

Henrietta Szold Hadassah - Hebrew University
School of Nursing at the Faculty of Medicine



January 9, 2011

International Committee for the Evaluation of Nursing Study Programs

The Council for Higher Education

Jerusalem 91040

Dear Colleagues,

The Henrietta Szold Hadassah Hebrew University School of Nursing at the Faculty of Medicine, Jerusalem (SON) welcomes the in depth and insightful report written by the International Evaluation Committee (the Committee) for the Council of Higher Education (CHE). We appreciate the dedicated and professional work of the team members. We were very encouraged by the recognition by the Committee of the high motivation and high level of achievement of the faculty concerning academic development, research, and publication. The Committee cited the strength and relevancy of the curriculum of the SON and the high level of clinical teaching. We were pleased to offer them the opportunity to meet our students and be impressed with their abilities and achievements.

We have studied and support the Committee's comments and recommendations, and are actively integrating them into the existing dynamic strategic plan for the SON given our existing resources. The Committee's report has already been presented and discussed by our Internal Evaluation Steering Committee, the Faculty Forum and the Curriculum Committees of the undergraduate and graduate programs. In addition, preliminary discussions have been held with the management of the Hadassah Medical Organization, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, as well as the Rector's office of the Hebrew University. It should be noted, however, that full scale implementation of the recommendations require national and/or institutional commitment as demonstrated by ongoing discussion, policy development,

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economic investment, efficient and focused budgeting, creative organizational restructuring and action. The following are our comments related to specific aspects of the report.

Programs of study

The recommendations of the Committee coincide with processes that have been initiated at the School and are in line with the national agenda. The SON prides itself in addressing the issues and trends in national and international nursing on an ongoing basis. We creatively blend these trends into the curriculum in existing and new courses. Today's reality is that we have a curriculum that is 25% heavier and richer than the already heavy core mandated by the Ministry of Health Nursing Division (MOH-ND for the BSN program. The changes needed at the Ministry level are imperative in order to achieve an optimal curriculum encompassing continuing evaluation at the school level.

Unfortunately at this juncture there has not been formal approval of the "Nursing Law", which would define and support the scope of professional nursing practice. Academic nursing education also lacks a professional body that has formal jurisdiction on the quality of content and the context of higher nursing education. In the interim, we will suggest to the Forum of Nursing Deans of Israel (university based) and the Forum of Directors of Schools of Nursing in Israel (not necessarily university based), the creation of a nursing educational think tank. This body will be designed to encourage dialogue with the MOH-ND in order to meet the needs of the country as suggested by the content of the core curriculum, and by internationally accepted criteria for advancement in nursing. Preliminary discussions have already begun to the creation of this body.

An additional challenge that needs to be addressed at a national level is that of recruitment of high quality applicants to the nursing profession, assuring the growing needs of highly qualified nurses for care management and clinical decision making within the evermore sophisticated, complicated and demanding health care system. This agenda needs to be declared as a national mission, lead by the government. A proactive plan of action carried out in collaboration with various professional and non professional interested parties needs to

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address the image of nursing in Israeli society. Their actions should be based on strategic plan, focusing on increasing the visibility and credibility of professional nursing. The administration of the SON started raising this issue at various local and national levels. Additional aspects affecting the quality of the applicants and thereby the graduates are: relevant admission procedures; adequate number of faculty and clinical educators; and clinical instructors who are solely devoted to teaching without a patient load. Resource allocation at both national and local levels is once again a critical requirement for these challenges.

The SON, which includes the home academic institution at Hadassah and its two satellite schools, has a complicated working relationship. The original affiliation was a historic stepping stone for the national academization of nursing. Decades of growth and change and complex administrative models of each institution require extensive efforts to update the working model in order to reach the highest level of academic excellence that is equivalent at each institution. The SON works actively to create an environment of curricular uniformity and equivalency between the three schools, with a 14% increase in uniformity since the report was issued. There are unique challenges at the satellite schools including staffing, teaching strategies, infrastructure, and faculty academic development due to the multi-institutional organizational structure of the SON and heterogeneous financial agreements with the home institutions.

There have been some exciting developments since the Committee evaluation in the area of clinical master's education. Legal formal recognition has been established in Israel for an advanced clinical nursing practice role, "nurse specialist", with the first clinical area being palliative care. In addition, for the first time in Israel, master's level nursing education has been determined as the educational framework for advanced practice educational preparation. This is critical to the overall improvement of quality of care and an important step in the marketing and recruitment of quality students. Being clinical in its essence, the existing master's program at the SON fits well to become a platform for the expected preparation of

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the new specialists. The SON has taken the initiative to develop an MSc sub-track for palliative care to meet this national agenda.

