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CREDIT BY EXAMINATION: A FUNCTIONAL LINKAGE BETWEEN
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN NURSING

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

PH.D.

1979

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CREDIT BY EXAMINATION: A FUNCTIONAL LINKAGE BETWEEN
POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN NURSING

By

Odessie Goodwin Taylor

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Under the Supervision of Professor Willis Moreland

Lincoln, Nebraska

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TITLE

CREDIT BY EXAMINATION: A FUNCTIONAL LINKAGE IN

POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS IN NURSING

BY

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PREVIEW

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mobility of students who are enrolled in or applying to postsecondary schools has increased dramatically during recent years. Whereas at one time, transfer students were merely moving from a four-year institution in one state to another school in a different state; today, the individual is most likely going from one type postsecondary school to another. The reasons for these changes vary and are related to the number of adults beginning or returning to school, the diversity of postsecondary educational institutions, and the perception by many that college and/or career education is necessary for employment and advancement. Registered nurses and others who seek additional education are sometimes hindered in this process as policies and procedures allowing for these enrollments have not been fully developed. This study deals with the admission of adult registered nurse students into baccalaureate nursing programs and the validation of tests to be used as a part of this procedure.

Theoretical Apparatus

Schooling in America is served by four major systems: preschools and elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. These systems are hierarchial and can be divided into two types: traditional and non-traditional. The former involves education through secondary school plus higher education; while the latter is composed of the rest of postsecondary

education and includes technical, business, and proprietary schools, correspondence schools, extended campus programs, external degree programs, military schools, some programs sponsored by community colleges, and programs offered by industry, business and hospitals (Minter 1979).

These systems function together through linkages of varying strength and form. The attachments between systems develop over time as the system becomes formalized, as institutions recognize the need for articulation, and as societal forces demand continuity between systems and production of specialized workers. The linkages are classified as structural, purposive, supportive, productional, functional, or others. Structural linkages are concerned with the organization, administration and control of the institutions while purposive ones deal with knowledge and its various uses by each system (diffusion, utilization, and creation). Various supports or resources are shared by the systems such as methods, technology and personnel and in some instances one system prepares workers/professionals for the other system. Probably the most important linkage is productional since the product of all systems is the learner who may and does move between systems.

The functional linkage is that which assists the movement of individuals from system to system (see Figure 1). Certain characteristics can be attributed to these linkages: (1) they are common between any two well-established systems but weak with regard to evolving systems; (2) they are present between non-competing systems but unlikely in highly competitive situations; and (3) they are more likely when systems have comparable form, structure, and goals. Various factors increase the development of functional linkages such as financial support; consumer and governmental demands; attacks on a competing system; and public

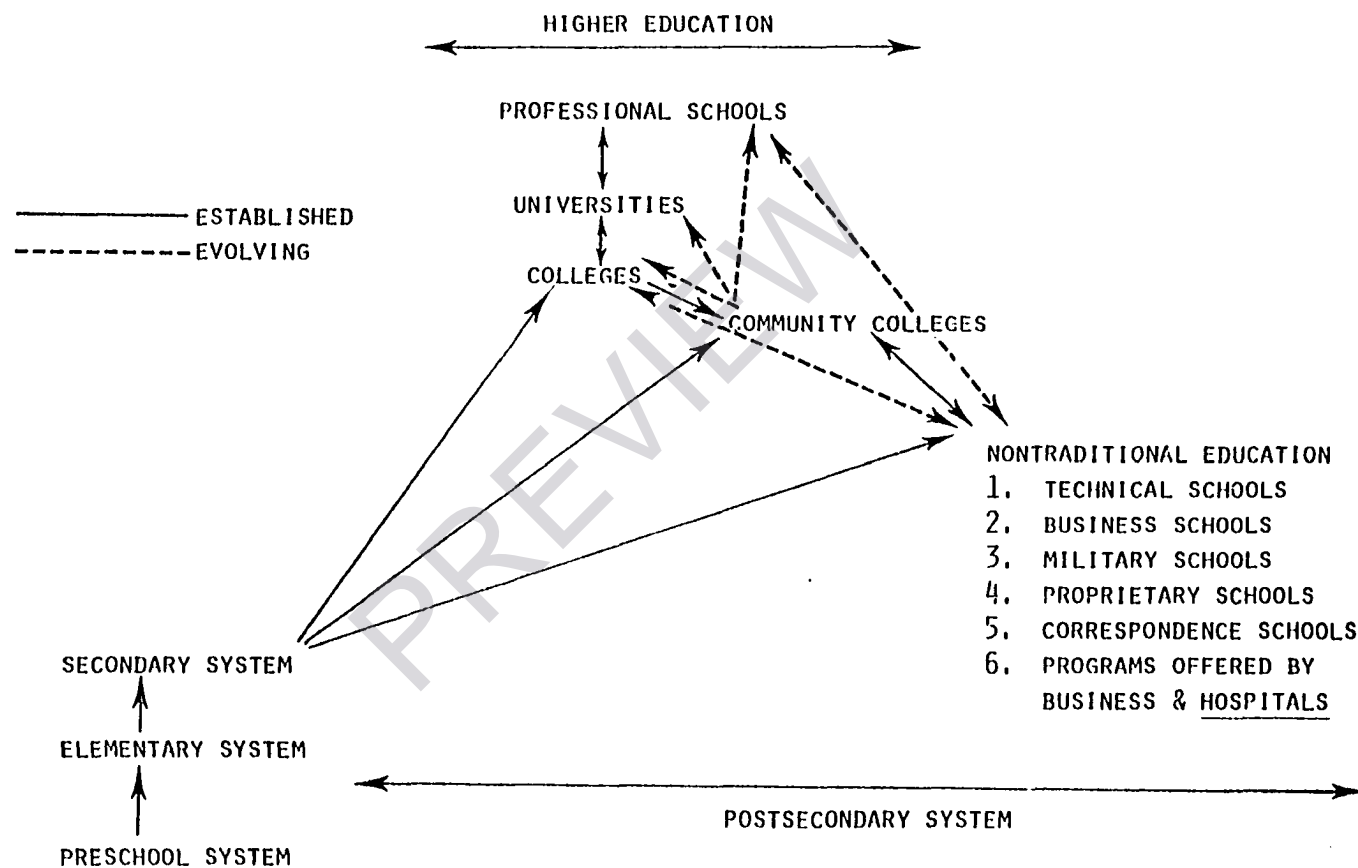


FIGURE 1. Hierarchical Arrangement and Functional Linkages of Educational Systems

