

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE

BY K.C. AGGARWAL*

As biological, physical, and behavioural sciences are advancing and as patient/community health care is becoming complex, nursing profession is trying to keep up its standards of nursing care by introducing different courses of study. There are divergent views regarding these different courses of study, but definitely there are basic differences between various courses inspite of many similarities in them.

Nursing profession is passing at present through an era of academic excellence. As profession is trying hard to cope up with the changes in health and allied professions, many programmes of study in this field are fast emerging, ranging from Diploma in nursing to Doctorate programmes in Nursing Education/Doctorate of Philosophy in Nursing. As different courses of study are fast emerging, the opinions of nursing authorities have come into focus about these courses. In the views of some authorities in nursing, there are almost no differences between Diploma in nursing and B. Sc. Nursing (Four year) and Post Certificate/Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing, B.Sc. Nursing (Post Basic) and M.N./M.Sc. programmes. But it is my firm belief that there are basic differences between these programmes inspite of many inherent similarities in them.

There are no two opinions that schools of nursing graduates are the main source of nursing manpower in this country and that they are qualified registered professional nurses, but due to advancement in medical and behavioural sciences, there are many shortcomings in diploma nursing programmes. Diploma graduates know well to perform nursing activities skillfully but largely remain ignorant about the why of activities. In schools of nursing somehow creative minds of the students do not develop to a great extent because their education is revolved round routine work of the hospital. The students lack the

knowledge of behavioural sciences whereas B. Sc. Nursing programmes are based on sound foundations of physical, biological and behavioural sciences. In B. Sc. Nursing programmes deliberate attempts are made to develop creativeness in the students. Both courses prepare first level professional practitioners of nursing. In diploma programmes, hospital service is the main aim or focus and student education is secondary whereas in B. Sc. Nursing programmes, education is the primary purpose and the aim of clinical experience is to further the understanding of concepts in nursing and enhance theoretical knowledge of the students.

Some of the nursing educators and administrators believe that B.Sc. Nursing Post Basic and B.Sc. Nursing (4 years) are identical. In my opinion they are identical in the sense that both are first degree programmes in nursing but basically they are quite different from one another in objectives, in teaching approaches, in the background and experiences of the students. Again, in the views of some authorities, the aims of B.Sc. Nursing Post Basic is to fill the gap between the contents in Diploma Nursing and B.Sc. Nursing (4 year) programmes, but it is my belief that an attempt is made to fill the gap in knowledge and understanding of the concepts of patient and community care but the objectives of Post Basic B. Sc. Nursing are to prepare capable nurse practitioners, nursing service administrators, and nurse educators. Hence both can be said to be preparing first level practitioners of nursing in the hospital and the community.

According to views of some of the educators and students of nursing, there are no differences between Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing and Masters in Nursing programmes. It is correct that both aim to prepare practitioners of nursing but one prepares at baccalaureate level and another at Masters level. In Post Basic B.Sc. programmes research is just introduced and the graduate of this programme cannot undertake independent research studies whereas in Master of Nursing programmes, students learn research methodology in detail and apply that research theory in their guided research work for the partial fulfilment of the Masters degree. M.Sc. graduates are able to undertake independent research studies whereas Post Basic B.Sc. graduates are not prepared for such type of work.

Though there are divergent views regarding the different types of programmes of study which are justifiable at some point but it is to be remembered that as in other professions, professionals are prepared at different levels of competence, so is the case in nursing too. It is my firm belief that to compare two programmes of study in terms of learning experience, the objectives of which are entirely different, is a futile exercise. The best way to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each programme would be to see the learning experiences in terms of their behavioural objectives.

It is my firm belief that the reasons for such divergent views regarding various programmes of study in nursing stem from lack of

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*Mr. K.C. Aggarwal B.A., R.N., B.Sc. Nursing, Ed. & Admn., M.N. (P.H.) has joined Jawahar Lal Nehru University New Delhi recently to take up Post Masters and Doctoral studies in Community Health.