



Teaching and practicing nursing code of ethics and values in the Gambia

Haddy Tunkara Bah*, Jainaba Sey-Sawo

Department of Nursing, University of the Gambia, Gambia
Department of Nursing, University of Benin, Nigeria

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Teaching
Implementing
Nursing
Ethics
Values
The Gambia

ABSTRACT

Nursing has a professional autonomy which goes along with responsibility and accountability of nursing actions. Nursing practice should always be guided by a code of ethics and values. However, the concepts of nursing ethics and values are contained only in the introductory courses of the nursing curriculum in the Gambia. Many nurse educators and clinicians are not knowledgeable about the code of ethics of nursing in this country. Lectures on nursing ethics and values are mostly taught by invited guest lecturers in only one or two lecture sessions of the entire nurse training programme. Teaching nursing ethics and values at clinical level is poor due to the limited number of trained senior nurses to serve as mentors and supervisors for students and junior nurses. Most of the Gambian public health facilities do not have standard guidelines on various nursing procedures. Low status of nurses and conformist style of training nurses hinder the effective implementation of the code of nursing ethics and values among professional nurses in this country. There is, therefore, inadequate teaching and implementation of the code of nursing ethics and values which calls for urgent reforms in nursing education and practice to improve the standard and image of the Nursing Profession in the Gambia.

1. Introduction

Ethics refers to the study of moral judgements based on values, beliefs and attitudes that an individual or group possesses (Sinclair, Papps & Marshall, 2016). Ethics in nursing means the set of rules or principles which guide decision making and behaviour of nurses. Nursing has professional autonomy and nurses are reasonably independent and self-governing in making decisions in practice. The nurse can independently initiate decisions without medical orders (American Society of Registered Nurses, 2007). This has been achieved in nursing today due to the nursing profession's ability to build for its members a high level of academic excellence leading them to a state where they have the ability to provide specific services and client advocates. Hence, the autonomy nursing profession comes along with responsibility and accountability. It is important that this professional autonomy is always governed by a code of ethics and values.

Individuals who aspire to enter the nursing profession need additional guidance and education within nursing school curriculum. Yet, nursing ethics and values are usually taught as part of the introductory courses in most of the nursing curriculum in the Gambia. This may not be sufficient to produce a highly competent and ethically oriented professional nurses. Nurse educators in this country have the opportunity and obligation to guide nursing students in the areas of nursing

ethics, ethical analysis, and ethical decision-making to produce ethical practitioners.

The training of nursing professionals on the values and ethics in nursing should not be limited to the academic institutions only. Nursing ethics and values should also be learnt at clinical practical areas through role modelling and supervision by mentors and preceptors who should be experienced nurses with good moral disposition. Extensive experiences and supervision from mentors, preceptors and supervisors are necessary to achieve a considerable nursing competency through ethics and values orientation. Unfortunately in many developing countries including the Gambia, there is high attrition rate of senior trained nurses due to poor working conditions and salaries (Saho, 2011; WHO, 2010; The Gambia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009). There is no formal mentorship programme in the Gambia (Bah, 2016) and young inexperienced nurses are sometimes posted to clinical areas without the support of a senior nurse to build their knowledge and skill competencies on nursing ethics and values.

Throughout the past years, Gambian Nurses were using the International Council of Nurses (ICN) code of ethics until of recent when the National Nurses and Midwives Council in collaboration with the Gambia Nurses and Midwives Association and other stakeholders developed a national code of ethics in 2014 putting into consideration the cultural values of the Gambians. However, many nurse educators

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: htbah@utg.edu.gm (H.T. Bah).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijans.2018.08.005>

Received 22 March 2018; Received in revised form 1 August 2018; Accepted 23 August 2018

Available online 24 August 2018

2214-1391/ © 2018 Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

and clinicians are not conversant with this new code of ethics. This has created a knowledge gap among nurses and nurse educators on the existing values and ethical principles governing the nursing profession which can have direct impact on the standard of nursing care in this country.

2. Teaching nursing ethics and values

Nursing education in the Gambia is provided by two Universities, Gambia College, School of Enrolled Nurses and School of Enrolled Community Health Nurses. Bachelor of Science Degrees in Nursing are provided by the Universities and a postgraduate in Nursing is offered only by the University of The Gambia. The theoretical foundation of nursing ethics education is grounded in ethical principles, value formation of the individual, and patterns of knowing. Nursing ethics in education has immense competition with an already content filled curriculum (Ayd, 2015). Currently, the concepts of nursing ethics and values are contained in the introductory courses or as a single course of the nursing curriculum in The Gambia which is not sufficient for the students to master the ethical principles of the Nursing Profession. Principles and concepts of nursing ethics and values should not be treated as a single course but should be integrated in all nursing courses in the curriculum. Nursing ethics education integrated throughout a nursing programme has been praised for its effectiveness (International Council of Nurses, 2015) and for establishing best ethical framework in nursing education (Milton, 2004). This is because nursing ethics and values are relevant in all the nursing disciplines and specialties. It is the role of the nurse educator to select strategies to creatively integrate nursing ethics into the curriculum.

