

**NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COUNCIL OF NIGERIA'S
ROLE IN MAINTAINING STANDARDS IN NURSING
EDUCATION AND PRACTICE**

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Brief Historical Background on Establishment of the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria


What is today known as the Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria was a product of the merger of the former 'Nursing Council of Nigeria' and 'Midwives Board of Nigeria'. Both 'Council' and 'Board' were established by ordinances that gave legal effect to their existence. The Midwives Board was established in 1930 while the Nursing Council was established in 1947. Both bodies existed as separate entities until 1978 when the Federal Military Government set up a Health Services Panel to among other things harmonize the activities of the Federal Health Agencies. The panel recommended that the two bodies be merged as their functions were identical. Government accepted the recommendation and in 1979 a Decree known as Nursing & Midwifery Council (Registration act) Decree No. 89 of 1979 was promulgated to give legal effect to the merger.

Functions of Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria

The primary objectives of the Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria are to ensure high quality of Nursing and Midwifery education in Nigeria and maintain high standard of professional practice and to enforce discipline within the profession.

Broadly, the functions are related to those of designing, implementing and evaluating various Nursing educational programmes of Indexing, Examination, monitoring standards of nursing practice in the country, Registration, Certification and Licencure of Professional Nurses.

SPECIFICALLY, COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

-  To determine who are Nurses and Midwives

- ✚ To determine what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become members of the profession of Nursing and Midwifery (hereafter-in this Decree referred to as “the profession”) and reviewing those standards from time to time as circumstances may require.
- ✚ To secure, in accordance with the provision of the Decree, the establishment and maintenance of a register of persons entitled to practice the profession and the publication from time to time of a list of these persons;
- ✚ To regulate and control the practice of the profession in all its ramification;
- ✚ To maintain, in accordance with the Decree, discipline within the profession.
- ✚ To approve training institutions and hospitals and to conduct periodic inspection of those institutions.
- ✚ To issue and cancel certificates and to arrange for the restoration of Nurses and Midwives to the Register where applicable;
- ✚ To specify the fees to be paid to Council in respect of the entry of names on the register and authorizing the Registrar to refuse a name to be entered on the register until a fee specified for entry has been paid;
- ✚ To improve methods employed in the basic and post-basic education of Nurses and Midwives;
- ✚ To co-operate with recognized bodies interested in the preparation of experimental schemes for basic and post basic education of Nurses and Midwives;
- ✚ To conduct National qualifying examination for Nurses and Midwives and to appoint Examiners;
- ✚ To appoint a Supervisory Authority for purpose of conducting a preliminary investigation into any case involving misbehaviour of a registered Nurse and Midwife and deciding whether the case should be referred to the Disciplinary Tribunal also to be appointed by the Council;

✚ To prosecute any known cases of unauthorized training of Nurses and Midwives in Nigeria.

Evolution of Nursing Education

We cannot talk about Nursing Education in Nigeria without mentioning the history and growth of Nursing generally. This will help us to understand our past, plan for the future and ensure professional advancement and excellence in Nursing education and practice. Nursing as it is today started though the efforts of Florence Nightingale during the Crimean War.

The campaign carried out by Florence Nightingale for organized and formal training for Nurses all over the world had a positive influence in Nigeria, which was a colony of Britain. The result was that by 1930, formal Nursing and Midwifery training had started in Nigeria in some mission and government hospitals. There was approved syllabus for training midwives, the entry qualification for Grade II midwives was standard six (6) and the training was for one (1) year.

The entry qualification for the grade one (1) midwives was government class four (4) Or Grade 11(2) Midwifery certificate. The period of training was two and half (2½) Years. The syllabus for midwives was later revised in October 1991. Today Midwifery education is a Post Basic Programme and the programme runs for twelve (12) calendar months.

General Nursing Education similarly developed. It was apprenticeship type of training before. The entry qualification was standard six (6) and government class IV (4). In 1965, a new Nursing Education syllabus was approved with the ultimate purpose of ensuring a uniform basic standard of Nursing in Nigeria and Internationally. The entry

requirement was a full secondary education with an attempt in WASC or its equivalent, the duration of training was three and a half (3½) years.

I recall the 1995 workshop in Akure on the implementation of the revised Nursing Curriculum. The resultant effect was the change in the entry requirement, which was raised to five credits including English Language and a science subject. These reforms were attempts made to raise the standard of Nursing nationally and internationally. The focus shifted from traditional pattern to community oriented care.

Nursing profession took a tremendous leap in Nigeria with the establishment of the Department of Nursing at the University of Ibadan in 1965. It was originally designed to produce teachers and administrators to the African region but the improvement in Nursing caused. by this programme had transformed the education and practice of Nursing profession. Today, more of such departments have been established in other Universities running the B.Nsc. programmes:

They include:

1. Department of Nursing, University of Ibadan, Oyo State.
2. Department of Nursing Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State.
3. Department of Nursing, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State.
4. Department of Nursing, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State.
5. Department of Nursing, University of Calabar, Cross River State.
6. Department of Nursing Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State.
7. Department of Nursing, Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State.
8. Department of Nursing, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Oyo State.

Crises in Nursing Education

Nursing Education in Nigeria takes cognisance of the National Policy on Education in developing sound educational principles which are essential to the preparation of Nurses to function independently and/or as members of interdisciplinary and intersectoral teams.

