

Nursing Education Has Achieved Progress

Shahzadi Harun

This is the first part of the article by the Principal, College of Nursing Mohakhali, Dhaka. The concluding part will be published tomorrow.

NURSING is slowly emerging as a profession in Bangladesh. Nursing education is developing rapidly and will greatly augment the status of nursing and increase its ability to compete effectively with other professions in the recruitment of well educated and cultured women.

At the beginning of Pakistan period, Bangladesh had very few nurses and only one Nursing Institute, attached to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. In the mid-1960s two more Nursing Institutes were opened, one attached to Chittagong Medical College Hospital and the other attached to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. Five more Nursing Institutes at the Medical Colleges in Barisal, Mitford, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Rangpur followed between 1970 and 1971.

Twelve Nursing Institutes attached to District Hospitals, were opened between 1970 and 1980. In 1981, the Government sanctioned the creation of 18 more Nursing Institute attached to what were then sub-divisional hospitals. These hospitals have been upgraded to District Hospitals. In addition to the 38 Government Nursing Institutes four Nursing Institutes are run by Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs): Rajshahi Mission Hospital, Chandraghona Mission Hospital, Kumudini Hospital, and Holy Family. Many of the graduates of the NGO Nursing Institutes join government services. Recently one Army Nursing Institutes has been opened.

British Model

Basic nursing education in the 43 Nursing Institutes continues to be patterned on the British model, with student nurses serving as apprentices and, therefore, are responsible for providing the majority of the nursing staff for the hospital. Thus, in Bangladesh much of the education of nurses is under the control of the hospitals.

Basic nursing education is a four-year programme. The first three years are devoted to basic sciences such as microbiology, anatomy, sociology, physiology, pharmacology, and public health, and to general

nursing including medical, surgical, paediatric, maternity, and community health nursing. In the fourth year most nurses study midwifery. Other fourth year courses open to a few nurses include psychiatric nursing and orthopedic nursing. The four-year basic nursing training focuses mainly on the technical skills nurses need to provide patient care in the hospital. Relatively less time is allocated for acquiring theoretical knowledge and even less to exploring the social issues that confront nursing in particular and health care in general. This apprentice model of training with its emphasis on technical functions has serious implications for the development of nursing as a profession.

Upon completion of the first three years of basic nursing education, nurses are eligible to take the national examinations developed and conducted by the Bangladesh Nursing Council (BNC), which is the Registration Body for nurses. Following the fourth year of education, graduates take BNC examinations in the subject they have studied and upon passing them are eligible for registration as midwives, orthopedic nurses, psychiatric nurses, etc.

The Government of Bangladesh has set a target of 1135 student admission each year to the 38 Government Nursing Institutes for a total of 4540 enrollment in all four years of the nurses education programme. At present approximately 3242 students are enrolled in the 38 Government Nursing Institutes. There are approximately 6000 nurses working in government service and in the private sector in Bangladesh now. This is a ratio of approximately one nurse for every 22,000 population, a very low ratio. The government's goal in the Third Five Year Plan is for 10,000 active nurses by 1990 which will improve the ratio of nurses to population.

The Nursing profession in Bangladesh can advance if we can reduce

the constraints and restraints on the continued development of nursing education in the country. The serious constraint is the alienation of nursing education programme from the general education and local needs. The Nursing Science course has been included in the National Curriculum at the Secondary and Higher Secondary Education Boards, as are Home Economics and Social Welfare from 9th grade to 12th grade as multi-tract system in general education. This is a land mark in the Area of Nursing Profession in Bangladesh.

Higher Education

To meet people's needs for nursing services, nurses with advanced education in teaching, public health nursing, administration and research are needed in Bangladesh. Preparation for these roles requires education beyond the basic four-year nursing course. To provide this higher education, the College of Nursing, Mohakhali, Dhaka, was founded in 1972, with the assistance of the World Bank, WHO, and UNICEF. The College is the only institution for higher education for nurses in Bangladesh and so is the institution where most of Bangladesh's nurse teachers and nurse administrators are prepared.

The College of Nursing was recognised and affiliated as a Constituent College as well as an Institute under Dhaka University beginning in 1977. The College of Nursing curriculum was revised in the 1986-87 session and has been approved by the Faculty of Medicine, University of Dhaka. Because of its affiliation with Dhaka University, the College of Nursing is empowered to grant Bachelor of Nursing science in Bsc, Post basic, Public Health and Diploma in teaching and administration, Community Health Nursing and Family Welfare Visitor, Trainers training.

WHO has provided extensive technical assistance to nursing service

and education in Bangladesh since 1972, particularly in the areas of curriculum development and public health nursing. At present, one WHO Senior Nurse Educator, who has a Doctorate in Public Health teaches research and statistics courses and assists the faculty in research, public health nursing theory and practice, curriculum development, and evaluation.

At present the College offers two two-year post basic degree courses—one in Nursing and the other in Public Health Nursing. These degree courses include advanced nursing theory and practice, basic and social sciences, research, curriculum development, administration, Bengali and English. Currently 164 students are enrolled in these two courses.

The BSc course in Public Health Nursing emphasises Primary Health Care and work in the community. For example, a school health education programme has been incorporated into this course's and syllabus. On February 1985 a health education programme in three schools were begun by the Public Health Nursing Faculty and students at College of Nursing with the joint approval of the Ministries of Health and Population Control and the Ministry of Education. The schools are Adarsha Ucha Balika Bidyalai, Mohakhali Model High School, and Mohakhali IPH High School, each of which enrolls 2000 students in two shifts. This programme is the first school health programme of its kind in Bangladesh. The School Health Clinics are open one day a week. College of Nursing students are assigned to do assessments of height, weight, vision, speech, dental care, personal hygiene, and nutrition.

Through this school health programme over 6,000 students are given services in cooperation with teacher and parents. Public Health Nursing students from the College of Nursing have also provided health education for workers in the Kohinoor Group of Industries, Nabisco and other industries in the Tejgaon Industrial area of Dhaka. To meet the curriculum requirements of Industrial health, occupational health and health in the work-place.