

A Form of Decision –Making Failure in Arabian Nursing Education

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Opinion

Late in the twentieth century and, exactly, in 1983, Yarmouk University/ Jordan started its Bachelor of nursing programme. At that time, when the Faculty of Nursing (FoN) had no nursing PhD holders, other than the Dean, nursing students had the opportunity to study a course titled “Bed Nursing Diagnosis”, which has, overtime, changed to become “Health Assessment” course. This is an essential course that is taught all over the world since decades. The nursing curriculum was never based on the medical model.

Thirty years later when, in October 2012, I joined the University of Benghazi, Libya, to teach nursing, I had the opportunity to view the nursing curriculum that was developed by PhD holders who obtained their qualifications from a developing country. The curriculum was introduced in 2007 after approval by the University higher authorities. The curriculum has no “Health Assessment” course; English language was not considered as a unit that students need to learn before they start the nursing courses offered in this language. Therefore, English language, courses were scattered over the four year duration of study. In addition the curriculum suffered fatal errors as it contained various courses that were purely based on the medical model and were taught by medical doctors. Such courses were “General Internal Medicine”, “Special Internal Medicine”, “Forensic Medicine”, “Obstetrics and Gynecology Medicine & Surgery”, “Geriatric Medicine”, “Pediatric Medicine and Surgery”, “Psychiatric Medicine & Mental Health”, and “Community Health Medicine”. The FoN had a “Quality and Performance Appraisal Unit” headed by an academic member of staff who had a Bachelor of Botany degree and who was also the Faculty research representative at the University Council! The Dean of the FoN who is a medical doctor appointed himself as the Head of Scientific Affairs!

The question that poses itself is: What is going on in the twenty first century with regards to nursing education in Libya? To answer this question in such a way that would help the reader understand why nursing in Libya is substantially lagging behind the world, the facts reported above would be discussed in some detail.

University administrators and decision makers might not be aware that there are huge variations in the quality of nursing education programmes across institutions of higher education in the world; many programmes in the developed countries are much more advanced than those offered in the developing countries. Therefore, the said University and may be others take inappropriate decisions when recruiting teaching staff with low academic capabilities and giving them responsibilities that they cannot fulfill. Evidently, the price of this is, in part, a poor nursing curriculum confirming that teaching faculty might be unaware of what is going on in the world of nursing education, and may not be willing to learn from the experiences of others. The visible landmark of administrative corruption which is evident in the appointment of individuals in positions they are unqualified for complicates the picture further. Nevertheless, such administrative corruption is not unique to the Libyan context; it does affect other institutions of higher education in the middle east region.

With this faulty system in place, the consequences are awesome. Concerned Libyan universities waste massive resources to produce poor outcomes. Nursing students learn little nursing if any; they waste a considerable amount of time and effort on irrelevant medical courses. During my work at the said University, I conducted in February 2014 a medication calculation test for six out of nine nursing graduates who were appointed as teaching assistants because they were the “best”. All of them failed the test which is an essential component of nursing practice! Simply speaking, they did not learn nursing. Therefore, graduates of such programmes would not be in position to practice true nursing and would not, successfully, carry out their roles and responsibilities like their counterparts across the world. Meanwhile, patient safety will be threatened.

To rectify this situation, the said Libyan university and all concerned others need to re-consider their recruitment policies. Like many universities in the region, they need to recruit graduates

who obtained their qualifications from developed countries, and be selective when recruiting applicants who obtained their higher qualifications from developing countries.

Administrative corruption and responsible decision making never meet. This corruption has to, sooner or later, come to an end. Academic and administrative positions must be occupied by qualified and competent staff if progress is to be made. If existing

laws do limit the universities ability to achieve this important goal, they need to be amended.

Education is a national security issue and must be viewed as such. Personal relationships should have no place when it comes to education. Ensuring that the right person, with the right skills and experience, is in the right place remains a vital issue that decision makers should always think of and never sacrifice.



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