NURSING EDUCATION IN BARBADOS IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE SETTING

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BACKGROUND TO NURSING EDUCATION IN BARBADOS

Nursing Education has traditionally been based in hospital controlled schools and Barbados, with two such schools, has proved no exception to this pattern. A School of Nursing was established at the Barbados General Hospital in 1908 and in 1966 it was transferred to its present location, close to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, as the Tercentenary School of Nursing. The Psychiatric Hospital School of Nursing was established in 1960. These two schools offer the following nursing programmes to students:

Tercentenary School of Nursing

(1) a three-year programme in basic nursing education leading to the Registered Nurse Certificate.
(2) a one-year post basic programme in midwifery for graduate general trained nurses, leading to the Registered Midwife Certificate.
(3) an 18 to 21 month programme for singly qualified psychiatric trained nurses to complete the basic nursing education programme at (1) above.
(4) a one-year course for nursing assistants.

Psychiatric Hospital School of Nursing

(1) a three-year psychiatric nursing programme leading to the Registered Mental Nurse Certificate.
(2) an 18-month programme for the graduate general trained nurse who might wish to complete the Psychiatric nursing programme.
It should be noted that this programme is open to any general trained nurse working in the Public Service, it is not restricted to graduates of the Tercentenary School of Nursing.

Over the years, these schools have supplied Barbados with an adequate number of staff nurses to meet the needs of the various nursing service departments and have trained students from other Caribbean countries at the rate of 8 to 10 per year. The schools enjoy a good reputation in the region and overseas and many of their graduates have achieved notable success.

There are three identifiable components in a hospital-based nursing education programme:–

(a) an academic component,
(b) a clinical component,
(c) a service component,

with greatest emphasis being placed on the service component. The deployment of student nurses in service is more often than not determined by the staffing needs of the hospital than by the practice needed by students in the development of nursing skills in the required area at the required time. This is not surprising since a hospital is, after all, an institution one of whose main objectives is patient care. Strenuous efforts by Government and, in particular by the Ministry of Health, have resulted in improved standards of nursing education from the first attempt at formal training of nurses in 1928 to the present system with two schools of nursing, but there is still scope for improvement.
"Whether the school operates under a Ministry, Board or hospital, patient care is a primary responsibility and nursing education continues to be seen as a secondary function". 1

RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE UPGRADING OF NURSING EDUCATION BY SENIOR NURSES IN THE REGION.

Regional workshops and seminars, as detailed below, have been part of the planning activities for the upgrading and reorganisation of nursing education in the Caribbean, and senior nursing personnel have, during the last decade in particular, made strong recommendations for the upgrading of nursing education programmes.

In 1975, the Caribbean Secretariat convened, in Barbados, a Working Party on Nursing Education to (a) re-examine the present system and projected plans for nursing education in the region in the light of their relevance to the needs of the people of the Caribbean, and (b) make recommendations.

The following were among the recommendations made by the Working Party:

(1) that the education of nurses should be integrated into the general system of education.

(2) that, ideally, the education of nurses should take place in an interdisciplinary setting.

Subsequent to these recommendations, another Workshop on Nursing Education was held in July 1976 in Antigua to
(a) "develop curriculum guidelines for a Basic Nursing Education Programme which would be integrated into the general education system;

(b) develop guidelines for the organisation and administration of such integrated nursing programmes;

(c) develop steps to be taken in implementing the integration of nursing programmes into the general education system.

This workshop was attended by nursing educators and administrators from all Caricom countries, the Bahamas and the British Virgin Islands. The Caribbean Nurses Association, the Regional Nursing Body, the University of the W.I., and PAHO/WHO also participated.

In December 1977, a group of senior health personnel from eleven Caribbean countries and Suriname met in Barbados to discuss some of the issues currently facing nursing. These issues arose from Governments' proposals to extend health care coverage to the entire population. To this end, a great deal of emphasis was placed on the need for strengthening the delivery of Primary Health Care services. Of major concern was how best to prepare nursing personnel at basic and post-basic levels in the light of the health care needs of the people of the Caribbean and the proposals for changes in the delivery of health care. Following discussions, the work group recommended, among other things, that:

(a) Nursing schools in the region re-design their curricula to include relevant learning experiences for students in community settings, in keeping with the shift in emphasis from institutional to community based health care.
(b) Governments be urged to take action that will expedite and enhance efforts now being made by the Regional Nursing Body (RNB) toward standardisation and reciprocity in nursing education in the region.