Nurses face ethical dilemmas on a daily basis which need experience, critical thinking, and an ability to evaluate the ethical principles relating to an existing problem and make the best ethical decision that helps to solve the problem. Thus, teaching nursing ethics and values should be practice-based in order to ensure competency on their application. Teaching and learning ethical comportment in interpersonal and relational skills require thoughtfulness, good curriculum and pedagogical development and planning as postulated by Benner, Suphen, Leonard and Day (2010). Unfortunately, nursing ethics and values are taught in The Gambia's nursing training institutions mostly using lecture discussions in which the role of the teacher is that of an expert and that of the student is listening, taking notes, answering and giving responses when required by the teacher. In addition, lectures on nursing ethics and values are commonly delivered by invited guests from The Gambia Nurses and Midwives Council and content is usually covered in one or two lecture sessions. These guest lecturers are usually not trained teachers and may not have the required skills for effective teaching of nursing ethics and values. This inadequate and theory-based teaching of nursing ethics and values in this country, limits the translation of nursing ethics from theory to practice thereby creating a gap and different perceptions among nurses in the training institutions and those in the actual professional situations. Many researchers have found that a gap between theory and practice in nursing education do exist (Abu Salah, Aljerjawy & Salama, 2018; Estrada, Socorro, GuanHing & Susan, 2015; Tel Hussein & Osuji, 2017). According to Sawo, Bah & Kante, (2017), in The Gambia, the challenges faced by nursing institutions include the shortage of faculty members and lack of clinical tutors at the practical areas due to the brain drain of highly qualified and educated nurses migrating to countries with higher salaries and better working conditions. Student nurses are posted to health facilities to be supervised and assisted by the trained nurses in the clinical areas who might be too busy to attend to their learning needs thus, leaving a big theory and practice gap to be filled. Hence, there is an urgent need to bridge this gap.

Nursing ethics can be effectively taught by a combination of teaching methods that enhance visualization of the concept scenario that is being taught and promotes translation of theory to practice.

These teaching methods include problem-based learning, group teaching, role play, modeling, case studies, debates and clinical experience. Benner et al. (2010) discussed the importance of developing the individual's ethical behavior with a focus on modeling the behavior through "doing, knowing, and being" as they relate to teaching ethics in the classroom. According to Lin, Lu, Chang and Yang (2010), problem-based learning (PBL) can enhance the efficacy of teaching nursing ethics. These authors revealed that students did express increased feelings of motivated learning and critical thinking when PBL was used. PBL framework also has the potential to improve self-directed learning, critical thinking, communication, and ability to work as a team (Alexander, McDaniel, Baldwin & Money, 2002). Other authors (Garity, 2009; Bijani, Tehranineshat & Torabizadehadd, 2017) recommend peer-tutored PBL in situations where there is lack of qualified educators to teach nursing ethics such as in The Gambia. This will give enough time to nurse educators to provide more in-depth discussion and application of what is being taught. Team-Based Learning (TBL) is another type of teaching and learning nursing ethics and values strategy, which focuses on small group learning, student preparation and application of class content (Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, 2015). Garity (2009) suggests combining theory and practice using small group discussion. The use of case studies provides students with the opportunity to dissect real life situations and develop a deeper understanding of concepts in nursing ethics education. Lin et al. (2010) identified the importance of using a combination of case studies, simulation, and reflection experiences to develop critical analysis skills. Garity (2009) explored the use of debate in nursing ethics education and found that debate as a teaching methodology supports students in developing critical thinking, which is an important component in learning nursing ethics and values.

Furthermore, codes of nursing ethics and values are continually being revised and modified to meet the changing needs and values of the nursing clientele. This calls for lifelong learning of new concepts and principles of nursing codes of ethics as they are developed. Thus, the teaching and learning of nursing ethics should not be focused only in nurse training institutions but also in clinical areas. Experienced senior nurses should serve as role models and mentors for students and junior nurses in guiding their development in competency of ethical decision making and behavior skills in the clinical environment. However, there is a limited number of trained senior nurses in many public health facilities in The Gambia due to a high attrition rate among this category of staff (Saho, 2011; The Gambia Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, 2009). Under this situation, students and inexperienced nurses lack role models to translate the theory of ethics and values learned during training to practice when they encounter real ethical situations.

The Gambia Code of Ethics for nurses requires that nurses follow the best practice guidelines to ensure quality of patient care. Yet nursing care guidelines are scarce in many health facilities in this country. Most of the health facilities do not provide standard guidelines on the various nursing procedures and sometimes what is taught in the training institution cannot be applied at health facility level due to lack of trained nurses and equipment. For instance, students are taught to always maintain privacy when caring for patients but at health facility level, many of them do not have enough screens. Nurses face dilemmas in applying the code of ethics due to this theory-practice gap. Ethics learning and application are personal processes that always go with everyday nursing work. Hence, there is also a need for the development of a pedagogy that integrates this self-learning experience along with professional training where ethics is seen as a natural component of nurses' work instead of a rule that they should follow as professionals. It is imperative for nurse educators and clinicians to be at the forefront of not only establishing an ethical foundation in the nursing curriculum, but also emulating how one should conduct oneself in professional and personal environments. It may be considered flawed thinking to expect students to act with virtue, if those teachings are not also virtuous.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/9955191>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/9955191>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)