We are also pleased to inform the Committee and the CHE that the non-thesis track has been approved this year and we look forward to recruiting more applicants, contributing to the growing number of nurses pursuing professional advancement while contributing to a higher level of health care. In addition, the MSc students at the SON have most recently been included in the Faculty of Medicine competitive academic achievement scholarship program. We are looking forward to expanding the possibilities through university financial aid as well as proposals for possible financial packages which include Research Assistant and Teaching Assistant posts, opportunities that are not yet offered.

We would like to comment on the statement made by the Committee report page 3 that "the number of masters' students (has) declined from 60 to 39 from 2008 to 2009". The number of admissions to the MSc program has remained stable, with an annual acceptance of 15-20 applicants in accordance with university agreements. During the initial years of the program students did not complete their thesis within the 2 year period mandated by the university. In 2006, a concerted effort was made from within the academic faculty of the SON to lead the students to complete their theses through pressure and support. Therefore, the reduction in the student body is actually a positive trend in that we accomplished the goal of timely thesis completion within two years.

Additional programs of study that the SON plans to develop are degree tracks for registered nurses to advance professionally and academically within developed roles (ex. BA (non-nurse) to BSN program; transforming post basic courses to masters degrees; RN to masters degrees- direct track; additional nursing Masters degrees in the areas of mental health, women and family health, sexuality and counseling- areas determined by field surveys). The development of a PhD program has been included in the relatively long term plans of the SON. The SON views the recommendation for a national PhD program as a

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realistic stepping point toward the actualization of this goal and has already started to examine this possibility within the university.

The SON has planned and supported specific initiatives by faculty members to include advanced teaching modalities in the form of culturally appropriate computer assisted interactive learning models, simulators and small group learning. These initiatives are financed, on the whole, by private small monetary gifts. The SON has also compiled a long wish-list of desired teaching modalities such as a simulation center and inter-site learning through distance learning in real time. There are a number of faculty members available with expertise in nursing education and learning technologies to lead such a teaching strategy transformation. State of the art learning modalities are also the vision of the Faculty of Medicine, and its current dean, Professor Eran Leitersdorf. However, each of the advanced teaching modalities suggested needs a large budget that includes materials development and physical infrastructure, faculty preparation, posts for trained faculty, evaluative procedures, and support personnel. Adequate financial resources for such initiatives are sorely lacking. It should be noted that the development and implementation of fund raising infrastructures are in the sole jurisdiction of the administrative institutions (Hebrew University, Hadassah Medical Organization, Ministry of Health, and Clallit Health Services).

Research and Faculty development

The recommendations of the Committee related to research and faculty development are in congruence with the vision of the SON administration. We are encouraged by the Committee's view that we are on an internationally recognized path to this goal.

The SON launched a Research Center in 2007. University recognized faculty and junior academic faculty develop a yearly work plan for the development, implementation, and dissemination of research. The SON has been through a process of academic evolution beginning with the faculty pursuing their doctoral degrees and then obtaining academic appointments at the university. This year's goal has been the support and submission of research grants. In addition, throughout the years, the research center has hosted, for both

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short visits and semester visits, various guest research leaders who share their expertise as well collaborate on research with faculty members. The center is very limited in infrastructure support including but not exclusively, research seed money, statistical support, grant allocation, and translation services.. This point was elucidated by the Committee. The continual search for research funding and international mutual collaboration is important recommendation that has been eagerly accepted. We at the SON also commit to the further advancement of our faculty and the development of relationships between the research faculty, research center and departments at the university.

We would like to highlight some of the essential comments of the Committee which need to be addressed by the SON, Faculty of Medicine, and university forum regarding nursing research:

- *Recogni(tion) of nursing research as an essential component in addressing the population's health needs*
- *Provision of full support to the nursing faculty in research development.*
- *Provi(sion) of significant resources for new academic nursing positions, research development, and enhancement of existing and new faculty ... to achieve the highest academic levels in nursing regionally and globally.*
- *Actively recruitment of international nursing faculty for two-year Sabbatical leaves, as well as, for example, senior Fulbright scholars to strengthen the department research capacity.*

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In summary, the Committee's report contains vital recommendations which have the potential to significantly contribute to the further growth and development of the SON at the Hebrew University. It is our goal to actively integrate these recommendations. The following short and long term processes will be included in our strategic plan.