(c) Governments be urged to implement the recommendation of previous workshops - that education of nursing personnel (basic, post-basic and continuing) take place in an inter-disciplinary setting, and within institutions whose primary purpose is education.

Similar recommendations have already been made by leaders in nursing in North America and Britain - an in many cases the main thesis, i.e. the transfer of nursing education to an institution whose primary purpose is education, has already been put into practice.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BARBADOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

At this stage, I should like to focus on the Barbados Community College, its overall aims and educational objectives and the programmes which it offers. The Barbados Community College was established in January 1969, with the overall aim of catering to the educational needs, at tertiary level, of the society. Its curriculum objectives then stated:

"...The curriculum of the Barbados Community College is designed to encourage in its students both development as persons and growth in the knowledge and skills in the careers of their choice.... The overall curriculum objectives are based on the belief that the graduating students will be better equipped to pursue total self development".
Initially, the College comprised Divisions of Commerce, Liberal Arts and Science. Divisions of Technology and Fine Arts were added in 1973 and 1974 respectively. A Division of Health Sciences was also added in 1974 and in January, 1980 the Division of Hospitality Studies (formerly the Barbados Hotel School) was incorporated into the College. The Barbados Community College is a truly multi-disciplinary teaching/learning institution, covering the widest educational spectrum in Barbados and indeed possibly in the Caribbean.

The College, which falls under the Ministry of Education, is administered by a Board of Management. There is a College Advisory Committee comprising the Principal, Deputy Principal, Senior Tutors (i.e. Divisional Heads), Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Guidance Counsellor, Physical Education Officer, General Studies Tutor and two representatives from the Students' Council. This Committee concerns itself with all aspects of College life and makes recommendations directed towards improving the overall operations of the College.

**DIVISION OF HEALTH SCIENCES OF THE BARBADOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

The College participates, through this Division, in the PAHO/WHO Regional Project for the Education and Training of Allied Health Personnel. Students from Barbados and other Caribbean countries are currently being trained as Pharmacists, Public Health Inspectors, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Medical Laboratory Technicians, Medical Record Technicians, and Dietetic Technicians. The Division made history in January 1980 when its first nursing programme, a post-basic diploma programme for Community Health Nurses was implemented.
At the inaugural ceremony in 1974 to mark the establishment of this Division, the first official reference to the integration of Nursing Education with the Division of Health Sciences was made. The Minister of Health mentioned the desirability of having student nurses trained in an educational setting and enjoying full student status.

The organisation of this Division reflects the need for continually assessing the suitability of specific programmes in the light of the changing health needs of people of the country and region. For example, for each programme there is an advisory sub-committee, the composition of which includes professionals from Government and the private sector working in that area, representatives from related professional associations and relevant regulatory bodies. The input of such sub-committees is vital to the success of the programmes - they are the direct link between the educational institution and the working environment for which the students are being prepared. In fact, such sub-committees are constituted while the programmes are in the planning stages and give input into the shaping of curricula so that the training of students is related to local and regional health needs. On-going assessment of programmes by these sub-committees gives guidance to the College in the modification of curricula.

In addition to these programme sub-committees, there is a Divisional Advisory Committee whose members include the Head of the Civil Service, senior officials from the Ministries of Education and Health, a representative from the Training Division, the Director of the Q.E.H., a representative from the General Nursing Council, a representative from the Faculty of Medicine, U.W.I., the Chief Nursing Officer, the Senior Tutor of the Division,
the Director of the PAHO/WHO Regional Project and the Director of Project HOPE. This Committee advises on the overall direction of the education of health personnel in the College especially in the light of local and regional developments and needs.

Curricula have been developed mainly by professionals in the Caribbean region. For each professional programme, there is an overall co-ordinator whose responsibilities include teaching some of the professional courses, and identifying in conjunction with the Divisional Heads, suitable lecturers for other components of the programme. Interdisciplinary teaching is a reality in this Division with many core courses shared by students in different programmes. As the Division expands, it is intended that a more comprehensive core curriculum will be developed.

Moderators external to the programmes, from U.W.I., University of Guyana and other educational institutions in the region, are used widely for final examinations to ensure objectivity and the maintenance of comparable regional standards for professional health education.

