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UNIVERSITY NURSING EDUCATION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.

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UNIVERSITY NURSING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA:
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all nurses who are struggling academically, to uplift the image of the nursing profession.
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ABSTRACT

Education we say is the bedrock of any nation, because education is the training of the mind and character of someone to ensure change of unwanted behaviour or strengthening encouraging behaviours. Nursing education in Nigeria was hospital based at its inception, with change in the contemporary society, it has move from the hospital to the university level. This attainment has met some problem such as limited number of universities offering nursing degrees, non sponsorship and denial of higher education, feminization of the profession, limited areas of specialization and so on. The prospect of university education has also been discuss in this paper, as well as recommendations to improve nursing education.
INTRODUCTION

Nursing profession has evolved over the years as a unique profession for the provision of personal care to patient during illness and disability, as well as the provision of preventive and promotive health care to groups/communities. It is essential service for the conservation of life, alleviation of suffering and the promotion of healthy living.

Since the middle of the last century, there has been a tremendous and rapid growth of science and technology, which has brought about a revolution in health care delivery. According to Jinadu (2002), this revolution has led to increasing demand for better-educated nurse. Society demands from the nursing profession, the best that such revolution can offer. With this view, there is a unanimous agreement about the need for a change in general nursing education in Nigeria. How ever opinions differ about the directions and momentums of such a change. Some of the anxieties that have been expressed as observed by Jinadu (2002) include: where should basic nursing education be placed along the educational system of this country? Is nursing and midwifery council of Nigeria doing the right thing by advocating Polytechnic education for basic Nursing? Are we being led by the nose to a blind allay?.

Concerned nurses have canvassed many opinions and ideas about the directions of nursing education in this country, often without painstakingly and
objectively assessing the pros and cons of them. Whichever direction, it may decide to take, it is important to realize that Nigerian nurse leaders and nurse educators need to monitor and evaluate the quality of nursing education especially with regards to its appropriateness for nursing practice and professionalism in order to meet the demands of the society, it is on this premise that this discussion is based. This paper will examine the problems and prospects of University nursing education in Nigeria.

**OBJECTIVES**

At the end of the seminar presentation, the audience will be able to:

- Describe briefly, the history of nursing education in Nigeria.
- Discuss the problems of nursing education in Nigeria.
- Discuss the prospects of nursing education in Nigeria.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF NURSING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.**

A brief history of nursing education in Nigeria will be discussed from two perspectives:- Pre-colonial and post colonial era.

**PRE-COLONIAL ERA.**

In the pre-colonial era, the standard of nursing education was lower than the apprenticeship type of training. People recruited had no formal education other than being loyal to their masters. The training was carried out at various mission post, which later became the training schools (Ndatsu, 2002).

Following the Crimean war, Florence Nightingale initiated and sustained a campaign for nurses all over the world to have an organized and formal training. This
had a positive influence in Nigeria which was at that time a British Colony, and led to the establishment of formal nursing training schools at some mission and government hospital with approved syllabus for midwifery training. The entry qualification was standard six for grade II midwives and the duration of training was one year. While that of Grade 1 midwives was government class four or Grade II midwifery certificate with two and a half year duration of training. Similarly, General Nursing Education also developed with apprenticeship type of training and an entry qualification of standard six and government class four. In 1951, the Preliminary Training School started. The duration of training for those who had standard six was twelve months in the preliminary training school While those with government class four spent six months; after which they were sent to the Divisional Headquarters hospital for training that lasted for about three additional years. As would be expected, these calibers of nurses were prepared on the job for local consumption. Then, the need to produce professional nurses that will be acceptable nationally and internationally arose – nurses that will be able to function independently on assigned responsibilities and roles.

POST-COLONIAL ERA.

The stated needs led to the setting up of a committee on New Standards of Nurse training (Ndatsu 2002). It is believed that the recommendations of the committee; led to the emergence of and approval in 1965 of a new Nursing education
syllabus; with the ultimate goal of ensuring a uniform basic standard of nursing in
Nigeria and abroad.

