

Optimizing Training Programs: Insights From Nursing Students Employability Skills and Attributes

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates the employability competencies of Chinese nursing students in private vocational education while seeking insights from both their professors and medical administrators. A combination of survey techniques and interview methods was used to evaluate four variables called assets, deployment, presentation, and context in the study. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of employability skills in nursing, limited research has explored how vocational nursing education in China addresses these evolving industry needs. The sample included 150 final-year nursing students (aged 22–25) and 50 faculty members and healthcare administrators directly involved in training or recruitment. The findings reveal that students excel in communication and teamwork, essential for healthcare, but struggle with critical thinking, time management, and adaptability. Administrative personnel validated student knowledge deficits in challenging situation assessment together with their inability to adapt to changing environments which necessitated stronger training programs. The analysis of qualitative data shows geriatric care together with community health and technology competence as fundamental requirements for current nursing standards. Academic curricula require updates through case-based education and simulations and digital literacy programs to meet skill requirements and mirror professional healthcare standards. The study offers essential knowledge to enhance nursing education training because it allows better preparation of students who will work in today's fast-changing healthcare system.

Keywords: Employability Skills, Nursing Education, Vocational College, Critical Thinking, Industry Needs

INTRODUCTION

Modern healthcare competition demands that nursing graduates obtain more than university subjects teach since they need complementary professional capabilities to fit future workforce requirements (Chen et al., 2021). Healthcare systems worldwide have undergone substantial changes because of technological development and industry practice changes and population diversity. Nurses must show fundamental abilities which include effective communication together with team coordination combined with problem-solving abilities in combination with adaptive skills according to Heward et al. (2020). The nursing sector in China experiences severe pressure because of two main factors: a growing aging population and constant healthcare policy changes (Yang et al., 2020). The literature shows that modern nursing professionals need employability skills as a fundamental tool to thrive in current healthcare environments. Researchers have consistently shown that nursing programs must adapt to present industry standards as this enhances graduate success in professional

roles (Halcomb et al., 2020). Student-perceived assessments about their employability skills differ from those of both instructors and healthcare administrators which may create skill development gaps according to Watson et al (2021) and Bui and Zeng (2020). Addressing these skill gaps through specific educational transformations is vital for boosting the employment success of university degree graduates.

Global recognition of employability skills in nursing education remains insufficient because Chinese vocational colleges have not received adequate targeted research on competency development for industry needs. A research investigation scrutinizes whether nursing students correctly rate their employability skills when faculty and healthcare administrators provide assessments. Sources predict a match between undergraduate nursing students' evaluations of their capabilities and professional judgments of institutional evaluators. When nursing graduates start their clinical careers academic training frequently reveals unpreparedness in workforce readiness. The increasing need for flexible nurses who are immediately prepared for professional practice drives an ongoing upward trend in healthcare sector demand.

The research analyzes the employability competencies of nursing students who study at Caofeidian Vocational and Technical College. The study evaluates students' self-assessments together with the remarks of faculty and healthcare administrators to find both positive aspects and training needs. The research investigates present healthcare requirements along with ways nursing educational programs can match up with industry requirements. Students will demonstrate similar evaluations when comparing their calculations to the assessments from faculty and healthcare administrators according to the proposed research hypothesis. The curriculum integration of occupational skills from nursing industries will improve the professional market readiness of graduate nurses. The research findings offer essential information to improve nursing training curriculum because they help maximize graduate employment opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent changes in healthcare systems and workforce demands require nurses to learn employability skills which fulfill industry-level requirements. Nursing practitioners depend on communication skills and teamwork abilities for safe patient care provision and building successful collaborations between healthcare professionals according to Chen et al (2021) and Watson et al (2021). The ability to coordinate effectively produces direct effects on patient results within healthcare environments. Advanced nursing practice demands both critical thinking and adaptability skills because healthcare professionals need to handle complex cases alongside handling new technology. The changing healthcare policies together with a rising elderly demographic in China establish an immediate necessity for versatile nursing professionals with analytical abilities according to Yang et al. (2020). According to Zhao and Sun (2021) nursing education needs to match real-world patient needs for resolving skill shortages that mostly affect problem-solving abilities and time management skills.

