

Quality Assurance in Nursing Education



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Abstract

In all countries of the world, nurses are the largest group of health care professionals. The production of qualified nursing personnel is the responsibility of nursing institutes. Nursing institutions are required to develop their own mechanism for their quality assurance (QA) for quality nursing human resource production

QA can be internal and external. QA maintained by institution itself is called internal quality assurance and by external agency like nursing council is external quality assurance. For the internal QA, regular monitoring by the institute itself is necessary. Many institutes may not have a system of self assessment for quality. So this article is aimed to provide information to nursing institutes for internal quality assurance.

Introduction

Nursing is a career that combines scientific knowledge and technical skills to provide quality care. Nurses need to be knowledgeable, resourceful and they need to work with other health team members for the benefit of the patient. They are the health team members who spend the longest time with patients performing dependent, interdependent and independent functions (Badru, 2006). The nurse is a member of a collaborative health care team who functions within the legal/ethical framework to provide care to patients/clients in a dynamic health care system (Mgbekem and Samson, 2006). Health care consumers have great expectation from the nursing personnel. Although

nursing professionals are the major contributors of the health care system, they are facing the challenge to provide quality service. One of the solutions for this is the quality nursing education.

The goal of nursing education is to prepare nurses to carry out their roles and functions effectively as demanded by their profession. In the era of quality orientation, human rights and a consumer-driven society, the quest is for the best quality of nursing education. Quality is the extent of resemblance between the purpose of education and the care provided by the graduates as outcome of education. The nursing education institutions are expected to provide quality education and to produce qualified graduates who will meet the needs and expectations of society. Each institution is required to develop its own mechanism to ensure quality called quality assurance so the graduates attain adequate standards of education that is knowledge, skill and attitude to fulfill the need of the society. Quality assurance is a dynamic process that provides the nursing education institute/campus with tools that measure current performance levels and facilitate continuous improvement.

The field of QA is as old as modern nursing. Florence Nightingale in 1860 introduced the concept of quality in nursing when she started an institution of nursing (Koziers et al, 2004). The traditional focus of nursing education was to teach the knowledge and skills that would enable a nurse to practice in the hospital setting. However in present situation, nursing personnel have to respond to new scientific knowledge and technologies, cultural, political and socio-economic changes in society. Nursing education curricula are continually revised to meet these changing needs (Raj, 2008).

In Nepal, nursing education was begun in 1956. During these 50 years, nursing education has gone through various ups and downs and new trends have been seen in its quality. Previously only the government and public institutions were available for nursing education. But today different universities and private sectors also have entered in this field (K.C, 2006). There are mushrooming of nursing campuses specially in urban areas of the countries with the questionable infrastructure for nursing education including hospital for clinical practice (Sapkota, 2010, and Rai, 2010).

Quality Assurance System

QA system is maintained internally by the institute/campus itself and externally by the regulating authority like Nursing Council. Internal QA is the audit and assessment done by a team from within the organization. The nursing institution develops its own goals and objectives relevant to local and national health care needs

and the methods to achieve these goals. It conducts periodic reviews to assess the extent of its goal achievement and effectiveness of teaching learning methods, the facilities, and resources for implementation of the curriculum. The institution may invite external reviewers to assist in the review (WHO, 2007).

External QA refers to the audit and assessment done by a team from outside the organization through objective evaluation. External QA team includes Nursing Council, Ministry of Education, affiliating university or organization like CTEVT etc. External analysis is needed to confirm that nursing institutes' responsibilities are being properly fulfilled which provides reasonable evidence that competent and qualified nursing graduates are being produced to meet the needs of the nation (WHO, 2007).

For the purpose of external QA, there should be an independent regulatory body (*accrediting authority* or *QA agency*) that carries out its functions in a continuous, transparent way. The external agency usually includes representatives of the universities/institutions, the nursing professional, the health care authorities, the registration authorities and the community. In Nepal, Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) is the authorized body for ensuring quality nursing education. All the nursing institution should follow the rules and regulation provided by NNC Act. Feasibility study for establishment of program, counseling to the affiliation authorities, accreditation of the program are some of the quality mechanism

used by NNC to ensure the quality of nursing education (WHO, 2007).

The auditors examine whether the campus has maintained the standard set in the accreditation checklist and simply checks a “yes” or “no” column. The assessment judges the level and provides the score indicating the level of quality. The institute must review the results and improve the quality in areas that are not in standard level, while maintaining the quality of those that already meet the standards.

The scope of assessment can include curriculum, student guidance, teaching and assessment methods, teaching and learning environment, available resources and standards, quality control and procedures, number of students who are passing the examination,

receiving a nursing license upon graduation, getting jobs upon graduation, and number of research grants and number of publications in journals (Mgbekem and Samson, 2006)). The assessment results range from “excellent”, to “improvement required”. In case of a grade of “improvement required”, a repeat visit after one year is planned to assess the status of improvement of recommendations.

