



**IMPACT OF ASSESSMENT REFORMS
ADOPTED BY UNMEB ON NURSING
AND MIDWIFERY TRAINING IN UGANDA**

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UNMEB

BACKGROUND OF UNMEB

Before the year 2006, assessment of Nurses and Midwives in Uganda was the mandate of the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Council (UNMC), which falls under the Ministry of Health (MOH).

In the year 2006, all departmental schools were transferred to the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) leading to the establishment of the Uganda Nurses and Midwives Examinations Board (UNMEB) under the (BTVET) Act No. 12 of 2008 and operationalized by Statutory Instrument No. 4 of 2009.

Since then, assessment methodologies and approaches undertaken by UNMEB have undergone fundamental reforms, whose impact is being shared in this presentation.



BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Nursing education and practice are evolving (Hoy & George, 2018), thus assessment must evolve to ensure production of nurses who meet current standards.

Assessment has always been a critical component of the education system as it generates information and depending on the nature and use, can play multiple roles in education, most importantly in accountability (Linn, 2000).

Outcomes of assessments together with accountability policy, consist a channel through which educational reform ideas may flow (NRC, 2002).



BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY CONTD...

Assessment reforms lead to evidence-based resource allocation and skillful change management - as well as the technical capacity in assessment (Kellaghan et al).

Assessments explicitly aim to contribute to improved learning outcomes, by stimulating action from the community, providing guidelines to tutors, or influencing government policy (Elks, 2016; Linn, 2000).

Assessment data in Uganda have been used more often for policy agenda setting, policy implementation and monitoring, than for policy formulation (Best et al., 2013).



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES GUIDING THE STUDY

To

- i) establish the assessment reforms that have been adopted by UNMEB since its inception in 2006.
- ii) find out the performance of stakeholders involved in nurse assessment prior to implementation of the assessment reforms adopted by UNMEB.
- iii) determine the performance of stakeholders involved in nurse assessment after implementation of the assessment reforms adopted by UNMEB.



METHODS

This was a mixed methods study that employed both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

It involved documentary review, (analysis of monitoring and evaluation reports, summative results, awards and examination committee meeting reports) indicating performance, pre and post implementation of the reforms over a period of years since 2006 till date.

It also had one on one interviews with key informants, focus group discussions, and site visits to schools especially for validation prior to conduct of examinations.



RESULTS: ASSESSMENT REFORMS

- Wider stakeholder involvement at policy and planning level
- Transition from manual to electronic examination data management (EMIS)
- Takeover from course exit finals to annual and now to introduction of Semester examinations.
- A shift from Hospital based practical assessment to the Objective Structured Practical Examination (OSPE) at the national level
- Development of Competence based and soft skills assessment modalities
- Paradigm shift towards continuous assessment (CA) contributing 40% of the final scores awarded by UNMEB
- High-quality timely feedback on the assessment processes to various stakeholders



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

Wider stakeholder involvement at policy and planning level

- MoES, MOH, UNMC, Private training Institutions, other Examination Boards, Legal Advisor, Principals, Directorate of Education Standards; Directorate of Industrial Training; All Medical Bureaus, Universities and UNMEB as Secretariat.
- The key intention was to ensure greater and direct ownership of quality of UNMEB assessment outputs by the training, assessment and practice stakeholders thus accountability.



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

Transition from manual to electronic Examination data Management Information System (EMIS)

Schools own registration of their candidates, improved means of collection of examination fees (and tuition for schools) with timely registration of verified candidates for most of the schools (90%).

Improved capturing (80%) and security of data, both for registration and candidate results due to controlled levels of access.

Ongoing realignment of the EMIS to suit documentation relating to ongoing changes.



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS – TRANSITION FROM MANUAL TO EMIS CONTD...

- Simplified tracking of student performance from enrollment to graduation (progress and Summative). Through the NSIN, e.g **M14/U001/DN/001**, UNMEB is able to monitor student performance, student transfer and accumulation of awards throughout their nursing career.
- NSIN formed the basis for **document cataloguing, response to inquiry, systems design, information search, examination data management**, among others, not only to UNMEB but also to the broad stakeholder spectrum.