The employability framework based on Assets, Deployment, Presentation and Context dimensions provides nurses with an organized way to assess career-essential capabilities (Jackson & Bridgstock, 2021). Employers have identified "Assets" as critical competencies because research shows they are crucial factors for success in modern workplaces (Wilton, 2020). Many nursing graduates show weaknesses in "Deployment" skills because they lack expertise in applying their knowledge to real-world healthcare situations according to Tomlinson (2020).

Healthcare technology requirements demonstrate why digital literacy training has become essential for the healthcare profession. Nursing programs need to focus on graduating students who can handle electronic health records (EHRs) as well as telemedicine platforms and other digital tools because of their growing adoption in healthcare (Smith & Jones, 2019). Research shows that experiential learning methods including case-based simulations with clinical practicums successfully eliminate theoretical knowledge-practical application differences. Through these approaches students build their critical thinking abilities and develop adaptability to master the challenges healthcare provides (Kaddoura et al., 2021). Students can develop advanced preventive care knowledge through community-based learning as Nguyen et al. (2020) explain while expanding their skill set.

The current nursing profession demands recognition of emotional intelligence as well as resilience according to current research. According to Wong et al. (2021) the development of resilience requires nursing students to experience different clinical environments while having access to mentoring programs. Essential professional traits enable nurses to handle work-related psychological stress while sustaining optimum performance under pressure. The education system of vocational nursing colleges across China lacks sufficient research about student preparation for actual workplace challenges. The current gap requires research that identifies proper nursing education methods to match professional industry requirements.

Educational institutions should implement focused curricula to bridge critical thinking gaps as well as time management and technological proficiency shortages to meet industrial workplace requirements. The authors Zhao and Sun (2021) stress that nursing curriculum needs to evolve toward future-centric knowledge by including essential occupational competencies needed to support modern health industry requirements.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study use mixed-method research design, combine quantitative and qualitative approach to assess employability skills and attributes of graduating nursing students from Caofeidian Vocational and Technical College. The quantitative part use researcher-made questionnaire, experts validate it, and give to students and faculty both. The questionnaire is measuring four important employability dimensions such as assets, deployment, presentation, and context, yes. For qualitative part, we do semi-structured interview with important people, like faculty and healthcare administrator, to look into current industry need and practice that must be included in nursing education. Both number data and story data come together make big picture of students' job skills and how these skills fit with what industry want.

Sample Size/ Participants

This study have total 200 respondents including 150 nursing students graduate from Caofeidian Vocational and Technical College and 50 important stakeholders, which are faculty members, school administrators, and hospital representatives. The students ages range from 22 to 25 years old, selected by stratified random sampling for make sure diverse representation. The faculty, school, and hospital administrators were chosen on purpose because they directly involved in employability assessment and recruitment process of nursing graduates. These participants give very important insights about how students think their employability skills and what industry expect from nursing graduates.

Instrumentation

The study use two main tools for collect data: one questionnaire made by researcher and one guide for structured interview. The questionnaire was made to check the employability skills and attributes of nursing students who graduate, it have four dimensions such as the assets, deployment, presentation, and context. It was validated by three professional experts and tested with some group to make sure it is reliable, giving a Cronbach's Alpha of .604. The structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from faculty, school administrators, and hospital representatives. It focused on industry needs and how to integrate relevant practices in nursing education. Both instruments was carefully developed to align with the study objective, ensure comprehensive coverage of necessary competencies and factors affecting employability.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data gathering start after securing approval from Institutional Ethics Review Committee. The researcher gave out the online questionnaires to nursing students who were graduating to make sure people can access. With the data, the researcher also did open-ended question survey with teacher, school administrators, and hospital administrators to get deeper understanding to the study. The

