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## Nursing Faculties: The Heart of Nursing Academia

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### Abstract

Nursing academics involves both the profession of nursing and the profession of education. This article sheds light on different duties and responsibilities performed by nursing faculties, various challenges, and how nursing institutions and stakeholders can work together to overcome the challenges. This article also focuses on various key areas like research, clinical practice, teaching-learning activities, and administrative roles that nursing faculties are supposed to acquire and gain their competence. Moreover, nursing faculties plays pivotal role in tailoring the quality nursing professionals. However, faculties need to attain excellence in their roles so that the positive attitude with professional demeanor are passed on to the next generation.

**Keywords:** Academia, Nursing education, Nursing faculties, PhD nursing

## Introduction

Nursing academics is a beautiful blend of theory, clinical practice, research, and administrative prospects. To promote a good academic environment in universities/ institutions, a nursing preceptor has to be a master in the above-mentioned areas. Proficiency Certificate Level of Nursing (PCL), BSc Nursing, Post-Basic Bachelor in Nursing Science/ Bachelor in Nursing Science, and MSc Nursing/Masters in Nursing are currently existing program in Nepal. There is no doctorate program in nursing and aspiring PhD program students have to pursue such professional degree from foreign countries. A PhD degree imparts advanced research capabilities to the degree holder. There is a need to start PhD programs in different parts of Nepal so that nursing professionals can earn the degree from within the country and can get highly skilled in research activities. As stated above nursing academics comprises both the profession of nursing and the profession of education. Academics should not be confined only to teaching but it has to meet the wide horizon of the academic environment which is complex, evolving, and challenging job. Heavy workload, insufficient support system, inability to retain faculties, job insecurities, and financial discontent are prevalent issues. These issues are to be addressed immediately.<sup>1</sup> Among various roles of nursing faculties, the main role is to facilitate student's learning and prepare them for their professional development.<sup>2</sup>

## Research Activities

As a nursing preceptor, one has to regularly get involved in research activities like conducting research, data analysis, presenting papers at conferences both national and international, journal club, and making contributions to research committees and guiding students research. This will enrich the quality of nursing education and promote evidence-based theory and practice which will benefit the students as well all other stakeholders including leaders, business houses, government organizations, the patients, the health care professionals, the NGO's, health volunteers, and their families. Enhancement of knowledge in research and improvement in research skills through various refresher training is the need of the hour in nursing academia. It is high time we ask ourselves as a nurse researcher "How far have we been using our research findings in our prac-

time?" Nurses need to even focus on practice-oriented research and interdisciplinary collaboration with basic sciences and clinical sciences which will help in the adoption and implementation of translational research. A higher education degree such as PHD will instill strong research commitment in the academics.<sup>3</sup> Continuing nursing education, a support system from the organization, identifying the barriers to research activities, and participation of nursing professionals in forums for discussion will be helpful.<sup>4, 5</sup> Adequate research budget allocation for financial support leading assurance to carry out research activities is required.

## Clinical Practice

Nursing faculties provide their valuable time to students during clinical supervision. The things taught in the classroom are demonstrated in the skill labs followed by return demonstrations and feedback that helps students to acquire the competencies in a safe and friendly environment. The skills will be transferred to the patients during clinical placements under the supervision of the nursing faculties. Simulation-based education is also an important way to enhance the confidence of the students as they can practice in safe and controlled environment. Simulation in nursing education helps in critical thinking and good decision making by students making them successful and competent health professionals.<sup>6,7</sup> Assigned clinical supervisors evaluate the students on the basis of evaluation criteria and provide constructive feedback to the students. The theory-practice gap is another challenge in the field of nursing academics in a country like Nepal. Maintaining the appropriate ratio between clinical supervisors and students, institutions having with their adequate clinical facilities, adequate clinical exposure, proper coordination and cooperation from the hospital staff, and refresher training on hands-on skills for the clinical supervisors will help to bridge the gap between theory and practice. A good clinical supervisor will lead to competent students who will remain outstanding and become qualified nurses to provide quality nursing care. In the healthcare industry precision is the key and there is almost no margin of error as the health related decision taken by the

healthcare team determines the patient's future quality of life.

