

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Nursing Education's Future: Blended Learning

To the Editor,

We are already in the era of a rapidly aging society and low birth rates. As expected, pensions are depleting, generational conflicts are arising, and the economic growth rate is slowing down. What about education? Unfortunately, downsizing universities has also started, triggered by a significant decrease in enrollment, and has begun to accelerate. What does this societal trend suggest to us as nurse educators? How best can prospective nurses be prepared to achieve a better, healthier society given these challenging circumstances?

Nurses are in high demand in a super-aged society. They help the elderly maintain their health as best as possible in nursing homes or through home healthcare. Their contribution, by extension, can reduce younger generations' financial burden to support the elderly as well as alleviate generational conflicts by controlling skyrocketing medical expenditures. A nurse's role is vital to say at least.

A paradigm shift from traditional face-to-face teaching to blended learning in nursing education will help meet escalating elderly-centered care needs in a more efficient way. Considering that a rapid reduction in the number of students will lead to the university downsizing its physical assets—e.g., faculty members, facilities, and/or capital—in nursing colleges, how to balance finite resources while ensuring the nursing education remains effective will be unavoidable and pressing in the very near future.

Blended learning is not only compelling in terms of verified educative effectiveness (Ocak, 2011), but also worthwhile in its flexibility. Nursing is theory-driven practical scholarship; thus, practical training is essential. Blended learning such as flipped learning for the improvement of teamwork-based problem solving (Ratta, 2015) and virtual reality-based simulation for the enhancement of practical nursing care competency (Jenson & Forsyth, 2012) will be highly applicable in preparing future nurses.

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