questionnaires were finished in two-week time. After gathering, the data was put together and secured. The numerical data was processed with tools of statistics, and the qualitative answers was analyzed for themes that come out. During the whole process, confidentiality of the participants was protected, and all the participants were informed about purpose of the study and that their participation is purely voluntary.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied such as mean and standard deviation to calculate the levels of students and administrators about employability skills. For accuracy, an statistical software was used particularly SPSS version 23. To test the hypothesis on significant differences and relationship, all tested at α .05 level. Data from the open-ended questionnaires were done for thematic analysis. It show pattern and theme about nursing graduate employability (Nowell et al., 2019). Mixing number and story findings give good understanding about nursing graduate employability skill (Creswell & Poth, 2019), making sure that the researcher has full insights into the readiness for job of the nursing students.

The data analysis interpretation levels in this study provide a nuanced understanding of respondents' attitudes based on their level of agreement. Responses are categorized as follows: "Strongly Disagree" indicates a very low level of agreement or satisfaction, suggesting significant room for improvement in the assessed area. "Disagree" reflects a low level of satisfaction, pointing to potential areas needing attention but not as critically deficient. A "Neutral" response equates to an average level, indicating moderate or ambivalent feelings towards the topic, which may not require immediate focus. "Agree" represents a high level of approval or confidence, suggesting that participants recognize the value or presence of the skill or attribute. Finally, "Strongly Agree" is aligned with a very high rating, indicating strong confidence or satisfaction in the skill, competency, or attribute in question. These gradations support a more refined analysis, aligning well with contemporary research standards (Nowell et al., 2019).

RESULTS

This study examined the employability skills of nursing graduates by analyzing their self-assessments and evaluations by faculty and administrators. The findings, summarized in Tables 1 and 2, highlight the strengths and areas for improvement in four dimensions: Assets, Deployment, Presentation, and Context.

Table 1. The student's assessment of their employability skills and attributes with reference to assets, deployment, presentation and context

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Assets	4.19	0.81	Agree / High
Deployment	4.27	0.77	Strongly Agree / Very High
Presentation	4.18	0.79	Strongly Agree / Very High
Context	4.24	0.73	Strongly Agree / Very High
Overall	4.22	0.76	Strongly Agree / Very High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree (very low), 1.81-2.60=Disagree (low), 2.61-3.40=Neutral (average), 3.41-4.20=Agree (high), 4.20-5.00=Strongly Agree (very high)

Table 1 presents the self-assessments of 150 nursing graduates from Caofeidian Vocational and Technical College. The graduates rated themselves highly in the Assets dimension, particularly in communication and teamwork. These skills were identified as critical for effective collaboration and patient care in healthcare environments. The Presentation dimension also received strong ratings, indicating graduates' confidence in showcasing their skills during job applications, such as through resumes and interviews. However, the Deployment dimension, which focuses on critical thinking and

time management, received the lowest ratings. This suggests that while students are confident in their foundational skills, they face challenges in applying them effectively in dynamic healthcare settings. Overall, graduates perceived themselves as well-prepared in interpersonal and self-presentation skills but acknowledged the need to strengthen their practical and adaptive abilities.

To gain a more balanced perspective, the faculty, school, and hospital administrators' assessments were analyzed and compared to the students' self-assessments. The faculty, school and hospital administrators' assessment is reflected below:

Table 2. The faculty's assessment of their employability skills and attributes with reference to assets, deployment, presentation and context

Dimension	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Assets	4.37	0.71	Strongly Agree / Very High
Deployment	4.52	0.59	Strongly Agree / Very High
Presentation	4.44	0.66	Strongly Agree / Very High
Context	4.47	0.62	Strongly Agree / Very High
Overall	4.44	0.66	Strongly Agree / Very High

Note: 1.00-1.80=Strongly Disagree (very low), 1.81-2.60=Disagree (low), 2.61-3.40=Neutral (average), 3.41-4.20=Agree (high), 4.20-5.00=Strongly Agree (very high)

To provide additional perspectives, Table 2 summarizes the evaluations of faculty and administrators. These evaluations largely align with the self-assessments in identifying communication and teamwork as significant strengths. Faculty and administrators confirmed that graduates excel in collaborative and interpersonal competencies. However, they identified more pronounced gaps in the Deployment and Context dimensions, particularly in critical thinking, adaptability, and understanding of professional and regulatory standards. These gaps highlight a discrepancy between students' perceptions of their skills and the expectations of their educators and potential employers, signaling a need for targeted curriculum improvements.

