

ASSOCIATION AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

Now-a-days, under compelling circumstances, some of the professional associations have started using the negative attitudes such as strikes, gheraos, work-to-rule method, etc. The nurses' association should not adopt these negative approaches even under compelling circumstances, says Mrs. RAJAMMA PHILIP, Nursing Sister, PGI, Chandigarh.

BEFORE bringing about any change in an association, it is essential to know what is an association, what are the characteristics of it and its true image in order to enable us to bring about any change. Let us now examine what is an association and/or professional association.

An association is an organisation of people with a common purpose and a formal structure. The association, whether rich or poor, new or old, special or general, is always a result of dedicated, selfless and voluntary efforts.

Professional Association

Professional association is one which is engaged in one of the specialised professions or in an occupation requiring a high level of training and proficiency. One of the characteristics of a profession is that its practitioners tend to band together for mutual assistance in solving problems connected with their labours.

Paten has stated the following six attributes which mark off a group of persons and professionals in character :

1. A body of scientific knowledge as a common possession and extended by united efforts.
2. A statement of conduct based on courtesy, honour, and ethics which guides the practitioner in the profession in relation with clients, colleagues and the public.
3. An educational process based on the body of knowledge in ordering which the professional group has a recognised responsibility.
4. A standard of educational qualifications for admission to the professional group based on character, training and proved competence.

5. Recognition of one's status by colleagues or state as a basis of good standing.

6. Organisation of the professional group devoted to its common advancement and its social duty rather than the maintenance of an economic monopoly.

In the modern world of improvement of science and technology it is essential for the people of various professions to get together and plan their activities to safeguard and to promote the interests of a particular profession which they follow. To take a few examples, there are labour unions which look after the interests of labourers. But in professional associations like Teachers' Association, Medical Association, Students' Association, etc., which look after the interests of teachers, doctors and students, this includes more than what is in the trade union activities. Nurses in India have felt the need for such an association since 1902. A group of Nursing Superintendents first planned to form an association which later emerged as The Trained Nurses' Association of India.

What is the image of a Professional Association and a Trade Union ?

Prestige Hierarchy

The image of the profession has come in the prestige hierarchy and has been based on and received subsequent prestige from the older professions of medicine, law and ministry and has included an overt goal of service to mankind. The service ideal is implemented through higher education, keeping up with new developments and, if necessary, self-sacrifice, such as low salaries and long hours of duty. However, the image purveyed to the public and to persons being recruited is one of service. The association negotiates with the administration to "uphold the dignity of the profession".

The image of the union, on the other hand, has come to be associated with blue collar occupations located lower in the prestige hierarchy. The image carries the idea of an overt goal of economic improvement of its members with primary concern, due wages, hours of duty, and other benefits. In achieving position, seniority and experience take priority over education and knowledge of new developments. Unions have preserved in being what they are, no more and no less, largely instruments for protecting and enhancing the immediate economic interests of members. The union agitates by strikes, 'dharnas' and violence at times to attain unrealistic demands.

Within the nursing profession, especially in India, traditional images of both the profession and the union are taking place. The image changes may be due to competition between the two models for the allegiance of nurses. 'Nursing Association' which works for better organisation of hospitals and patient care and development of nursing practice and education are no exception to other professional associations.

Now-a-days, under compelling circumstances, some of the professional associations have started using the negative attitudes such as strikes, gheraos, work-to-rule method etc., as the last method to achieve their fundamental rights. The nurses' association should not use these negative attitudes even under compelling circumstances. Nursing is a noble profession and as such requires dedication, patience, perseverance, satisfaction, selflessness and suffering on the part of patients and community.

Whither TNAI ?

How can nurses bring about changes in the professional association—TNAI ?

The associations are judged from the variety of functions they perform.

The following can be enumerated as some of the changes:

1. Unite all persons interested in the profession by membership. Make it a point to get TNAI membership before getting enrolment or even admission to higher posts.
2. Give publicity to nursing by organising nursing exhibitions like family welfare, vaccination, etc. or festivals in the schools and colleges about first aid, diabetics, etc.
3. Work for the improvement of professional prestige by improving working condition of the hospitals. Avoid having any bad experience to the patient and be familiar with hospital staff.
4. Work for the adoption of Nursing Council Act to keep up the standard of nursing education.
5. Create and publish professional literature, e.g., anecdotes, short stories, articles from own experience with the patient.
6. Conduct study and research for the advancement of Nursing Science, and enhance professional education.
7. Study the latest ideas of nursing about open heart surgery, coronary care unit, nursing administration and others.
8. Bring members into close relationship with one another, with Government, eminent persons in other fields and members of the other associations at national and international levels.
9. Work for the standardisation of the nursing practices throughout the country, e.g., clerical work and other non-nursing duties deputed to others.
10. Find out solutions for the immediate professional problems.

11. The Association can be materially benefited by a sound and active public relations policy. Therefore, it is essential to have a Public Relations Adviser—a consultant who will serve the Association in a part-time capacity, at least.

12. Promote coverage of professional interest over Radio/Television.

13. Promote international relations by sending delegates representing the Association who are capable and active.

14. Establish Nursing awards for the active and efficient members.

15. Organise conferences at local, district, state, national and international levels.

16. Encourage a nuclear form of association: In the Departments and Wards, Ward Sisters should play an important role to enrol more members and actively participate in other activities of the Association.

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