

Nursing As Part Of General Education

NO DEMOCRATIC government, which is dedicated to the ideal of the greatest good of the greatest number, can afford to neglect the physical welfare of its people. That is why the Directive Principle of our Constitution incorporate a policy on this subject. The programme of public health covers a wide area, and includes not only the actual treatment of the sick but also advance planning for prevention and control of disease.

With the spread of education, and the increasing awareness of their rights, the people at large are becoming more and more conscious of their health needs, of their right to use the services available to meet those needs. For such services to be effective and readily available an elaborate programme of pre-planning is required, and it is necessary to relate this part of welfare activities with the other programmes of social uplift like school and college education.

Nutrition

Millions of people in our part of the world are in a state of chronic under-nutrition and mal-nutrition not because of poverty alone, but due to shortage of food alone, but because of superstitious ignorance. Better health for the family depends upon the adoption of a scientific approach to the feeding of the family. This requires not only a better knowledge of the latent values of different foodstuffs but also a knowledge of new food substitutes and of better methods of cooking to conserve the nutritious elements of food.

Nursing is not merely the art of administering medicine to or taking measurements of the patient. The

The noble ministry of the nurse is second only to the divine art of healing. Both in the East and the

West, a heavenly origin has been ascribed to the profession of medicine, but it was only about a hundred years ago that the true significance of the noble profession of nursing was first realized. It was in the middle of the nineteenth century that Florence Nightingale elevated the profession of nursing from the traditional drudgery of the lower classes to the chosen profession of the educated and the upper classes.

I sometimes wonder why nursing has been restricted to only hospitals and nursing homes. Nursing, so far as it involves care of other human beings, is a primary function of every one; and every mother

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and every father is primarily a nurse. The duties of parenthood automatically involve the duties of nursing, and the rearing of families is too important a subject to be treated casually, and parents must acquire knowledge and training in the fundamentals of natural, physical and social sciences. In short, another craft and child-rearing today are almost synonymous with an exercise in scientific nursing, as well as an exercise of the principles of a liberal education.

One of the primary functions of education is to train the mind and to develop the latent faculties of the individual. For centuries, the aim of education, especially in the West, was the "production of a gentleman" by expanding—his intellectual horizon and raising his cultural level. This type of education was known as liberal education, and has always been considered as separate from the comparatively recent development

what is known as Professional education. These two types of education are now complementary to each other and the isolation between the two is artificial.

Educational thinkers all over the world are already realising the necessity of imparting a job-orientation to the educational curriculum, and I have no hesitation in saying that an orientation towards training in health services deserves priority over all other kinds of orientation. Though the 19th century bourgeoisie contempt for the profession of nursing has now largely disappeared, there is still a tendency to feel that the profession of nursing requires only a rudimentary base in general education. This approach is incorrect and anachronistic, because it does not recognise the needs of the changing times. The duties of the nurse are becoming more and more specialised and it is necessary to handle increasingly sophisticated apparatus and machinery in hospitals. The elementary base of general education is therefore, no longer adequate to sustain the specialised nature of the duties of the nurse. It is, therefore, necessary to evolve an integrated outlook with regard to professional education viz-a-viz general education, and to determine a higher base of normal education for those who are to embark upon professions like nursing. It is true that subjects like first-aid, child care, and nursing are already a part of the curriculum of schools, but they are of a very elementary nature and do not fulfil the purpose of imparting a health orientation to general education to such an extent as to prepare the students' mind for the possible selection of a career in the health services. I suggest that the time has come when the Health Department and the Education department should evolve an integrated and complementary programme which should

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Excerpts from a talk by Mrs. G. Parampal Singh, Director of Public Instructions, Punjab Higher Secondary Education.

Management or clerical functions are essential components of the machinery in the ultimate care to be given to a person, but that is not nursing. Nursing is what the nurse does to the individual during his state of dependency on her for his needs until he is helped to become independent and capable of taking care of his needs on his own. The value that the nurse places on human dignity has much to enhance or degrade the attitude she develops towards the style of her practice. Thus the correct attitude towards nursing transcends many obstacles and makes nursing into an art as well as science.

The educational needs for such a nurse are to be made at the level of a University. The problems, to a certain extent, arise from the nature of traditional hospital school programme which is isolated from any system of higher education and from their unsuitability with regard to the preparation of nurses for their work in modern health services. The facts inherent in the traditional hospital school system are that nursing education is given in the form of an on-the-job training, being paid for the services which places the students on an employer-employee relationship, and the patient a commodity. In this system of education the demands of service usually have priority over those of education. The very low status given to working women outside their home, and the low achievement in education among women continue to perpetuate a poor image of the nurse to our own people of this great country. This is both a perplexing and persistent problem facing the nurse educators.

One way out of this confounded situation is to upgrade the entrance requirements for schools of nursing to higher secondary level with a good percentage of marks and affiliate excellent hospital schools of nursing to the various universities. This will consequently set right the disparities and lacunae with regard to qualification of teaching faculty, requirement of students, and also help the required

standard of teaching facilities and enrichment of the curriculum as a whole.

Once the undergraduate programme for preparing basic nurses in our country is streamlined on par with accepted systems of higher education, the postgraduate programme will lend itself to preparing nurses for leadership position in teaching, administration and continue to practice in specialized areas of nursing.

At the basic level in a University there is a chance for an inter-disciplinary approach to the organization of nursing curriculum.

At the university level the idea of continuing education and part-time education, and extension service administration has a chance to be experienced.

Nursing Education could be on an extending continuum ranging from auxilliary nurse training to preparation at the doctoral level university faculty, top level administrators and researchers. Differentiation of function becomes a desirable and necessary corollary of the complex and rapidly changing society in which we live. The auxilliary training can be streamlined and included in the system of secondary education and the professional education streamlined into the system of university education. This step will put the nursing education in general on an educational continuum starting from 9th Class onwards. The students of the secondary school will have a certificate fit to continue university education as well as a certificate that will qualify them for employment.

Once this is done, while being employed, she could take part-time courses, evening college courses, and thus continue higher education, depending upon the individual's ability to pursue higher education.

By this set up the constant unnerving question of 'which is the best programme' would appear illogical to the person asking. It is not possible to make valid comparisons between unlike things. We need both the auxilliary and the

professional nurse. By recognising their essential differences in character and level of education the kinds of ability required for successful completion, the function for which each can and should prepare, we may be able to attract to nursing a much broader segment of the population than we are now doing.

In a free atmosphere of learning for the pursuit of knowledge, nursing studies and research work would begin to grow. This would, in turn, strengthen the undergraduate programme for the preparation of nurses.

Graduates of such a university programme are more likely to deliver the quantity and quality of nursing care needed in our dynamic free country.

If our national demands are for quality nursing and if our promising women folk are to come forward to give this high quality of care then the society must strive to strengthen the educational system of nursing under the auspices of university education.

General Education—

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provide a higher base of general education for the profession of nursing and a higher level of nursing and health orientation in the programme and curriculae of general education.

In the integrated programme the establishment of separate nursing institutions may become obsolete to a great extent and the present level of the training of nursing will become a part of a co-ordinated curriculum for the training of teachers. This will entail a reshaping and an expansion or establishment of separate wings attached to the Training College as is done in Western Countries.

In the Education Department, a health orientation of teachers' training will enhance employment opportunities, and the Health Department, on the other hand, will benefit from this integrated programme in the form of a larger turn-out of trained as well as better educated nurses.