DECISION OF BARBADOS GOVERNMENT ON NURSING EDUCATION

In May 1979, the Government of Barbados agreed that:

(i) nursing education should be integrated into the general education system and transferred from the Ministry of Health to the Ministry of Education and Culture, specifically to the B.C.C. in its Division of Health Sciences.
(ii) that the Ministry of Health should set in train the necessary machinery leading to the transfer of nursing education.

(iii) that a curriculum for a three year integrated nursing programme should be developed to fit into the programmes of the BCC where the student nurse can participate actively in the general academic environment.

The implications of these decisions on nursing education will be examined further.

I. INTEGRATION OF NURSING EDUCATION INTO THE GENERAL EDUCATION SYSTEM AND SPECIFICALLY TO THE DIVISION OF HEALTH SCIENCES OF THE B.C.C.

The decision to transfer nursing education in Barbados to the educational system is consistent with the new approach being taken by Governments in the region in planning for the delivery of health care. Two important aspects of this new approach are as follows:

1. The emphasis in health care delivery is being placed on the provision of primary health care for all sectors of the population.

2. The interdisciplinary approach to the delivery of health care must be strengthened.

The interdisciplinary approach envisages a group of health professionals of various categories, working towards a common goal - that of the overall health of the client. These health personnel include nurses.
pharmacists, dietitians, nutritionists, laboratory technicians, medical records technicians and dictation technicians. The composition of an interdisciplinary health team and the relative responsibilities of its members will vary with the different needs of clients, since the maintenance of health is multisectoral and no one discipline can be expected to provide all the necessary inputs. Within the Caribbean, the interdisciplinary team approach has not been sufficiently emphasized either in the education system or in the delivery of health care. Each discipline has pursued its goals in isolation and at times to the exclusion of other health disciplines. This often results in unnecessary duplication of effort and wastage of resources. An effective interdisciplinary health team should boost morale and provide a sense of satisfaction in all its members whatever their level of training; it should also provide optimum health care to its clients and utilize the country's resources more economically and efficiently.

ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL NURSE

The important role of nurses in the health care system cannot be over-emphasized. Advances in medical knowledge are imposing new responsibilities on members of the nursing profession. Modern concepts in health care with increased emphasis on health promotion and maintenance require nurses to act as teachers and counsellors to patients and their families. Nurses will be required to participate more actively in the planning of primary and other health care services. Strengthening of the interdisciplinary team approach will demand increased responsibility from nurses.
Major aspects of the role of the professional nurse in the health care system are outlined by Dr. Mary Seivwright under the following categories:

1. Clinical
2. Educational
3. Administrative/Management
4. Research
5. Public/community relations

Furthermore, the role of the nurse cannot be static. Health care needs of a society change as its economic, social and cultural needs change; so too must the role of the nurse change.

EDUCATION OF THE NURSE IN RELATION TO HER ROLE

The education of the nurse must therefore prepare her to fulfil her role effectively. To this end, a revised curriculum with an integrative approach and with greater emphasis on community health nursing is currently being implemented at the Tercentenary School of Nursing. In addition, however, student nurses should share educational, social and cultural experiences with other future members of the health team; nurse tutors should also share in an academic, social and cultural environment with tutors of other health professionals.
"This is a competitive and scientific age. If nursing cannot measure up educationally to other professions, if it fails to provide itself with the broad natural, biological and social science basis required for present and future commitments and if it lacks the ability to delineate clearly its functional potential as other professions do, it must fall behind in the quality of the contribution it can make to man's welfare and destiny, and in the attainment of a secure and honoured socio-economic status."

The transfer of nursing education to the Division of Health Sciences of the Barbados Community College should further assist student nurses by (1) reinforcing the reality of an interdisciplinary approach to the planning and delivery of health care and (2) preparing them to fulfil their ever-changing role.

II. ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF THE TRANSFER OF NURSING EDUCATION FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

In order that such a transfer might be effected smoothly, a wide range of administrative matters had to be thoroughly studied and recommendations made. It was clearly seen that both Ministries involved, the B.C.C., other relevant institutions and agencies and the nursing tutorial staff needed to have their roles and responsibilities clearly defined. To this end, a Steering Committee was appointed by the Minister of Health under the chairmanship of the Chief Nursing Officer to prepare a proposal for the transfer.
The areas represented on this Committee were as follows:-

1. Ministry of Education
   Senior Education Officer (Tertiary)
   " " (Planning)
   Assistant Secretary (Tertiary)

2. Barbados Community College
   Representative of Board of Management
   Principal
   Senior Tutor, Division of Health Sciences

3. Queen Elizabeth Hospital
   Assistant Matron
   Principal Tutor, Tercentenary School of Nursing
   Senior Tutor, " " " " " Tutor, " " " " "

4. Psychiatric Hospital
   Principal Nursing Officer
   Senior Tutor, School of Nursing

5. Barbados Registered Nurses Association - a representative
6. General Nursing Council - a representative
7. Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners - two representatives
8. PAHO/WHO - Advisor, Nursing Education
Six sub-committees were formed to study specific aspects of the transfer, as follows:

(i) Administration and Planning Committee - to obtain administrative approval for the students' utilization of clinical facilities and to prepare the draft report.

(ii) Nursing Service Committee - to evaluate and determine nursing service manpower needs which might result from changes in the nursing programmes.

(iii) Transfer of Personnel Committee - to examine the personnel implications of the transfer and make recommendations for the transfer of officers.

(iv) Student Welfare Committee - to formulate policy guidelines for student nurses at the College in the light of existing student policies at the Schools of Nursing and the B.C.C.

(v) Budget Committee - to examine the financial implications of the transfer and to submit a budget proposal for the Nursing Programme on transfer.

(vi) Curriculum Development Committee - to develop an integrated curriculum for the basic Nursing programme to reflect an emphasis on primary health care and Community Health.

The importance of this time-consuming exercise cannot be over-emphasized. Such an investigation of all administrative aspects of the transfer was necessary and it was carried out thoroughly with the full co-operation of all the participating agencies.
The completed proposal is now under study so that the required administrative changes which must take place on transfer may be worked out.

III. PARTICIPATION OF THE STUDENT NURSE IN THE GENERAL ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT OF THE COLLEGE

There are many features of the general academic environment of the College from which participating students can derive great benefits. These include:-

(a) Counselling services. These are provided by a trained Counsellor and are concerned with helping students learn new ways of dealing with and adjusting to life situations. Three components of students' growth are emphasised: (a) social and personal development; (b) educational development and (c) career and vocational development.

(b) Students' Council. This is the organising body of the Students' Guild and it comprises a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and a representative from each Division. There are various committees responsible for sports, cultural activities, publications and welfare. The Students' Guild plans and organises a variety of student activities in the College and in the community.

(c) Physical Education Activities. Students participate in a wide variety of games and in athletics. They are allowed to gain practical experience in management by being allowed to run separate clubs, one for each sport, within the College. Sporting activities are co-ordinated by the Sports Council which comprises the president of each club and the Physical
Education Officer. The College has a modern gymnasium which can seat about 700 persons and which is used widely for national and international tournaments.

(d) General Education/Enrichment programme. This programme is designed to complement already existing courses by broadening student knowledge and skills and developing desired attitudes. Courses in Communication Skills, Sociology, Psychology, Survey of English Literature, and Caribbean Writers are currently offered. Afro-Caribbean Dance, Modern Dance, Drama and Vocal Music are also offered as recreational courses under this programme.

It must be stressed that the availability of amenities and facilities, however modern, and of a wide range of enrichment courses is no guarantee that the members of an institution will benefit from them. Staff must play an active role by firstly, helping students to realize the importance of participating in activities outside of those specifically required by their curricula and secondly, encouraging students to make the fullest possible use of available resources at the College.

The Barbados Community College is indeed a tertiary institution whose philosophy, policies and programmes provide an ideal atmosphere for the education and training of a competent and professional nurse, aware of her responsibility to and in the community and intellectually equipped to assume the duties demanded by her ever-changing role.
SUMMARY

This article outlines the recommendations made and action taken in the upgrading of nursing education in Barbados especially over the last decade. It examines the suitability of the Barbados Community College as an institution in which nursing education can take place especially in the context of new approaches to the planning of health services in the Caribbean. It is suggested here that the College provides an ideal atmosphere for the education and training of a competent and professional nurse.

REFERENCES


2. Barbados Community College Calendar 1970-71 p.16
