Nursing is a constantly evolving profession. Tremendous changes have taken place in nursing during the past 50 years. Today’s nurses and nursing students face a lot of challenges. With globalisation, technological advancements, changing demands of consumers of health care, changing trends in the field of medicine and nursing, nurses have to perform many new and challenging roles in addition to the traditional caring roles. Today’s nursing students are going to be future leaders of the profession and we expect competent nurses with leadership qualities and right attitude to do the best if placed under favourable conditions of training and service.

Let us examine some of the issues and challenges faced by today’s nursing students.

1. **Pattern of nursing education:** There is no uniform pattern of nursing education in the country. The entry qualification for all the basic courses in Nursing is the same. They practice as registered nurses under the same level even though the duration of the course, syllabus and scheme of examination are different. Nursing is the only profession that claims professional status that does not require the bachelorette degree on the minimum education qualification for entry into practice.

2. **Gap between theory and practice:** There is a wide disparity between theory and practice. There is lack of coordination and collaboration between nursing education and nursing service. What is learned in the theory classes is not actually practiced in the clinical setting due to various reasons. Students somehow earn a degree or diploma even without any exposure to the clinical field.

3. **Technological advancement:** One of the challenges faced is the imbalance between the use of advanced technology in health care and the human needs of the consumers. The time and attention demanded to operate, monitor and maintain technology can dehumanise the client care, focusing more on machinery than the individual. Nursing is basically a caring profession based on humanistic philosophy and the student should be given opportunity to practice high-touch and hi-tech care.

4. **Commercialisation of nursing education:** Many nursing schools and colleges have been opened basically with profit motive. Students are given meagre amount as stipend and utilised as quasi employees to supplement the hospital work force. About 80 percent of the work load in majority of the hospitals is shared by the nursing students.

5. **Dilution of standards by accrediting bodies:** Many nursing colleges and schools have been started without parent hospitals. As a result many institutions affiliate to one hospital which will definitely affect the quality of training imparted to the student. Learning in such situations is dangerous. It is a threat to the people as they are exposed to unskilled and unsafe care.

6. **Shortage of nursing faculty:** Many schools and colleges are not having qualified and experienced faculty which affects the quality of education. There is lack of appropriate role models in nursing service and education. Fake nursing teachers and unethical practices by nursing faculty are a serious threat to the profession.

7. **Stressors faced by students**
   - Academic stress - students are overloaded with assignments and extra duty hours including night duty
   - Lack of supervision and guidance in the clinical field
   - Environmental stress
   - Lack of extracurricular activities
   - Negative feedback
   - Compulsory bond system

All these factors will lead to demoralisation of the nursing students.

**Suggestions**

1. There shall be a uniform pattern of nursing education throughout the country. High power committee has recommended that there shall be only two levels of nursing education - the professional nurse and the practical nurse. It is high time to implement the above recommendation.

2. Quality control by state and national councils. Councils should take strict measures to ensure that the prescribed norms are followed.

3. The Nursing Service sector should be strengthened.

4. Nursing policies/Nursing Practice Act to be framed.

5. Continuing Education and Research activity to be promoted.

6. Reorganisation of Nursing curriculum.

7. Student should be given student status and not to be treated as employees. Their curricular and extracurricular activities should be systematically organised and implemented.

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