

NURSING AS A PROFESSION

Opportunities and Social Status

By

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In our consideration of knowledge unique to the profession of education, we must bear in mind the urgent necessity for the constant renewal, re-examination and re-evaluation of our knowledge, which is the first criteria of any profession.

Flexner in describing the characteristics of a profession "stressed the intellectual nature of professional activities, their dependence on science and learning and the necessary limitations in their scope and purpose." He pointed out that any profession, to be dignified by this designation, must have an intellectual or theoretical content which sets it apart from occupations whose principal special requirement is a motor skill or technique. As a profession becomes self-organized, strong in-group feelings among members of the profession develop. A sub-culture forms with its own symbols, values and norms of behaviour.

Ernest Greenwood, a contemporary social theorist, stresses also the importance of systematic theory and points out that whenever a group achieves the status of a profession, it moves its instruction to an academic setting. Another characteristic of professions which differentiates them from other kinds of service occupations is the relative privacy and uniqueness of the knowledge and skills of the professional. In general, members of the public must accept the ability of the professional to perform the service required.

General Principles

Eight general principles of education for professional functioning presented below have been developed from a number of sources and applied to Nursing Education. Some, however, are equally applicable to all levels.

- I. The aim of professional education in nursing is to prepare nurses who understand and are guided by its code of ethics, who knows and understands the fundamental principles upon which professional tasks are based, and who effectively applies these principles in the performance of their professional tasks.
- II. The educational philosophy accepted by the faculty in a School of Nursing, if clearly stated, permeates the entire programme and is epitomized in a statement of aims. A clearly defined philosophy is basic to the development of any programme. It serves as the rationale for the faculty in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum. The development of the curriculum, student's attitudes towards

patients and the community, and the personal and professional growth of each student are but a few illustrations.

- III. The instrument through which the aims of education are achieved is the curriculum. The term "curriculum" is defined to include not only subject-matter content but also all the instructional activities and all the learning experiences provided by the School.
 - IV. The faculty of the School of Nursing is responsible for the planning, teaching, supervision, and evaluation of all the learning experience of the student.
 - V. The objectives of the curriculum clearly define the desirable educational outcomes in terms of behavioural change and the content or life situation in which the behaviour is to operate.
 - VI. The nursing curriculum provides for the growth of the whole individual, not just training in specific skills. It is concerned with the learner as a person, as a citizen, and as a developing practitioner of nursing.
 - VII. The elements (content and learning activities) of the curriculum are selected and organised in accordance with sound psychological principles of learning.
- A learning experience may be defined as a sequence of activities that are planned so that a particular goal will be reached.
- VIII. Nursing is a dynamic profession. Therefore, continuous evaluation and study of both nursing practice and nursing education are essential, if the changing and expanding nursing needs of society are to be met.

The influence of industrialisation and technology is felt in every aspect of our lives. The effect of industrialisation on nursing practice, however, does need to be studied. What are society's needs for nursing care? What is the best way to meet these needs? Is nursing education preparing persons who can meet these needs adequately? The answers vary according to the changing needs of society.

Evaluation

Research in the natural sciences and in medical science has contributed knowledge which has led to an ever-increasing number of changes in medical treatment, which in turn affects nursing practice.

Considering these two facts, the need for continuous evaluation becomes apparent if nursing is to keep pace with the changing times. Further, a profession should constantly enlarge the body of knowledge it uses and improve its techniques of education and service through the use of scientific methods.

Is nursing a profession or an occupation? Do we meet in our educational standards and practices the characteristics of a profession just mentioned? This question, I would prefer to leave open.

The Question

There are loud cries in every country of the world for more nurses, better nurses, more teachers, etc. The more frequent question is: "Are nurses doing nursing or are nurses so involved in other tasks that the patient rarely sees them? We must continuously evaluate the types of educational programmes offered, the standards of selection and admission and also to make nursing generally more attractive to prospective candidates. There are still countries where the nurse is very much looked down upon and nursing is not too socially acceptable and there are other countries where nurses rank high in prestige and social status. We may, therefore, conclude that nursing is in the process of transition and that this may include also a "striving for status."

The knowledge explosion, improvement in communication and technological advances, are producing sweeping changes in nursing. Nurse Educators today are concerned not only about *how* students accumulate knowledge and *what kind* of knowledge they do accumulate, but about what they do with this knowledge.

By social status of the nursing profession, I assume this statement means in India, and I am not qualified to answer this except may be on a comparative basis. But what do you mean by social status?

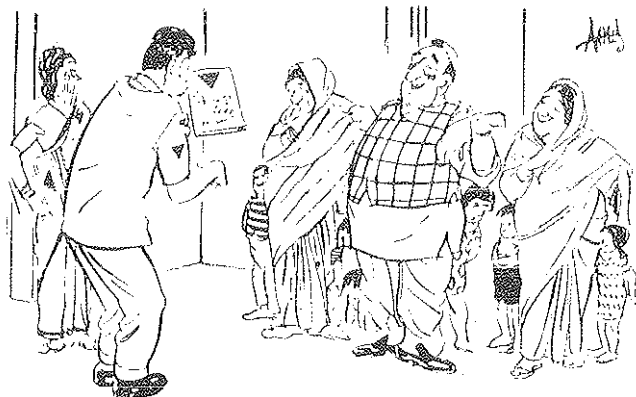
The Concern

There was an article recently in a local paper with title "*The Concern for Status*." The author of this article states that Indian society beyond question is marked by a high degree of concern for status. The place where we live, the way in which we speak, the people with whom we associate, the family into which we marry, the school to which we send our children—these are all chosen with an almost obsessive concern for the status they are likely to confirm or sustain.

He says that the concern for status and hierarchy reveals a fundamental continuity between the past and the present, including the caste system and religion particularly in the notions of purity and pollution.

My question is—Is this true in nursing? Can we classify ourselves as members of a profession or an occupation? It is an accepted fact that if one demands respect, he will receive it: Would you, therefore, agree that if we improve the status of our profession—*nursing*, we will then improve the social status?

FAMILY PLANNING



.....but I have two wives
(Courtesy Your Health)

T.N.A.I. Song adapted for Nurses' Week

By Miss Marian Pritchard

Tune :—College Song "Viva la compaigne."

1. Let all India's Nurses now join in a song
T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

Success to each other and pass it a-long

T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

Chorus :— T.N.A. T.N.A. T.N.A.I.

T.N.A. T.N.A. T.N.A.I.

T.N.A.I. T.N.A.I.

T.N.A.I. T.N.A.I.

2. A Nurse on your left and a nurse on your right

T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

In love and good fellowship let us unite

T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

Chorus

-do- -do-

3. In all states in India, T.N.A.I. Stands

T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

We greet too the Nurses in far-away lands

T.N.A. — T.N.A.I.

Chorus

-do- -do-

YOUR QUESTIONS ?

Readers' questions concerning matters of professional interest to Nurses will be answered by experts in this column from the next issue of the Journal along with the names of questioners.

Only a selection of answers of general interest will be published.

Readers may send their questions to :—

The Editor,
The Nursing Journal of India,
L-16, Green Park, New Delhi-16

The envelope should be marked
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