The entry qualification was a full-secondary school education with an attempt
in West African School Certificate or its equivalent; and duration of training of three
and a half years. The syllabus was broad-based and graduates of the programme
could practice in hospital wards, fields of obstetrics, public health and psychiatry.
The implementation of this syllabus continued until 1978 when a review of the
former one was approved. The emphasis on preventive care as emphasized by the
World Health Organization informed the decision of the council to make the new
curriculum, community nursing oriented. It also included some traditional medical
functions with a system approach to disease. However, it laid more emphasis on
liberal education with an entry qualification of a pass in West African school
certificate [WASC] or its equivalent geared towards giving a full students status to
nurses.

The need for provision of manpower to prepare this caliber of nurse led to
establishment of Department of Nursing at the University of Ibadan in 1965 for the
B.Sc (Nursing) degree in Education and Administration. The entry qualification was
five credits and Registered Nurse certificate and the programme lasts for three years.
This was later followed by the Baccalaureate Nursing programme at the Obafemi
Awolowo University in 1974, whose graduates registered as General Nurses,
Midwives and Public Health Nurses. While this was going on, there were other Post
Basic Nursing Programmes at the School/Hospital level such as Orthopedic nursing, Peri-operative nursing, Nurse Anesthetist, Public Health Nursing, Ophthalmic Nursing programmes etc of varying durations. Moreover other Diploma Nursing programmes like Nurse educators; Nurse administrators etc were also established at the Polytechnics lasting for two years. The graduates from Polytechnics were awarded the ordinary National Diploma (OND). These arrangements have been rather haphazard.

**PROBLEMS OF NURSING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA.**

It is important to examine some of the actual and envisaged problems of present day nursing education, so that it does not hinder future development.

**Offering of Nursing Degree programmes.** Only five Federal Universities in Nigeria currently have departments of nursing. These are University of Ibadan.

- Obafemi Awolowo University – Ile-Ife.
- University of Nigeria Enugu Campus.
- University of Calabar
- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

In addition to these five Universities, the 2002/2003 JAMB brochures list two other Universities. These are Babcock University – Ilishan – Remo in Ogun State and Madonna University Okija in Anambra state as offering degree in nursing. This number is so limited as compared to other disciplines like law, medicine, engineering, pharmacy, Education etc. where nearly all the Universities in Nigeria
have faculties for these programmes. With this, opportunity for higher education for nurses is highly limited. Ojo, (1982) is of the view that the few universities in Nigeria offering degree programmes in Nursing are inadequate to cater for the education of the increasing number of nurses who want to read nursing degree courses. As such, many nurses find it difficult to update their professional knowledge, skills and attitude in the university.

**Limited areas of specialization:** Another problem is the issue of specialization. Only few universities offer postgraduate courses in nursing. At the master’s level we have maternal and Child Health Nursing, Nursing Education, medical/Surgical Nursing etc, and at the Doctorate of Philosophy (PHD) level, it is still the same. This has led to increased number of graduate nurses taking up masters and PHD degree in non-nursing fields. As a result of this, graduate nurses who would have increased the demand for professional nursing divert to other fields, as soon as they find the opportunity.

- **Non-sponsorship of higher education opportunities.** Some administrators and directors through bureaucratic, undemocratic and unprogressive process frustrate the motivation and efforts of their sub-ordinates to embark on continuing nursing education (Igbinosum 1996, Adeyemo 1997, Ejikeme 2001). This has much impact on nursing education and the nursing profession at large. For instance, in some states where University nursing programmes are not accessible for nurses to combined their work and academic pursuit, most of them take up degree
programmes in non-nursing fields on part-time basis thus diverting to other fields of life. Such ventures do not contribute to the development of nursing profession. Kolo (1999) in his work, stated among other things the steady rise in the cost of education as a cog in the wheel in university education: Corroborating this, Watson and Wells (1987) stated that university education is faced with ever increasing costs with dwindling federal government maintenance. Non-sponsorship has forced prospective students to defer or forgo their admissions. University education has become very costly, that, it is getting beyond the reach of a common man. Hence sponsorship is very vital for the education of nurses; by the government, administrators, directors, oil and other multinational companies in order to meet the challenges of modern nursing in Nigeria.