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

Takeover of annual and later, introduction of Semester examinations

- All candidates are subjected to the same national examination for their level and program across the country (100%) under a semesterised syllabi.
- Improved coverage of the educational content for each of the semesters (100%) with an increase in number of papers sat from 3 to 5 per semester.
- Biannual validation of all the accredited examination centres for fitness of conducting examinations, hence improved readiness from most of the schools (95%).



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

A shift from Hospital based practical assessment to the OSPE at the national level

- High levels of objective, valid, consistent and reliable practical assessment for all candidates
- Retooling of all Practical Examiners (80% coverage) thus objectivity
- Improved preparation of candidates for OSPE since a wide range of skills are assessed at once
- Improved stocking of and access to the Clinical skills Laboratories (80%)
- Schools and their training hospitals have to put up modalities for the hospital based practicals during training



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

Development of Competence based and soft skills assessment modalities

- Students spend more time in the clinical area than cramming bookwork. This has resulted in improved performance especially in MCQs
- Schools have to increase practical placement sites, including Health Centres 3 and 4
- Action research into some sections of the examinations that were previously being poorly performed
- Retooling of setters and moderators to set questions at higher cognitive levels of Blooms taxonomy



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

Paradigm shift towards Continuous Assessment (CA) contributing 40% of the final scores awarded by UNMEB (starting this December)

- Realignment of log books and EMIS to suit the assessment criteria, followed by trainings on their use
- Various assessment styles at institutional level for CA
- Feedback from placement Supervisors informs decisions made by practice and academic assessors
- Supportive supervision of Principals and tutors on how to conduct objective and valid CA
- Incorporation of both assessment for learning (CA) and assessment of learning components (Summative)



RESULTS: IMPACT OF THE REFORMS

High-quality timely feedback on the assessment processes to various stakeholders.

- Use of conveyor belt system to mark theory examinations, thus objective and comprehensive feedback
- Improved quality of training arising out of accountability demands
- Feedback has been valuable in decision making on appropriate interventions for instance availing scholarships for tutors of specialized courses such as mental health nurse tutors, demanding for release letters for post EN/EM-RN/RM students due to poor performance in these disciplines.
- Transcripts showing all examinations offered by UNMEB instead of result slips.



DISCUSSION

- Assessment reforms have driven change at different levels of Nursing and midwifery training by informing;
 - i) the public about the overall state of achievement using disaggregated data (Kellaghan et al)
 - ii) policy makers who make decisions about licensure, accreditation, allocation of resources including tutors for special course units, skills and clinical areas (Kuan,2011).
 - iii) administrators on rewards and sanctions for their schools according to their performance (Rind & Mari, 2019).
- All these reforms have led to accountability in all the stakeholders responsible for Nursing and Midwifery training in Uganda.



CONCLUSION

- Assessment reforms adopted by UNMEB have consistently demanded for accountability from all stakeholders and have continuously proved to be a powerful strategy for ensuring that all the Nursing/ Midwifery students training at Certificate and Diploma level in Uganda are held to the same set of high standards.
- With continuous innovations in nurse education and assessment, the nursing profession will continue to meet and surpass needs and expectations of the society.



RECOMMENDATIONS

UNMEB/ MOES

- Keep on the quest for new innovations to equip the nursing profession for an increasingly demanding and complex healthcare environment.
- Conduct research on challenges of implementing the assessment reforms
- Intensify retooling of stakeholders on implementation of the reforms

Training hospitals and Mentors/ Supervisors/MOH

- promote a positive learning culture that allows honesty and openness, and a desire to learn through role modeling the soft and hard skills and performing objective assessment in continuous assessment



RECOMMENDATIONS CONTD...

Training schools/ tutors

- Implement the reforms to the later especially as concerns validity of continuous assessment

Students

- Embrace student centered learning and stay close to the clinical area for more practice and adaptability for the assessment reforms directly affecting them.



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