1. Policy development reflecting an interface between the Ministry of Health- Nursing Division and academic nursing leaders concerning the core competencies for professional nursing and image development and marketing of nursing.
2. Development of organizational strategies for the generic undergraduate program to maximize uniformity and equivalency in terms of learning modules and outcomes, in addition, to strive for the best profile of potential applicants and efficient and valid admissions procedures.
3. Formulation of a creative working plan to expand the choices for learning tracks in the Masters program.
4. Creation of pioneering organizational strategies towards the continued academic growth of our faculty and our research agenda.
5. Identification and development of realistic and broad financial investment strategies.

In light of the findings of the Committee, we strongly recommend that the HEC and other stakeholders of nursing and nursing education work together towards developing a national campaign to improve the status of nursing and of nursing education and research of nurses in Israel.

The faculty and administration of the SON and its academic committees look forward to a dialogue with the university and the applicable administrative bodies of the SON in pursuit of the common goal to give practical meaning to the Committee's recommendations and develop an operational plan to bring them to fruition.

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To quote an empowering statement from the Committee report:

"Hebrew University could assume a leadership role in development of this national initiative and thus addressing the wide range of health care needs of a multi-cultural Israeli population through the extended support of advance nursing practice and nursing research development" (p. 13).

Sincerely,

Miri Rom RN PhD

Director and Associate Dean

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Wednesday, March 02, 2011

The Committee for the Evaluation of Nursing Study-Programs at the Hebrew University and the Hadassah Hospital provided us with a thorough and comprehensive report about the school. We thank the committee members for their analysis of the different programs in the school and for their recommendations. In adopting the recommendations, we have to negotiate among the different elements that shape the school, some of which are not under the control of the university. In particular, in addition to constraints within the Hebrew University, the School of Nursing is critically dependent on the good will and cooperation of the three hospitals involved in the programs and the Ministry of Health, each of which has different goals it strives to fulfill and different organizational culture it employs to attain these goals. The response of the School's Director addresses these codependences at length. The rest of this reply refers to the general concerns of the committee.

The committee recommends that we reconsider the current curriculum (which is mandated by the Ministry of Health) and increase the basic science content. We already begun a process of curriculum evaluation, but we have little control over the cooperation of the Ministry.

The committee recommends the use of new means of teaching, problem-based and computer-assisted learning. While we view this venue as highly desirable, we regard it as a national challenge that requires national support, as the creation of such means should be applied to all Schools of Nursing in the country.

The committee also recommends the development of a simulation center. Such a center is desirable not only for the School of Nursing, but for the Entire Faculty of Medicine. Indeed, the Dean has voiced his wish to create such a center several times in the last year. Unfortunately, this project is currently beyond the financial ability of the University. It should be a national project. We note in brief that a private simulation center of this sort currently exists, but the cost of using it is far beyond the ability of the school.

The committee makes several recommendations regarding the duty functions of nurses involved in the program. For example, that clinical preceptors should have no additional responsibilities to clinical training. The University, however, must rely on clinical staff employed by the hospitals. Even though we endorse this recommendation fully, we have little control over the policies of the hospitals.

The committee makes several suggestions to facilitate training of students who learn in special tracks. For example, to introduce challenge tests and to create accelerated tracks to advance degrees. We are currently examining these options as we consider them favorably. The committee recommends the creation of a non-thesis MA track. We have already adopted this recommendation.

The committee recommends maintaining a 1:15 teacher-students ratio at the advance degrees. We shall strive to achieve this end.

It also recommends that all theses be written in English. Although desirable, we do not think that such a requirement is feasible at present. Notwithstanding, when possible, we encourage students to write their thesis in a format suitable for publication in the professional outlets.

The committee envisions a graduate school in which students are given scholarships and research positions. Although such a vision is highly desirable, the current budget situation does not allow the University to fulfill it. We call upon the Ministry of Health to offer scholarships to student nurses in advance degrees, as a mean to develop the nursing profession.

The committee makes several suggestions about means to enrich the faculty at the School. The University is trying to actively recruit international nursing faculty, we also maintain close collaboration with Schools of Nursing in the United States. We encourage our faculty to play in the international arena, and we encourage collaboration between faculty of the School and faculty members from other areas, such as medical school, public health and the faculty of social science.

We should note that although the academic positions in the school are funded by the Hadassah hospital, the quality of the faculty and their advancement in academic ranks are determined by the university, according to the standard procedures in the Faculty of Medicine. In other words, the academic members of the school are evaluated academically according to the same standards as other faculty members. We think that this is an essential component in our attempt to maintain a high-quality School of Nursing.

Let me reiterate my appreciation of the work of the committee.

Sincerely

Yaacov Schul