

PROFESSIONAL NURSING IN MALAYSIA

Jane Buncuan

RN, RM, HV, MN (Flinders); BHSc.Nsg (UWS Nepean); Dip. Appl.Nutrition. (UI);
Senior Lecturer & Head of Nursing Department, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Zabidah Putit

RN, RM, PhD (Bristol); MHSc (Hons) (AUT); BNSc (Hons) (UM); Cert. Ed.
(Huddersfield) Senior Lecturer, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

ABSTRACT

Professional nursing in Malaysia started with the arrival of British nurses during the colonial era to set up hospitals and to train the local people on nursing. This exposure to Western knowledge and ideologies led to the development of nursing knowledge in Malaysia. The nursing profession in Malaysia progresses at a slow pace. From being handmaidens, Malaysian nurses are slowly gaining some autonomy in nursing. Nurses in Malaysia, however, are still facing challenges that delay professional progress as compared to other countries. This paper attempts to discuss the development of professional nursing in Malaysia.

Keywords: professional, development, nursing

INTRODUCTION

Nursing exists in view of its obligation to provide care for people who need care. It is, however, necessary for one to be qualified before he or she could be called a professional nurse. This means that one needs to successfully complete an accredited nursing education programme. This is consistent with Carper's statement that 'the practice of nursing requires not only *knowing that* but also *knowing how* and *knowing why* in regard to meaning, value, intentions, and goals' (Carper, 1992a, p.79). An expert nurse requires experience and formal education (Benner, 1982). Nurses apply their clinical skills through experience and structured learning. Nurses need to understand the process of knowing, the modes of inquiry, reflection and action within nursing situations, and the importance in structuring the discipline of nursing (Carper, 1992b). In view of these, the nurses in Malaysia require basic and advanced knowledge in nursing to understand the phenomena relating to the goals and the mission of nursing to provide quality care for the patients.

Professional nursing in Malaysia progresses much slower in many aspects particularly in administration, tertiary education and research. This situation is unfortunately similar to the development of professional nursing in the West where the field of medicine has control over the nursing profession (Crowther & McGann, 2008). Tertiary education in Malaysia started in 1992 and nursing research is, gradually developing. This slow progress could be due to the dominance of medicine, the hegemonic Health Care System (HCS) and other bureaucratic issues that persist to this day. Meleis, a well known American nursing figure, highlighted that

"... the discipline of nursing combines academic and professional approaches to knowledge development, a history of second-class citizenship, a history of devaluation to its mission of caring, and a history of oppression of its members that reflect worldwide oppression of women and subordination of nurses to other bureaucratic and professional structures."

(Meleis, 1991, p.127)