

SOCIETAL DETERMINANTS FOR NURSING EDUCATION

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Societal Determinants for Nursing Education is the second in the series of articles on the subject of Nursing Education in The Development of India, written by Miss Ruth Harnar. In this article, Miss Harnar has discussed about the various factors which influence the education and particularly the nursing education. "The whole process of Nursing Education must be a dynamic and changing one because society constantly changes".

The next article in the series, which will appear in the March issue, will be on the 'Social Forces and factors influencing nursing in India'. Ed.

In *Nursing Reconsidered, A Study of Change*, Brown has pointed out that nursing as well as other professions tends to assume that it has "a unique contribution to make to society",¹⁴ and that only nurses can decide what contributions would be best and how they should be made. This attitude in a developing country results in a handicap in achieving cooperative relationships necessary for working in a team, and also often fails to recognize the strength and importance of social trends impinging on nursing.¹⁵

Several such trends occurring in the United States are described: the growth of population, change in the distribution of population according to location and numbers in each age group, the affluent society, the recognition of poverty, the social revolution involving minority groups and youth, Federal Health legislation, increasing knowledge and health research, and the trend toward better professional preparation of nurses, including advanced and continuing education in all fields.¹⁶

The Florence Nightingale Foundation in two publications, *Basic Nursing Education* and *Post-Basic Nursing Education* stressed the importance of the influence of cultural, social and economic factors in Nursing. A great variety of general factors are described, but some were selected as more specific ones influencing the development of nursing: the status and role of women, the traditions and status of occupations, education—especially the education of women, and economic factors such as industrialization, urbanization, economic planning for health and conditions of work.¹⁷

In describing the world-wide crisis in education, Coombs termed it a disparity between educational systems and their environments. This has been caused by rapid developments in society and inherent inertia in educational systems which causes a lag in adapting to changes in science and technology, change in economic and political affairs, in demographic and social structures. The inertia of societies themselves—"the heavy weight of traditional attitudes, religious customs, prestige and incentive patterns, and institutional

structures has blocked them from making the optimum use of education and educated man-power to foster national development".¹⁸

There is an intimate inter-relationship of all these factors; so it is difficult to single out those which are most important for description. But in order to clarify the discussion, this has been done, with the knowledge that each one is influenced by many other forces.

The model in figure 3, "Relationships of societal determinants of National Policies and Nursing Goals", is an attempt to give some order to the selected major facets which have influenced nursing and nursing education in India, and which must be considered in planning the objectives and content of the curriculum, as well as the nursing and other health care services.

The three major headings, Historical (Religious, Cultural and Social Values), Political Influences, and Economic Crisis, each are connected by arrows to factors most closely inter-related to them. Other arrows between the various factors are only an indication of some influences which in reality must be thought of as forming a network of forces mutually affecting each other in various degrees.

Nurses in India involved in planning, curriculum development and continuing education for all levels of nursing and "para-nursing" personnel should clearly understand and take into account the factors in society related to nursing and the nursing role if the profession is to make a worth-while contribution to the India of today, and tomorrow.

Significant Influences in the Development and Patterns in Nursing Education.

The major influences which cannot be ignored in studying the *historical* development of nursing, and which would be given much greater attention in planning for the education of nursing personnel to meet present and future health needs in a country are: The status and role of women, traditions and status of nursing as an occupation, education, especially the education of women, the growth of population, and

changes in the geographical distribution and in the composition of age groups, social revolutions, the economic factors of industrialization and urbanization, and distribution of wealth, accepted political beliefs and perceptions of the role of the State in the life of the people, expanding knowledge and medical technology and how it is used for the public welfare.

These and other less influential factors have been termed "social determinants" of nursing education and they are intimately inter-related, changing each other as well as bringing about change in the way nurses are educated. (See Figure 3.)

The whole process of nursing education must be a dynamic and changing one because society constantly changes, but there is a danger that action taken to meet particular problems at particular times may become set patterns, and needed innovative change becomes difficult to bring about.

