

Historical Overview of Nursing Education in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

In the changing world, history is the key to understand the trend in any society. History of nursing education helps to understand how nursing education has progressed from past to present. The objective of this review article is to briefly describe the initiation and progression of nursing education in Nepal with special focus on trends in nursing education in Maharajgunj Nursing Campus, the first institution for nursing education in Nepal.

Initiation of Nursing Education in Nepal

Nursing education has more than six decades of history in Nepal starting from 1956. Before 1956, nursing service in Nepal was provided by foreign trained nurses. With the felt need for preparing nurses in Nepal, the first school of nursing now named as Maharajgunj Nursing Campus, was established in June 1, 1956 AD (Jestha 19, 2013 BS) under the Ministry of Health, Directorate of Health Services, with support from World Health Organization.¹ Late Lamu Amatya, who received nursing degree from Calcutta Medical College in 1954 AD, worked as the first in-charge of the school² and program was named as staff nurse training program. This school offered basic nursing program of three and half year duration with 15 students in the first intake.³ With the idea of bringing the nursing school near the clinical practice site i.e. Bir Hospital, this school, initially located in Surendra Bhawan, Sanepa, Lalitpur was shifted to Chhetrapati and then to Bir Hospital complex at Mahaboudha, Kathmandu. With the establishment of Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital, this school, the pioneer institution of nursing education in the country, was shifted to Maharajgunj as Maharajgunj Nursing Campus (MNC) in March 14, 1986 (Chaitra 1, 2042)³ In 1959 AD (2016 BS) another school of nursing (later named as Lalitpur Nursing Campus (LNC) was opened at Nir Bhawan, Lalitpur under United Mission to Nepal (UMN) program.

New Education System Plan and Nursing Education

Following the implementation of New Education System Plan in the country, Institute of Medicine (IOM) was established in 1972 AD (2029 BS) under Tribhuvan University (TU) with the mandate

to govern all health professionals' education programs in the country. Then, nursing education in Nepal which existed before the establishment of this institute also came under this institute. As a result pre-existing nursing schools came under TU, IOM and they were renamed as nursing campuses and Staff Nurses Training program as Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL) nursing program. The MNC became an IOM constituent campus and the LNC an affiliated campus. The duration of nursing program was changed from 3½ years to 3 years. Lalitpur Nursing Campus is under Patan Academy of Health Sciences since August 2015.⁴

Influence of Girl Education and Royal Involvement in Nursing Education

For many years from its inception, nursing education in Nepal remained a female oriented education and there was a gradual change in its entry requirement. During the early years, due to prevailing patriarchal society, the girls' education was low and nursing profession was not accepted well. These factors hindered in attracting candidates to join nursing. As a result it was difficult to fill up the intake quota and the entry qualification was kept as test pass until before 1969 AD (BS 2026). With increasing number of girls with higher education, the minimum entry qualification was increased to School Leaving Certificate (SLC) pass in 1969. From 1981 AD (2038 BS), the entry qualification was changed to SLC pass with second division marks. In 1990s along with entry qualification, an entrance examination was also introduced to select the best candidates in nursing education. Enrolment of late Princess Prekshya Rajya Laxmi Devi Shah in PCL nursing program in

1973 AD (2030 BS), has helped greatly in changing the social status of nursing education in Nepal.³

Trends in PCL Nursing Curriculum

Many changes occurred in nursing education after it came under TU, IOM. To get an equivalent status with other PCL programs of TU, PCL nursing curriculum was revised with addition of liberal arts subjects such as Nepali, English, Nepal Parichaya, as compulsory subjects. Behavioural Science and Applied Sciences like physics, chemistry and biology were also added in the nursing curriculum to broaden the students' understanding of human behaviour and application of scientific knowledge in nursing. PCL nursing curriculum which was initially clinical-focused was changed to learner-focused in 1976. In 1987 this curriculum was revised to make it primary health-care oriented with the aim of producing nurses with knowledge and skills to provide preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative care to individuals, families and communities. This curriculum was again revised in 2007 (2064 BS) to incorporate Skilled Birth Attendant (SBA) core skills along with addition of mental health nursing and geriatric nursing as per the changing health care need of the country and the global health care demands.

Trends in Nursing Education Institutions and Programs

Until 1980 AD, there were only two nursing campuses i.e. MNC and LNC to prepare nurses to serve in the country. In order to meet the increasing demand for nurses as a result of expansion of health services in the country, IOM upgraded some of the Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) and Community Medicine Assistant (CMA) campuses for PCL nursing program. These included upgrading Biratnagar ANM campus (established in 1966 AD i.e. 2023 BS) to Biratnagar Nursing Campus in 1981 AD (2038 BS), Pokhara CMA campus (established in 1982 AD i.e. 2039 BS) to Pokhara Nursing Campus in 1984 AD (2041 BS), Birgunj CMA campus (established in 1975 AD i.e. 2032 BS) to Birgunj Nursing Campus in 1986 AD (2043 BS) and Nepalgunj ANM campus (established in 1969 AD i.e. 2026 BS) to Nepalgunj Nursing Campus in 1987 AD (2044 BS).⁵ In 1989 AD (2046 BS) one more nursing campus i.e. Bir Hospital Nursing Campus was started under Ministry of

Health with affiliation from TU, IOM. This campus came under National Academy of Medical Sciences in 2002 (2059 BS).⁶ In the later decades education system was expanded in the country with the establishment of different universities and academies. Consequently nursing campuses are also expanded in the country.

