NURSING AND POLICY MAKING IN THE CARIBBEAN: HISTORY, STAGES AND PROCESS OF THE CHANGE IN ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR NURSING PRACTICE IN THE CARIBBEAN

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History of Nursing Education

Prior the 1940’s, nursing education and practice were not as coordinated as it is today and there was little contribution from nurses to policy development.
Quality was related to England where the colonial matrons came from. Senior nurses received their post basic training in nursing administration and nursing education.
• During this period of apprenticeship, the system of nursing education was based on the medical model and did not reflect a holistic approach.

• Examinations were set by the doctors.

• It was difficult at first for the nurse leaders to marshal a change in policy from the medical model of training to one which reflected a holistic approach.
History of Nursing Education (con’t)

At the first historical meeting of the “West Indies Federal Nursing Conference” held in Barbados in 1959, two resolutions were passed. This was as a result of the exposure of the senior nurses to quality education.

1. Standards of nursing education
2. Standard of nursing practice
History of Nursing Education (Cont’d)

Assistance to improve the standard of nursing education to a level that is acceptable was given by (PAHO). This was facilitated by Dame Nita Barrow whose experience as a CNO gave her the strategic edge.
As a result of the lobbying 23 schools were surveyed. This first survey provided an evaluation of the schools, established an accreditation process and laid the basis for developing uniform standards for nursing education in the region.
Advanced Nursing Education

Nurses sought to satisfy the desire for professional advancement. The Nurses Association of Jamaica and the Caribbean Nurses Organization agitated for advanced nursing education at the university level.

In 1957, they presented the case to the Federal secretary for the British Caribbean. In addition, they had to lobby university officials for elevated level education.
Supported by the WHO/PAHO, the governments of the region and the University representatives.

In October 1966, the first class of students was admitted to the Advanced Nursing Education Unit (ANEU) to begin their university education.
BScN for registered nurses was instituted in 1983 at the University of the West Indies. This was the second hurdle that the nurse leaders obliterated. The first was the change in the apprenticeship system.

Due to departmental discussions and recommendation from the RNB, the MScN degree programme began August 2002. This was achieved under the leadership of Dr. Hermi Hewitt.
Regional Nursing Body (RNB)

The RNB was formalized in 1972. The years between 1959 when the first West Indies Federal Conference was held and 1972 were a period of consolidation.

In its advisory capacity, advising the Health Ministers Conference on decisions of the body. The RNB advises the Ministers in change in trends and seek approval for change in policy directions.
Regional Nursing Body (con’t)

Sets and maintains standards of Nursing Education and practice bearing in mind that nursing regulates itself.

The ultimate objective is the provision of a sufficient quantity of adequately prepared nursing personnel to meet the health care needs of the countries of the Region.
An important step was the establishment of a pool of qualified persons who would act as Regional Nursing Examiners for the regional examination.

In 1974, on the request of the RNB, the Caribbean Conference of Health Ministers sanctioned the setting up of a system for the Accreditation of Nursing Schools. The RNB speedily developed a policy for reassessment.
Regional Nursing Body (con’t)

It was felt that the best way to ensure a common standard was through the establishment of a Regional Examination for Nurses.

A policies and procedures document for the evaluation of Schools of Nursing was developed and used as the guide for the assessment.
Regional Nursing Body (con’t)

The RNB recommended to the Conference of Ministers responsible for Health that Nursing Education should be in the mainstream of tertiary education, this was accepted since 1975.
Regional Examination Nurse Registration (RENR)

Following a feasibility study, the examination process was put in motion: The development of manuals and examination guides. Standardization of practice and education and guaranteed reciprocity within the Community.
Regional Examination Nurse Registration (RENR)

In 1990, the Regional Examination for Nurse Registration (RENR) was approved by the Conference of Ministers responsible for Health within the Community.

The first examination was written in 1993 and has maintained a high level of success.
Piggy-backing of other professions

• The new approach in nursing education, particularly the RENR was the trend setter for other professions. The initiative was among the first internationally.

• Other professions are reviewing this model with a view for implementation in their own programs.
ACHIEVEMENTS AND POLICY DECISIONS OF THE RNB

• Introduction of the RENR allowing for reciprocity

• Development of standards of education and practice

• Obliteration of the medical model for nursing education
• Transfer of Schools of Nursing from Ministries of Health to Colleges

• Closer collaboration between the regulatory body and Schools of Nursing
CHALLENGES OF THE RNB

• The policy decision for all RN’S to be at the baccalaureate level has met with skepticism.

• Hesitation on the part of some governments to recognise the BScN as the basic entry requirement for RN due to cost factor—enhanced remuneration packages.
STRENGTHS

• Resilience to move forward with the Nursing Agenda
• Wealth of experience in the region
• Teamwork and collaboration for problem solving/the tag team approach of nurses in the region.
• Commonality in cultures and problems.