The QA in nursing education is thus responsibility of the institute/campus itself, Nursing Council, and health education policy of the government and consumer as well. Quality, quality assurance, and accreditation are interrelated with each other and is a continuous process which is depicted in ‘figure 1’.

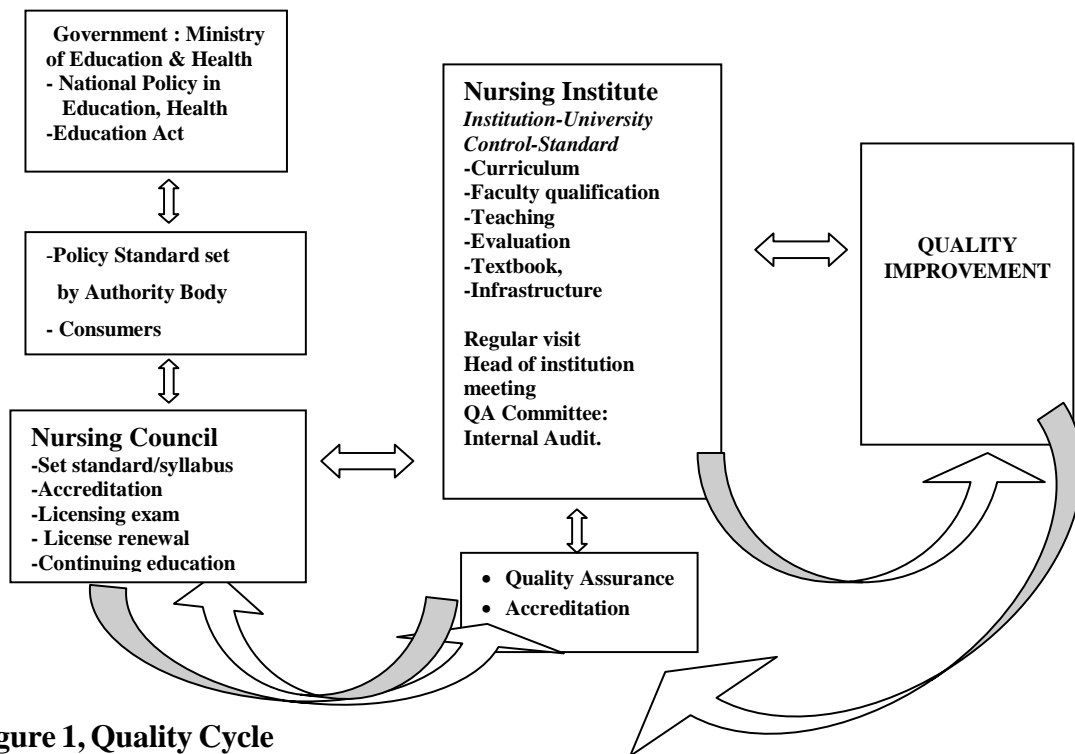


Figure 1, Quality Cycle

Adopted from: WHO, 2008. Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Nursing and Midwifery Educational Institutions: Report of Regional Workshop. Regional Office for South East Asia.

The figure shows that government that is Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Population formulates policy, act, standard based on professional standard, consumer's demand and expectation etc. Nursing Council formulates standard, accreditation criteria and other mechanism congruent with the government policy and standard professional requirement. Nursing Council as the main authority body also visits the campuses regularly to evaluate objectively the education quality situation of the campuses according to set criteria. In other side, nursing institutes/campuses also apply quality assurance mechanism by maintaining standard in curriculum, faculty qualification, teaching, evaluation, text book infrastructure according to nursing council and university standard guideline. It shows that government, Nursing Council, institute/campuses and even consumers have interrelated roles for quality assurance in nursing education.

Procedures of QA

1. *Self-study by the Nursing Institute/ Campus*

In self-study, nursing campus bring together the representatives from the administration, the academic faculty, students, and those associated with its teaching facilities and other constituents. The committee collects and reviews data about the nursing campus and

the educational programme based on quality assurance guidelines, to identify the strengths and problem areas. They also develop strategies to ensure that the strengths are maintained and problems are addressed. The campus usually sets an internal task force chaired by the Campus Chief or Head of Academic Affairs.

2. *External Quality Assurance*

The institution/campus submits its self-study report to the accrediting authority. Accrediting authority includes government body like Nursing Council, Education Ministry through affiliating University or organization like CTEVT etc. It constitutes a panel of five reviewers with a balance of expertise in the various areas health.

A visit is usually arranged by the nursing campus. The visit should be sufficiently long (about three days) to enable the reviewer to understand the educational programme, to visit the physical facilities and to interact with students, faculty, hospital staff and administrators. The panel assess whether the campus is operating within the educational guidelines and is meeting its own objectives. It also clarify issues identified from the campus self-study report and database and prepare a report for submission.