The General Nursing programme is the basic education programme for all nurses and midwives in Nigeria while any other programme is offered at the post basic level. The Basic Nursing Education programme is therefore geared towards the learning needs of students and the health need of the community and society. The programme forms the basis for the practice of Nursing and continuing professional development in the field of nursing.

The aim of nursing education in Nigeria is to prepare different cadre of competent nurse practitioners at all levels, who will utilize problem solving techniques in providing safe, acceptable, effective and affordable health services to meet the health needs of individuals, families and the community.

In 1988, the Federal Government launched the National Policy on Health which focuses on Primary Health Care. This policy was on implementation of the Almaata declaration on Primary Health Care as recommended by WHO/UNICEF in 1970. Item 9 of the Policy states that Ministries of Health shall ensure that medical, nursing; public health and other schools that train providers of health services under that jurisdiction include in their education programmes the philosophy of "health for all", the principles of primary health care and the essentials of managerial process for National Health development and to provide appropriate practical training in these areas.

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In response to this policy, Council commenced a review of its nursing and midwifery curricula. The concepts of Primary Health Care i.e. Community-oriented Nursing were integrated into Nursing Education programmes and practice. Other health trends like family planning, Breast Feeding and lactation Management, Post Abortion Care and Control of Diarrhea Diseases as initiated by WHO/UNICEF were concepts that called for progressive modification of the Nursing/Midwifery Curricula.

Nursing education is crucial to keeping nursing practice relevant to the health needs and expectations of the society. Workshops were therefore organized for tutors to expose them to these trends and strategies for the implementation were drawn up.

In spite of the improvement in our curricula, Nursing Education has remained hospital based. Nursing Qualification has remained Registered Nurse (RN) or Registered Midwife (RM), Consequently a number 4 nurses had to go through a zigzag route to obtain a higher qualification.

At every workshop/seminar organized by the Council, Nurses have asked for a re-examination of their professional qualifications/certificates. Many have left the profession out of frustration and dissatisfaction, for many others, the qualifications RN, RPN; RM etc. have no ready currency for entry into the general education courses in the Universities in spite of all the additional certificates. The need for a change and restructuring became inevitable. The experience of the Nursing Education reforms in the United Kingdom termed "Project 2000" which led to a "Diploma in Higher Education" (Nursing), "Dip. HE" was a motivating factor. In this reform, schools of Nursing and some midwifery schools were merged and linked to higher education sector (polytechnic /universities). The need for an urgent change to bring Nursing Education in line with the

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reform in the United Kingdom from where Nigeria inherited its long established Nursing Education model became very necessary. Although Council had discussed the issue of a collegiate system in the past, not much was achieved. As at today, all universities with Departments of nursing are running the generic nursing degree programmes. The question we may need to ask is what is, the number admitted into these programmes each year? How many graduates from these departments serve the country?

Statistics of indexing in the Council shows very marginal number of undergraduates from each University. Majority that serve in our public, private and community settings graduate from our schools of Nursing/Midwifery with only the professional registration.

Linking up with the National Board for Technical Education for a quantifiable certificate was the only way forward and you will agree with me that it is a child of necessity.

Despite all these efforts, Council has not relented in its efforts to encourage more universities to mount Nursing degree programmes and I am glad to inform you that we are making tremendous progress in the regard.

The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) which has been established mainly to assist workers to obtain degrees has also approved the commencement of a degree in Nursing. Nurses are hereby encouraged to take advantage of this to pursue a degree in Nursing.

Nursing Practice

The public enjoys quality Nursing practice as a result of quality education which the Council has introduced.

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The public is also protected from the harmful and sharp practices of charlatans since the Council has decided to fight quackery in the Nursing profession.

It will be recalled that the Federal Government has established Primary Health Care Centres, in all the 774 Local Government areas in Nigeria and Council has decided to further improve the quality and quantity of nursing personnel for effective management of these health centres.

Discipline

In ensuring standards of practice, Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria has a disciplinary committee which looks at all professional misconducts e.g. Truancy, Sexual Abuse, Addiction, Alcoholism, Negligence of duty, Pilfering, Exposition of patients secrets etc.

Council has a right to take professional disciplinary actions on any of the above mentioned misconducts. However, we have observed over time that often a times, employers of nurses do not contact Council on such matters as such they allow the nurses to go scot free only to be found repeating the same misconducts again. Let us together, uphold the ethics and etiquettes of our dear profession.

Conclusion

Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, being the custodian of professional Nursing training and practice is focused on the following:

- ✚ placing Nursing Education in its rightful position in National Education Systems
- ✚ improving and maintaining ethics and etiquettes of the profession
- ✚ promoting and sustaining quality nursing care to our clients and the society

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- ✚ collaborating in all areas of health endeavours and promoting team spirit among all health professionals

- ✚ improving and sustaining standards of nursing education and practice by ensuring that health institutions adhere strictly to the standards of professional practice.

Our mission statement “Maintaining Excellence in Nursing Education and Practice” remains unchanged. The Council will do all in its powers to ensure that Nursing profession is accorded high status Nationally and Internationally.

Maintaining standards in Nursing Education and Practice should be the responsibility of all stakeholders. We must therefore ensure that all nurses are adequately trained and retrained to be able to meet the challenges of our times.

Thank you very much for listening, wishing you a very successful deliberations.