Perceived as a Low Status Profession by the Society.

A central characteristic often cited of a professional status is possession of a distinct body of knowledge, available only to those who have a recognized professional qualification. As such, it is necessary for any aspiring profession to identify, demarcate and develop a body of knowledge and control access to it by means of an educational system. The educational system therefore bears a great deal of responsibility for professional development through its articulation of professional knowledge. In nursing, this is a prime concern, for without the identification of nursing knowledge (as opposed to other professions), nursing education is no more
than a watered down version of medical education, with fragments of the social sciences thrown in (Reed and Procter, 1993).

Much of what nurses do is considered dirty and unmentionable in a polite society. Nursing work involves dealing with faeces, vomitus, urine, blood, sputum etc. As such the society still see nursing as doing menial work which does not need academic study.

**Feminization of Nursing Profession**

In Nigeria as well as other countries, women form the majority in the nursing profession. As such, gender role has much influence on the profession because many people see gender as the most important factor in determining a candidate’s goals, ambitions and motivations. Rosenfeld [1986] stated that, one of the reasons nursing has had difficulties achieving professional status is the powerful impact of cultural mandate on people’s lives. The cultural mandate is a strong, almost inflexible, social expectation that women need to conform to the feminine ideal. What is said here in effect is the fact that their major life’s goal should be the primary allegiance to their families. There is also the belief of some cultures that no matter the level of education a woman may attain, the kitchen remains her office. This state of affairs thus discourages most nurses in pursing higher education and as such leads to the resultant slow progress of nursing education. To buttress this fact further, Sokoya (2002) stated that.
All women have been shamed and blamed from childhood. Girl children have been programmed by parents and the society to think and behave in a certain way, i.e., to be women, with all the rules, regulations, and frustrations that come with being a woman... African women and in particular Nigerian women are nationally disempowered due to the norms, beliefs and cultural practices even laws in the communities in which they find themselves.

Family problems like child rearing, dependent relatives and other commitments have affected university education of nurses, since most women in nursing are parents. Furthermore, the society considers the female characteristics found in nursing unprofessional because they are emotional rather than objective, passive instead of assertive and subordinate instead of dominant. Aina (2003) is also of the opinion that 'men create tremendous problems for the women'. For men, 'a woman should only be seen not heard'. Also women should remain their handmaids while they are the masters. From the foregoing, if more men join the nursing profession like what is happening in other professions, nursing education will take a different shape. Thompson (2001) stated that 'male nurses tend to be more career-minded than women, they have often been the breadwinner at home and women have lost out because of inflexible working conditions and the lack of child care provision'. With adequate media campaign for more men in the nursing profession, nursing which has traditionally been female dominated will reject the old stereotypes. Higher education of nurses in the universities will attract more males in nursing.
Apprenticeship system of training in basic schools of Nursing: World Health organization report of 1996 specified a nurse as one called for commitment, maturity and an ability to assess and synthesize a great deal of information quickly and accurately and for him/her to do this, calls for freedom and sense of responsibility. This is practiced in other places like Britain with success but they have a different method of integrating theory with practice. This is not applicable in Nigeria. Here it is more of master-servant relationship (Igbinosum 1984) especially in most mission schools of nursing. This type of training has deprived the nurses of social interaction, creativity and assertiveness, hence reducing the progression in areas of nursing education and practice.