Beyond the academic setting, it is important to consider the perspectives of industry representatives regarding the current needs and expectations in healthcare, which may influence how nursing education programs should be shaped moving forward.

Table 3. Current industry needs and practices for integration to nursing education

Industry Needs and Practices to be integrated in Nursing Education	Theme	Sub-theme / Skills
1 Population Aging and Long-Term Care	Holistic Geriatric Care	Specialized care for elderly populations.
2 Hospice Care		Management of chronic conditions and age-related illnesses.
3 Nutritional Support Care		Palliative care principles and practices.
		Supporting patients and families during end-of-life stages.
		Assessment and management of nutritional needs.
		Providing nutritional counseling and support.

Table 4. Current industry needs and practices for integration to nursing education

Industry Needs and Practices to be integrated in Nursing Education		Theme	Sub-theme / Skills
4	Palliative Care	Integrated Care and Safety in Nursing Practice	Symptom management and comfort care. Enhancing quality of life for patients with serious illnesses.
5	Infection Control and Prevention		Practices for preventing healthcare-associated infections. Implementation of infection control protocols.

Table 5. Current industry needs and practices for integration to nursing education

Industry Needs and Practices to be integrated in Nursing Education		Theme	Sub-theme / Skills
6	Community Nursing and Home Nursing	Innovative and Personalized Care in Modern Healthcare Systems	Providing care in community settings. Skills in home healthcare management and patient education.
7	Precision Medicine-Related Care		Understanding genetic and molecular diagnostics. Tailoring treatments based on individual patient data.
8	Innovation and Application of Medical Technology		Use of advanced medical devices and AI in nursing practice. Training in telehealth and remote monitoring technologies.
9	New Ideas and Technology in Rehabilitation Nursing		Innovative approaches in physical and occupational therapy. Use of robotics and virtual reality in rehabilitation.
10	Medical Big Data and Nursing Decision Making		Utilization of big data analytics in nursing practice. Making informed clinical decisions based on data insights.
11	Introduce Modern Technological Means		Integration of electronic health records (EHR). Adoption of smart healthcare technologies.
12	Practice Innovation and Research Development		Conducting research to improve nursing practice. Implementing evidence-based interventions.

Table 6. Current industry needs and practices for integration to nursing education

Industry Needs and Practices to be integrated in Nursing Education	Theme	Sub-theme / Skills
13 Mental Care and Mental Health	Integrated Mental Health and Emergency Care	Assessment and intervention for mental health issues. Promoting mental wellness and stigma reduction.
14 Disaster and Emergency Care		Disaster preparedness and response strategies. Triage and acute care in emergency situations.
15 Interdisciplinary Knowledge Integration		Team-based approaches to patient care. Collaboration with other healthcare professionals.

Table 3 to 6 show that industry representatives say nursing programs need to include geriatric care, community health, and mental health in the curriculum. As healthcare change, more and more need for nurses who have skill in these areas. Also, it is important to say that using technology and new ideas in medical practices is very important for making sure graduates ready for the challenges in modern healthcare. This finding suggest that nursing education need to change to meet the industry needs to make future graduates more employable and effective.

To sum up, the results from both numbers and words show that nursing students are good at communication and teamwork, but they need to get better in some areas, especially critical thinking, time management, and being adaptable. Also, the agreement between student and administrator evaluations shows that there is a shared understanding of these strengths and weaknesses. It is very important to include what industry needs in nursing education, especially in areas such as caring for older people and using technology. This helps graduates to be ready for the changing demands in healthcare.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals a consistent pattern: while nursing students rated themselves highly in interpersonal competencies, qualitative feedback from faculty and healthcare administrators emphasized real-world shortcomings in critical thinking, adaptability, and practical deployment of skills. This convergence suggests a perceptual gap between self-confidence and workplace readiness that requires curricular attention.