acceptance of the system. Factors acting against these linkages include differing philosophical positions between systems; desire of a system or subsystem to protect a specific knowledge base; and questions regarding a loss of quality in education with articulation.

As our country becomes a learning society and life-long learning becomes a major force, functional linkages between systems have increasing importance. Postsecondary education has become diverse and as increasing numbers of adults attempt to move from one institution to another when their personal and career goals change, linkages of this sort must increase. Innovations which serve as functional linkages and which have developed during the past ten years are collaborative agreements between schools, validation of course content, credit by examination, and credit for experiences. While the last two methods have been in use for some time, limited instruments, techniques, and procedures are available to use with them; and all those available have not been validated. Two other types of functional linkages are also needed: those which assess an individual's possession of requisite knowledge and skills for any one specific field; and those which would counsel about and orient adults to new and different systems found in postsecondary education.

Nursing Educational Programs

Problems related to functional linkages are also found in nursing educational institutions because of their diverse patterns of organization and control. Currently education in nursing may be pursued in hospitals, junior colleges, and four-year colleges and these programs may be categorized as either basic programs for the high school graduate or for the registered nurse and transfer student (see Figure 1 in Appendix B).

Basic Instructional Programs

Basic programs are for initial education of nurses and are concerned with planning and implementing structured learning experiences which are designed to develop students into nurses, to insure proficiency in knowledge and skills, and to prepare them for initial licensure. These vary as to time it takes to complete the program and administrative control and are found in two kinds of institutions: hospitals and colleges.

The hospital diploma school is older than others and first appeared in 1873 (Bullough and Bullough 1969:129). During the period of its rapid growth (to over 1700 schools by 1920), hospital administrators were quick to open training schools in order to improve care by utilizing the enrollees as a cheap and available labor pool (Strauss 1966:71). Reforms of practices within these institutions proceeded slowly and it was not until 1950 when accreditation services were established that significant changes occurred. Subsequently many of these programs were closed and only 367 of them remain today.

Currently, the first year of the educational experience in many diploma programs is devoted to college courses in introductory basic and social sciences with the next one and a half to two years used to teach nursing courses and to provide experiences within the hospital setting. Much emphasis is placed on the technical and the functional nature of performance. In 1977, 22,243 applicants were admitted to hospital programs; 18,014 students were graduated; and the applicants and graduates represented less than 20 percent of all students in nursing. The data compiled in Table 1 indicate that the size of these programs declined sharply from 789 units in 1967 to 367 in 1977 with a concomitant reduction in enrollments.

TABLE 1

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF HOSPITAL DIPLOMA
PROGRAMS IN 1976 AND 1977¹

Selected Characteristics	Hospital Diploma		Total for All Basic Programs ²	
	1967	1977	1967	1977
1. Number of Schools	789	367	1,284	1,339
2. Admissions	31,283	22,243	60,673	112,523
3. Graduations	27,170	18,014	37,931	77,755
4. Enrollment	85,515	52,858	140,430	245,390

¹NLN Data Source Book, 1978.

²Diploma, Associate, and Baccalaureate.

Associate degree programs are usually found in junior or community colleges. Of all the educational units in nursing, this is the only one developed as a result of research findings (Montag 1951) and its rapid expansion follows that of the junior college. Approximately seventy semester credit hours are required for completion of the program. Usually the credits are evenly distributed between courses in nursing and those in the humanities and sciences (social and biological). Clinical experiences for these students are primarily in hospitals but may also include some selected activities in community agencies.

In 1977 (Table 2), 645 associate departments enrolled a total of 91,102 individuals, admitted 56,610 applicants, and graduated 32,289 nurses (NLN 1978). The growth of these programs is readily apparent since they now admit over half of all students in nursing. The number of programs increased from 276 in 1967 to 645 in 1977 and enrollments

TABLE 2

SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF ASSOCIATE DEGREE
PROGRAMS IN 1967 AND 1977¹

Selected Characteristics	Associate Degree		Total for All Basic Programs ²	
	1967	1977	1967	1977
1. Number of Schools	276	645	1,284	1,339
2. Admissions	14,577	53,610	60,673	112,523
3. Graduations	4,639	36,289	37,931	77,755
4. Enrollments	20,660	91,102	140,430	245,390

¹NLN Data Source Book, 1978.

²Diploma, Associate, and Baccalaureate.

increased four-fold and close to half of all nursing programs were associate.

The baccalaureate program in nursing was first introduced in 1909 at University of Minnesota (Bullough and Bullough 1969:173). The baccalaureate program is four years in length with the major in nursing concentrated at the upper division level. The social, natural and biological sciences provide a base for content in the major and electives are considered an important element of the educational plan. The electives provide opportunity for a more liberal education. Theory and practice are provided in management and also clinical experiences in community health. Graduates with this degree are usually able to function in a variety of agencies and to advance to middle level management positions after a relatively brief period of practice.