Until early 1970s, there was only one level nursing program in the country i.e. PCL nursing program. Gradually nursing education programs were expanded from PCL level to bachelor level, master level and PhD level programs. In 1976 AD (2033 BS) two and half years Post-Basic Bachelor of Nursing (PBBN) program was started for the first time in midwifery⁷ in MNC with intake of 10 students to provide higher education opportunity in midwifery for the PCL nursing graduates. After completion of two batches, midwifery program was stopped and in March 1981 (Chaitra, 2037) PBBN program in community Health Nursing of 2 years duration was started with the intake size of 14 students and it continued for four batches as per the need of the country and the available faculty resource. In May, 1983 (Jestha, 2040) PBBN program in adult nursing was started with intake of 16 students and in February 1985 (Falgun, 2042) PBBN program in child health nursing with intake of 14 students were started and continued for three batches in both (MNC Record). However, there was mismatch found in the clinical placement of these PBBN graduates.

As a result of the mismatch of PBBN graduates in clinical placements, all PBBN curricula were reviewed in 1988 AD (2045 BS) and reorganized to form two track curriculum i.e. hospital nursing and community health nursing tracks with core courses in areas of teaching, leadership and management and research to enable graduates to be flexible and adaptable to any area of practice. This two-track curriculum was implemented from 1988. In 2000 AD (2057 BS) psychiatric nursing track was added to this curriculum. In 2013 AD (2070 BS) as per the feedback received from the PBBN graduates, and global health care need scenario, a major revision in PBBN curriculum took place with addition of basic sciences and geriatric nursing and five tracks i.e. midwifery, adult health nursing, child health nursing, psychiatric nursing and community health nursing with duration of program as 3 years. The curriculum

was renamed from PBBN to Bachelor of Nursing Science (BNS) curriculum. This BNS curriculum was implemented in IOM nursing campuses from the year 2013 AD (2070) and intake in 2 years PBBN program was stopped from the same year.

With the aim of bringing gender equality and positive change in nursing, previously female dominated nursing education was opened to male candidates in 1986 AD. A 10% quota from designated seats was allocated to male candidates in PCL nursing program. However, due to the pressure from community and dissatisfaction from students' side, after 4 batches of intake, this policy was stopped from 1990.³ Later on in 2018, by the decision of Nepal Nursing Council board meeting of June 19, 2018 (Ashar 5, 2075) nursing education was re-opened to male candidates with provision for 15% quota to male candidates in PCL and B Sc Nursing programs.⁸

Nursing teachers were also benefitted after the nursing program became university program. Need for strengthening of teacher capacity through further education and training was realized and during 1980s, two nursing teachers received PhD degree and more than 20 nursing teachers received master's degree from different universities outside Nepal. Truly saying, "*...the decade of 1980s can be remembered as the golden period for nursing education in Nepal*".¹ Then, these teachers greatly contributed in refining nursing curricula and improving its implementation in terms of classroom and clinical teachings.

Need for post-graduate level of nursing education in Nepal was felt and a feasibility study for initiation of master of nursing program was conducted in 1991 under the Nursing Education Department, IOM. The study indicated that with the expansion of health services, there would be a need for more nursing positions requiring higher level qualifications. The study also indicated that almost all (90.0%) of the PBBN graduates surveyed were interested in undertaking master's study in Nepal.⁹ As a result of this feasibility study, Master of Nursing Curriculum was developed with support from WHO and in April 15, 1995 AD (Baisakh 2, 2052 BS) MNC started Master of Nursing (MN) program in Women Health & Development specialty with intake of 4 students. In the subsequent years, Adult Nursing specialty (in April 2000), Child Health Nursing specialty (in April

2001), Psychiatric Nursing specialty (in April 2016) and Community Health Nursing specialty (in April 2020) were added to MN program in MNC. Currently in total 32 students are enrolled annually in MN program in MNC. By now, not only IOM constituent and affiliated colleges run the Masters level nursing program but also other educational institutions like BPKIHS, NAMS, PAHS and Kathmandu University have masters level nursing programs.

In 1996 another cadre of nursing program i.e. B Sc Nursing program was started in BPKIHS for the first time in the country. In IOM, it was started first in MNC in December 15, 2005 (Mangsir 30, 2062) with intake of 20 students. In the later years this program was initiated in other TU, IOM campuses as well as in other universities and academies. By now all nursing campuses under TU IOM have B.Sc. nursing program.

Another institution, the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) was established in the country in 1989 (2045 BS) as an autonomous body for the production of technical human resources including human resources in health required by the nation. As a consequence, TU decided to phase out all its PCL programs gradually and IOM abided by this decision phased out its PCL programs gradually from its constituent campuses. PCL nursing program was phased out from MNC and Pokhara Nursing Campus from the year 2015 AD (2072BS).¹⁰

Another milestone in nursing education was the provision of opportunity for nurses for the highest level of education i.e. Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in nursing in Nepal. TU, IOM started PhD program in nursing in MNC in February 1, 2012 (Magh 18, 2068 BS). By 2021, 4 candidates have completed PhD in nursing from MNC.

CONCLUSION

With increased demand for nursing education, country has succeeded in progressive expansion of nursing institutions under different universities and academies in the country. By now, nurses prepared in Nepal are serving not only in the country but outside country also. Now, there is a need to reflect back and take steps for quality nursing education to meet the demands of the competitive world. Nursing

campuses/colleges should foresee the problems and obstacles that are inevitable in their way and undertake timely remedial actions. With long history of existence of nursing education in Nepal, it is expected that this education will flourish further more during the years to come.

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