An example is the pattern of education for various categories of nursing personnel in India shown in Figure 4, "A career ladder for nursing". Goals and curriculum guides designed to raise the level of nursing education and bring about some kind of minimum standards into nursing services, as a protection to the

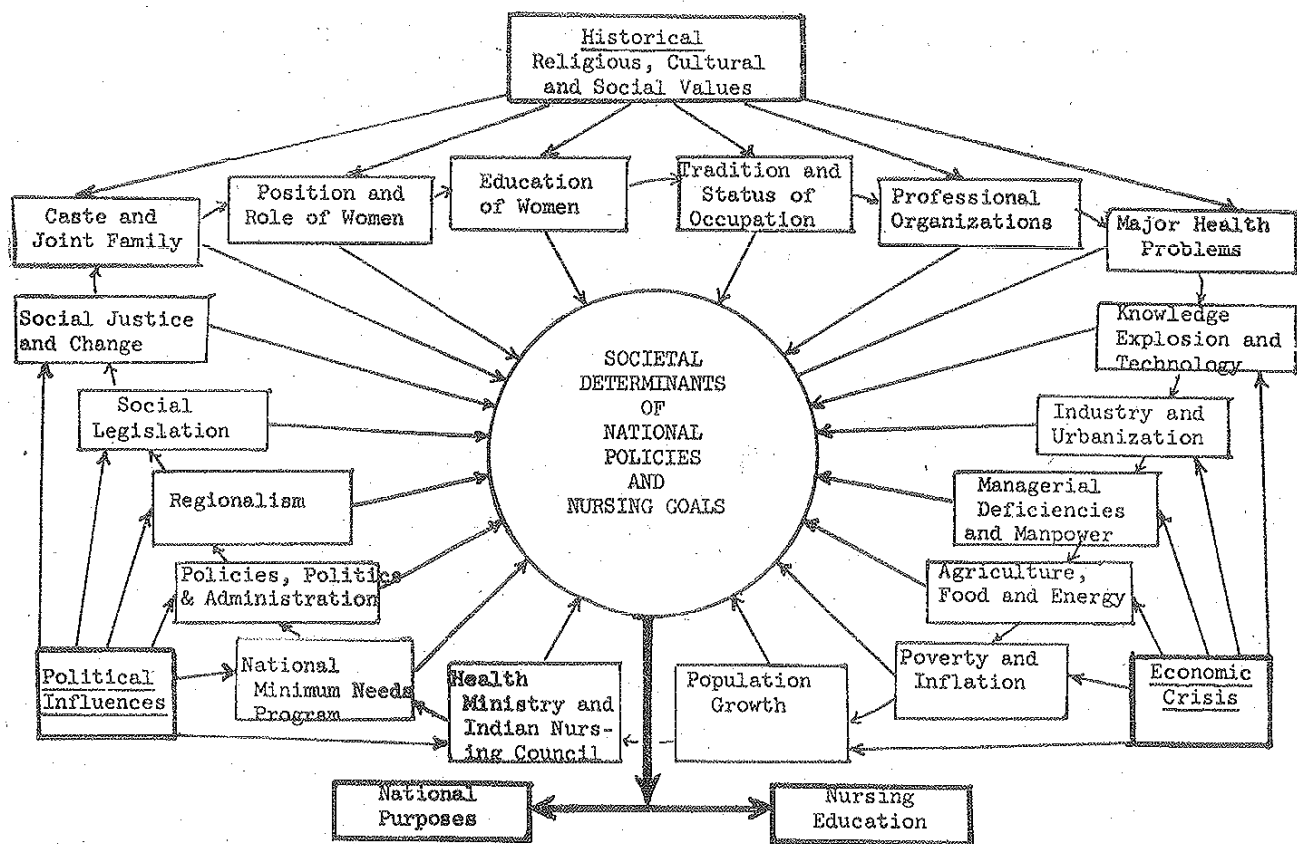


Fig. 3. Relationships of societal determinants to national purposes and nursing goals

14. Esther Lucile Brown, *Nursing Reconsidered, A Study of Change*, Part 1, "The Professional Role in Institutional Nursing", (Philadelphia. J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970), p. 2.
15. Ibid., pp. 2-3.
16. Ibid., pp. 2-13.
17. F.N.I.F., *Basic Nursing Education*, pp. 26-30.
18. Coombs, *The World Educational Crisis*, pp. 2-4.