DISCUSSION

The results show that healthcare professionals need better development in critical thinking capabilities and time management together with adaptability because these competencies are crucial for working in complex high-risk health settings. The set of competencies in critical thinking includes analytical reasoning as well as problem-solving abilities and evidence evaluation for informed decision making (Dahlke et al., 2021). Patient symptom analysis requires nursing students to simultaneously evaluate data sources and develop suitable responses for challenging clinical situations. The curriculum needs case-based simulations and clinical reasoning exercises to let students practice these competencies in realistic scenarios for better skill development.

Effective time management stands as one of the essential skills which needs development by nursing students. Set priorities and organize tasks efficiently as well as manage workloads effectively because these competencies directly affect nurses' capacity to provide timely organized patient care (Thomas et al., 2020). Nursing students need formal training in time management approaches which includes learning methods of structured work priority organization and workflow planning. Student

learning would benefit from practical patient simulation exercises which simulate real-time clinical scenarios to let them practice time-based provision of effective patient care.

The ability to adapt remains an essential skill for nursing since healthcare environments now demand immediate flexible solutions to various situations. The three core abilities within adaptability consist of emotional strength together with excellent stress management and acceptance of protocol shifts or environmental alterations. Shielding nursing students should cover three essential elements namely training encounters with multiple clinical areas alongside unexpected healthcare simulations and self-care resilience techniques. Students who develop these competences will excel at managing nursing unpredictability and succeed in dynamic healthcare environments (Eyüboğlu et al., 2021).

Student nurses would reach their full potential when they acquire enhanced proficiency in geriatric and community care training. Healthcare professionals caring for elderly patients need to learn about how aging affects health while they simultaneously need skills in managing lengthy illnesses and offering personalized support that meets these elderly patients' needs. Nurses throughout the world must acquire specialized expertise to treat elder patients because aging populations exist worldwide while educators must address mental health issues among seniors along with end-of-life care (Zhou & Wang, 2021). Healthcare delivery models now move toward community-based care therefore healthcare professionals must develop essential skills to work in those settings. Nurses need to develop three competencies including preventive care understanding and public health teaching combined with community resource coordination abilities. Students require practical training through community health practicums and local organization partnerships to develop their skills in delivering community-based care. Digital healthcare combined with telemedicine development requires nursing students to develop competencies in technology skills. The ability to utilize electronic health records (EHR) alongside telemedicine tools and analyze patient care data belongs to the competency area in this domain. Healthcare students must learn to operate within EHR systems and carry out patient care through virtual sessions and make efficient use of technological tools for decision making (Wieschke, 2020). The teaching of digital literacy in nursing education accompanied by practical experience with telemedicine systems will substantially improve these competencies among nursing students.

Healthcare institutions worldwide transition their strategies toward three primary directions which consist of prevention-focused and patient-first medical care integrated with technological solutions. The healthcare industry requires nurses who can adapt to digital technological advancements and possess community health expertise (Smith & Jones, 2019). The nursing education system should develop student competences for providing complete technology-enhanced preventive care to become qualified for contemporary healthcare institutions.

