

Nyadja Wandji Alain

Assignment 2

The history of the nursing profession in Cameroon.

Formal documentations on nursing and its evolution in Cameroon are hard to find and a lot of this history is handed down orally and some nursing research have been built around oral histories. Nursing education in Cameroon can be traced back to the start of the colonial era. When the Germans annexed Cameroon in 1884 they trained a type of medical personnel called ‘Dressers’(Maingeh,1999). A dresser was a surgeon’s assistant or ‘some sort of male nurse’ whose duty was to dress wounds and sores (Lee, 2005). There is virtually no local literature on what this training entailed and what the role of the dressers were in the health care system. The Germans were followed by the French and the British who partitioned Cameroon between them after WWI. In the French part of the country Dr Eugene Jamot according to the National Observatory for Human Resources for Health Cameroon NOHRHC (2010) opened the first school to train nurse aides in 1930. The training lasted three months and these graduates helped him in his fight against sleeping sickness. According to Kamta (1999) the training evolved to health assistants who were trained for three years and performed both medical and nursing roles. These health technicians were therefore not

described as nurses. Kamta goes on to add that it wasn't until 1959 that a formal curriculum based on the French model was introduced.

In the British Cameroons Maingeh (1999) reported that after the Germans left, the British continued using the services of dressers when they opened the African hospital in Victoria by 1933. During this time training for nurses was only available in Nigeria and since the British managed their territory as part of Nigeria it was easy for Cameroonians to study in Nigeria. The NOHRHC (2010) reported that the first training school in this part of the country was started by the Catholic mission in 1954 at Shisong. The school trained staff nurses in a three year programme. The state owned Bamenda nursing school was formerly opened in 1969 to also train staff nurses. These schools were all hospital based as there was no university based programme at the time. All the nursing programmes at this time were under the Ministry of Public Health. Graduate education in Cameroon has mostly remained inaccessible to the majority of diploma nurses.

The University of Buea (Cameroon's lone Anglo-Saxon state university at the time) began a four year training programme for the award of a Bachelor's degree in Nursing Science (BNS). The first batch of graduates left in 2001 and were mostly nurses who had previously held diplomas. It must be noted here that the duration of training was the same for both diploma holding nurses and candidates without any nursing background i.e. fresh from high school. The university conferred

its first Masters degrees in Nursing Education in 2009, and does not offer any doctoral degrees. The University of Yaounde I which is the oldest in Cameroon also started a Master in Nursing Science degree in the late 2000s. Entry into practice is still based on the three-year diploma which can now be obtained from both the ministries of Public Health and Higher Education. Preregistration diploma programmes also continue even as undergraduate programmes are now available. However, the pathway to upgrade preregistration and registration diplomas to bachelor degrees.