Testing strategies – Another cankerworm in basic nursing education is the system of final examination for nurses. One wonders the rationale behind the idea of testing a student in two or at least three procedures that have been taught over the years. The objectivity in this type of examination cannot be ascertained (Ojo 1982). Omotosho (2004) postulated that in most African countries, testing in nursing schools and at the licensure exam is usually by essay and not objective. This difference in testing style from nursing schools in the USA poses problems for many African students and nurses trying to further their education abroad. They are used to essay testing which calls for depth, detail, integration and understanding. In the US, they are confronted with objective testing that calls for breadth, variety, specificity and judgments. Moreover the nursing certificate obtained in Nigeria is not quantified.
PROSPECTS OF UNIVERSITY NURSING EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: Despite the numerous problems in nursing education, there are hopes of improvement in nursing education in Nigeria as it embraces a broad based education. University -based baccalaureate program is being advocated in nursing. According to Omotosho (2004), many nurse educators in Nigeria advocate moving all basic nursing training to the university to make it more broad-based and bring it to par with other major health professions. Generic nursing has become the approved university program, thereby making first degree nurses, clinical nurses as in medicine and pharmacy rather than specialist in education or administration at first degree level. There is an increased awareness among nurses that nursing education should be essentially university based. However, there is need for clear guidelines on how this could proceed as nurse leaders and even the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (N & M C N) have no clear view of what it entails. It is important to note that, a degree in nursing will make a difference in the profession, the nurse and the consumers of care. To the profession, university education exposes the nurse to liberal education to accomplish the criteria of a profession. The criteria for a profession include:- autonomy, accountability, a body of knowledge, competence, prestige etc. University education teaches the nurse autonomy; having autonomy means having a sense of responsibility for ones own behaviour. He\she will be accountable for his\her actions, especially not following orders and/ or not completing tasks. They will acquire specialized knowledge and skills in order to be safe and competent practitioners. In
fact, the graduate of nursing sciences is considered a polyvalent nurse with high competencies in comprehensive approach to healthcare and can meet diversified health concerns of individuals, families, groups and communities; thus strengthening the principle basis of professional practice. To the nurse, university education enables such a nurse to acquire the much needed confidence, assertiveness and behaviour modification to practice his/her profession in any setting he/she finds himself/herself. To the consumers of care, graduate nurses will be able to render a cost effective quality care to client/patients in an acceptable manner.

**Better Career Ladder and Structure**

The Nigerian government appears to have started correcting the anomalies in the career ladder and structure. Due to the progression of nurses to degree level. The recent categorization into graduates and non-graduates in the career structure by the ministry of establishment indicates the prospect in nursing education in Nigeria. Graduate of B. Sc nursing can now progress to level 17 as opposed to their non-graduate counterparts who will end at level 14. This now reflects the career structure that exists with their counterparts in the health profession. Solomon (1985) explored the influence of degree on salary levels among occupational health nurses and found salary increase to be an important consideration in the decision to seek a degree in nursing.
Development of Nursing Research and Team Work.

According to Umunna (2004), every nurse has a part to play in nursing research, whether he/she is participating in research itself or used as products of research. Nurses have in the past placed more emphasis on its practical aspect than on research, hence nurses tended to accept ideas and knowledge from authorities without many questions. In the present dispensation, with research, nurses are finding ways of coping with the changing needs of nursing and health care due to the following reasons: - the society’s discontentment with health services; the need to improve patient care; the growing need for establishing a scientific basis for nursing practice; the expanding role of the nurse and the demand for research that will provide a wide philosophical base for health care. With the call for a collaborative team work in the health sector, a nurse with liberal education can cope effectively with team work and research with other members of the health team. It will also develop and refine nursing theories, which will serve as guide to nursing practice.

Technological Advancement

In response to the societal tremendous and rapid growth of science and technology, modern nursing has therefore evolved as a science. As a science, nursing science is a series of processes, which must be planned, investigated, implemented and evaluated to accomplish defined goals. De Young (1982) asserts that an examination of the baccalaureate education programs in nursing today indicates not only that these programs emphasized a sound foundation in biological and social
sciences but also much emphasis is placed on the development of the thinking process, in essence, education for problem solving as opposed to education in facts and techniques; this was also corroborated by Forni (1986). Nursing informatics has also been included in the curriculum. It is anticipated that modern nurses will be computer literate to provide leadership in computerized design, management of patient and important health care information for various purposes. With this response to the challenges of computerization in the healthcare system by nurses, due recognition will be accorded to the nursing profession.