Nepal Nursing Council (NNC) Act has made a mandatory provision that prior to granting approval to establish and operate a nursing programme in Nepal, the concerned body (e.g. CTEVT) should consult the council. The council examines the standard and infrastructure of the proposed nursing campus on the basis of the criteria and provides its opinion on that matter. The concerned body

reaches to a decision in granting approval for establishment and operation of the institution on the basis of opinion of the council. Therefore, the concerned authority that has power to grant approval to establish and operate any nursing campus has to have prior opinion of the council and has to do accordingly before granting approval.

3. *Accreditation*

The accrediting authority makes a final decision on accreditation based on the report submitted by external QA panel. The period of accreditation granted, usually varies from 5 to 10 years. The accrediting authority may revisit the institute during the period of accreditation. If the campus does not achieve the required progress, the accrediting authority may cancel or reduce the accreditation. It may also impose additional conditions.

4. *Quality Assurance in Approving new Nursing Courses*

A panel of reviewers is usually constituted to study the broad outline of the new course, which is then submitted by the nursing campus well before (at least 18 months) the new course is to be introduced. A site visit may be arranged when the campus is ready for such a visit (WHO, 2008).

Roles of Nursing Institution (Campus) and Regulatory Bodies

The Nursing campus and Nursing Council (NC) should work together for QA of nursing education. The role and responsibilities of each organization are following:

S.N.	Nursing Council (NC)	Nursing Institution/Campus
1	Has Nursing Act that supports the role of NC in quality of education and accreditation of nursing campuses	Has the campus mission or objective of high quality of education.
2	Sets standard of nursing campuses	Operates/ develops based on the set criteria.
3	Sets standard of nursing curriculum for different types of programmes.	Develops curriculum based on the agreed national standard.
4	Approves opening of new nursing campuses.	Applies for opening of the new campus and implements when the approval from NC is granted.
5	Issues a regulation for curriculum approval and approves the new/revised curriculum	Submits a new/revised curriculum to NC for approval before implementation.

6	Withdraws/closes the campus or programme, if standard is inadequate.	Closes the campus or programme as per NC's order.
7	Develops accreditation procedures.	Develops internal QA system and has quality audit and assessment.
8	Visits campus after receiving application for accreditation from nursing campus.	Applies for accreditation and prepares for the visit.
9	Decides on the number of years of accreditation.	Improves quality of education based on the recommendations.
10	Monitors quality of education and enhances quality of nursing education to meet universal standards.	Improves quality continuously and maintains educational and professional standards.

(WHO, 2008)

Conclusion

Nursing is a profession which concerned with the health of the people. Quality education has significant role to promote the quality nursing practices, so that improvement in health of the people. Nursing education institution has responsibility to produce qualified nursing graduates through quality assurance mechanism. Quality assurance is the one of the mechanisms developed by educational institutions to ensure that graduates attain adequate standards of education to fulfill the need of the society. Some aspects of quality assurance are objectives, curriculum, qualification of teachers, teaching learning process, educational resources, assessment techniques etc. Quality assurance includes internal and external mechanism. Internal QA is maintained by the institute itself and external QA is the responsibility of the accrediting organization in the country like nursing council.

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(क) साधारण बचत हिसाबमा दैनिक मौज्जातमा १० प्रतिशत न्यूनतम मौज्जात: रु.१०००० प्रिमियम बचत हिसाबमा दैनिक मौज्जातमा ११ प्रतिशत न्यूनतम मौज्जात: रु.१०,०००००
(ख) महुती निक्षेप तर्फ

अवधि	३/३ महिनामा ब्याज लिएमा	१ वर्षमा ब्याज लिएमा	एकमुछ ब्याज लिएमा
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१ वर्ष	११.००	-	१२.५०
२ वर्ष	११.५०	१२.५०	१३.००
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४ वर्ष	१२.५०	१३.००	१३.७५
५ वर्ष	दोब्बर मुक्तानी (न्यूनतम मौज्जात रु. ५,००,०००००)		

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—कर्पोरेट महुती निक्षेपतर्फ रु.५० लाख वा सो भन्दा बढीको निक्षेपमा १३.५० प्रतिशत त्रैमासिक ब्याज ।

(ग) कर्जा तर्फ

क्र.सं.	कर्जा शीर्षक	प्रस्तावित प्रतिशत
१	घरेलु / हस्तकला	१५.५०
२	हायर पचेज	१७.५०
३	आवास	१७.५०
४	जग्गा	१८.५०
५	औद्योगिक / व्यापारिक	१६.५०
६	क. सुरक्षण पत्रमा कर्जा (गेयर, सहकारी र अन्य सुरक्षण पत्रहरू) ख. सुन चाँदी कर्जा	१७.५० १६.००
७	विपन्न बग क. व्यक्तिगत ख. संस्थागत	१४.०० ७.००
८	अन्य क. निर्माण तथा ठेक्का ख. ब्रिज फाइनान्स	१७.५० १८.००
९	महुती रसिदमा कर्जा	थप + २
१०	व्यक्तिगत	१७.५०