### Teaching Learning Activities

Nursing faculties are also involved in teaching students in the classroom and are also involved in formative and summative evaluation. Incorporating traditional teaching methodologies with other teaching concepts like the flipped classroom provides motivation and promotes effective learning among students. <sup>8</sup>Problem based learning is yet to be introduced in nursing curriculum at several universities of Nepal. Problem based learning is a student centered approach that improves critical thinking, problem solving skills, enhances communication <sup>9</sup> and promotes self-directed learning. <sup>10</sup>A nursing faculty should also become technology-oriented to keep pace with the modern world. The development of a structured feedback system for faculties from students and peer groups in the institute will also help in the improvement and progress of the academic environment and enhance the performance of faculties. <sup>11, 12</sup>

### Nursing administrator

Some of the nurses are also involved in administration and administrative activities. The nursing administrator is at the heart of the nursing institute. S/he can be a role model for all his/her subordinates. A capable administrator can always bring positivity to the institution where faculty members are motivated for their work. A good administrator promotes, includes and amalgamates views from all stakeholders before arriving at key decision points and has the ability for proper coordination with different organizations and stakeholders. This results in good decision-making capacity regarding staffing, policy-making, and financial matters. A cooperative and dedicated administrator can always energize her faculties and can bring about a culture of appreciative inquiry. She is also responsible for maintaining the quality academic environment in the institution. The administrator weighs the risks against the benefits and with all inclusive partnership of stakeholders, arrives at a consensual decision.

Academic nursing leaders should gain trust from faculty members and staffs. They need to understand the existing lacunae in academia including a lack of higher education and research engagement with international partners. He/She has to aptly perform resource management, prioritization of issues, maintaining proper team alignment and holding respectful interactions that are pearls of wisdom for academic nurse leaders. <sup>13</sup>

### Challenges and the way forward

Statutory bodies like the nursing council sets standards for the establishment of nursing colleges. Nursing licensing examination results are another aspect to rethink about the quality of the academic environment. As per the results of 34<sup>th</sup> Nursing licensing examination (2023), the pass percentage of PCL nursing was only 19.34% and among BSc Nursing candidates, only 49.03% successfully passed the examination. Institutions as well as faculties are to be thoughtful regarding this issue. This mandates better training methods to be used and more sessions on clearing any doubt that the students may have with their academics.

Work related stressors, over burdening workload, dissatisfaction with salary, paucity of time for academics, distressing work environment, and lack of engaging training sessions might lead to burnout among academic nurses. <sup>14</sup> Burnout which causes emotional exhaustion is a matter of concern for nursing faculty. There is a positive correlation between burnout and psychological distress among nursing faculty. Concerned authorities should intervene to overcome the issue of burnout and to maintain the psychological wellbeing of the faculties. <sup>15</sup> A psychologically sound faculty can impart clear teaching objectives and can expect better response and outcomes from students.

Administrators in academia are to be selected based on the defined eligibility criteria. There has to be a transparent point wise scoring system for promotion and appointment at senior levels. Feedback system to faculties can be achieved through an academic audit that is mandatory to identify the strengths and weakness of the institutions and to identify the methods of improvement. Medical education commission, Nepal nursing council, University Grant Commission

and Universities should have proper coordination. Trained faculties, structured curriculum, and necessary teaching resources are mandatory to meet the optimum standards and enhance the quality of education.

### Conclusion

Versatile, qualified, and dedicated faculties are the backbone of the nursing institution. A healthy and good work environment motivates faculties so that they align their efforts to achieve the goals of the organization. Overcoming barriers and challenges in nursing academia helps to improve the quality of education, and brings about the production of competent nursing professionals.

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