**Quality Nursing Care**

Acquisition of a degree in nursing will equip the nurse with adequate knowledge and skill, to render a comprehensive and standard nursing care, to meet the needs of the client/patient in an acceptable manner. Umunna (2004) stated that professional nurses have continued to develop from 'all purpose person' to venturing into academic and clinical areas of specialization thus making those experts and unique. They are in a better position to provide care based on evidence. From the foregoing, nurses who are experts in their fields of specialization, e.g., medical surgical nursing, public/community health nursing, nursing education, disaster relief etc will be able to render effective and efficient nursing to patients. Modern society is becoming increasingly aware of their health needs due to knowledge explosion, as such, the health system has also become more complex. Consequently, with complex nursing care, the expectations of the society will be achieved through university
nursing education, thereby gaining patronage and redeeming the image of the nursing profession. Steward (1993) confirmed this when he stated that there’s nowhere else except in a university that thorough scientific knowledge of the facts could be acquired.

However, all nursing education at the university level poses some challenges to the profession such as manpower for nursing education; nursing profession being in control of both skilled and non-skilled aspects of care; political will to effect changes that will carry all nurses along. It is against this background that Jinadu (2002) opined that our universities do not have enough manpower to cope with such a rapid change i.e. affiliation of all schools of nursing to the universities.

It has also been observed that majority of nurses possessing university nursing degree, major in public health, with only few majoring in education, there by causing dearth of educators. Nursing should be political conscious in order to formulate policies that will effect a change in the nursing profession while carrying all nurses along.
RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of this discussion, the following recommendations have been made:

- More universities in Nigeria should be encouraged and assisted to start nursing degree programmes,

- There should be affiliation of all schools of nursing to the universities.

- The government, private entities including companies, individuals and Alumni organizations should help in providing funds for sponsorship of nurses, and building of libraries.

- Nursing leaders and the universities should make provision for wider areas of specialization for nurses. In order to help attain any level they intend to in any area of specialty of their interest.

- More opportunity for university education especially on part-time basis should be explored and developed for nurses so that prospective professionals in nursing will not be lost to other disciplines.

- All nursing services department should implement as a matter of urgency nursing process, nursing research and nursing audit, which are vital tools for a qualitative, nursing care.

- More men should be encourage by the nursing leaders to change their attitudes towards nursing profession to join the profession through media.
Nursing education at its inception in Nigeria was hospital based, which entails training on the job. Change, which is an inevitable phenomenon, has the most striking characteristics of the contemporary society, hence there was some reformation from hospital based to the university level.

**SUMMARY/CONCLUSION**

Nursing education at its inception in Nigeria was hospital based, which entails training on the job. Change, which is an inevitable phenomenon, has the most striking characteristics of the contemporary society, hence there was some reformation from hospital based to the university level.

Government should encourage graduate nurses to specialize in nursing education by giving some incentives.

Cohesiveness of all registered nurses towards the implementation of the new career structure in Nigeria.

Nurses leaders should be involved in policy making bodies in order to formulate policies that will effect a change in the nursing profession.

The National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM) should be the embodiment of the resources, aspirations and professional actualization of Nigerian nurse. She should be the veritable change agent in the direction currently indicated in nursing education.

Regular education of the populace on the role of the nurse via nursing journals, television, radio, jingles etc should be encouraged.

Government should encourage graduate nurses to specialize in nursing education by giving some incentives.
As it is the case in many other countries, Nursing education in Nigeria has met some problems which include: fewer universities offering Nursing Degree programmes, non sponsorship and denial of higher education opportunities, Nursing being perceived as a low status profession, feminization of nursing profession, apprenticeship system of training in basic schools of nursing, testing strategies etc. In spite of these problems, there are hope in improvement (prospects) of nursing education in Nigeria as a result of moving all basic nursing training to the universities; and the generic nursing in the universities. Government has started correcting the anomalies in the career structure for graduate nurse and non-graduates. Development of Nursing Research and Team Work between the nurses and others leading to increase in nursing research, technological advancement, quality-nursing care etc. some recommendation were made on improvement of nursing education in Nigeria.

With adequate planning, implementation and evaluation, the nursing profession in Nigeria will be such that others will beckon with in the near future. It is also believe that, nursing will once again occupy its indispensable position in health care if our nursing leaders and all the nurses see the present situation as one that must be changed.
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