Similarly to Bui and Zeng (2020) research findings showed students misconceive their professional preparedness levels especially in critical thinking abilities. The outstanding performance in teamwork along with communication aligns with Wilton's (2020) findings about the effectiveness of interpersonal training in vocational education contexts. Vocational institutions face novel challenges when incorporating specialized nursing modules like digital literacy and geriatric care into their curriculum according to this research which differs from focus on university nursing programs examined in Halcomb et al. (2020).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research examined nursing graduates at Caoheidian Vocational and Technical College for their employability skills and attributes to determine their readiness for healthcare industry requirements. Graduates display advanced communication abilities together with teamwork expertise since these competencies prove essential for delivering quality patient care alongside healthcare partnerships. Results show nursing education successfully develops the most important social competencies within its program structure. The students need improvement in critical thinking alongside better time management and adaptability skills to achieve complete readiness for healthcare settings in the real world. The research develops a vocational-oriented model for nursing employability assessment that reveals how students and educational organizations have different employment readiness perceptions. The research supports Chinese needs of non-university nursing

graduates through a combined quantitative and qualitative approach which develops a practical assessment model for educational method alignment.

Skills relating to geriatric care together with community health and technology expertise gained prominence in this research. These competencies will become fundamental requirements for contemporary nursing practice because healthcare technology speeds up while the nursing population ages. Faculty members together with administrators highlighted a requirement to improve nursing education's connection with industrial needs to prepare graduates for healthcare's emerging challenges. The research outcomes drive recommendations supporting nursing curricula to add additional case-based learning and simulation exercises which improve critical thinking abilities and problem-solving competencies. To build time management skills together with adaptability students must perform clearly defined practical projects in various clinical environments. The curriculum should feature both geriatric care and digital literacy modules because dental nurses need foundational knowledge to handle current healthcare needs. Accelerating the formation of healthcare institution partnerships will enable students to gain real-world practical skills which bridge educational preparation with operational employment expectations.

Through these modifications nursing programs will improve their graduates' career prospects while creating a healthcare workforce consisting of competent adaptable and resilient nurses. This transformation of graduate readiness combined with qualified talent will enable healthcare institutions to deliver optimal services through competent staff. This research provides operational guidelines to improve nursing education but faculty must address expected obstacles concerning implementation. The implementation of simulation-based learning and digital literacy training with community care instruction needs substantial financial support for infrastructure development and training faculty and acquiring technological tools especially at vocational institutions with funding constraints. Experimenting with real-world industrial placements for students faces planning challenges owing to workforce deficits and scarce hospital placement positions. Proper strategic planning needs to merge with resource allocation and institutional support when implementing proposed reforms to guarantee their sustainability.

IMPLICATIONS

This study looked at the skills and qualities that nursing students from a private vocational college have for getting jobs. The findings showed important strengths and some areas that need improvement. Results from numbers show students mostly feel good about their skills in talking and working together, which are very important for healthcare places. But, they need to get better at critical thinking, managing time, and being adaptable, which are important to do well in changing healthcare settings. Faculty and administrators give good ratings to the students, especially for their self-motivation and ethical behavior. However, they all agree that better training in time management and understanding different cultures is very important to make sure graduates are well-rounded.

The findings showed that nursing programs need to include skills that are important for the industry. This is especially true for specialized care like geriatric and community health, and also for being good at using modern healthcare technologies. Nursing education should align with what industry needs now, like being ready for emergencies and controlling infections. This will help graduates deal with the challenges in today's healthcare field. This study shows how important it is to keep changing nursing programs so they match new healthcare developments. This way, nursing graduates are ready for success in their jobs and can meet the changing needs of their patients and employers. In the end, making specific improvements in education will help nursing graduates get better jobs, which is good for the healthcare system and for the students too.

The findings have important implications for nursing education, healthcare institutions, and future graduates. First, schools need to see the problems in critical thinking, time management, and adaptability that nursing students have and make changes to the curriculum to fix these issues. Nursing programs can prepare students better for modern healthcare by adding more hands-on experiences like internships and learning through real-life scenarios. Also, it is important to have cultural understanding and better teamwork, so soft skills training should be focused on just as much as technical education.

The findings show that healthcare employers should have ongoing professional development programs. These programs should focus on important skills, especially in communication and making ethical decisions. Also, training that is specific to industry, like technology and emergency response, should be included in both school and work environments. This way, nursing graduates can handle the changing healthcare situation better. In general, making nursing education match these important employability factors will help graduates have better job chances and also make the healthcare workforce more skilled and flexible.

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