

Community Health Nursing Training College,
P. O. Box 185,
Navrongo.
6th October, 2021

THE PRINCIPAL
COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING TRAINING COLLEGE
NAVRONGO

Dear Sir,

KEY ISSUES TO BE FIXED IN COMMUNITY HEALTH NURSING TRAINING COLLEGE (CHNTC), NAVRONGO

I wish to bring to your notice a number of issues or happenings in our college which I believe need to be addressed for the growth of the college. Almost all the issues outline here have been brought to your attention and therefore the school authority a number of times, yet nothing tangible has been done to address them. As vice principal and part of the management board of the college, I believe I am part of the system. That is why I deem it necessary to catalogue some of these key issues for the school authority to take urgent steps to address them to enhance the progress of the college.

INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Our school, Navrongo CHNTC, is one of the oldest nursing training colleges in Upper East Region. It was established in 2002 long before the establishment of Zuarungu Nursing and Midwifery Training College (ZNMTC), yet ZNMTC has surpassed our college in terms of infrastructure. Bolgatanga Midwifery Training College has also improved remarkably in terms of infrastructure. Meanwhile our college over the years has been admitting more number of students than any of the nursing training colleges in Upper East Region. More number of students means more school fees; and hence, there are certain basic infrastructures that the college should be able to undertake using the development levy component the students' school fees. However, no single structure has been put up using these funds since I joined this college in 2014. For example, first year and second year NAP students have their lectures under pavilions which were erected since 2014 as temporary structures to accommodate the huge number of certificate students that were admitted that year. The college simply has no excuse for not being able to put up a simple decent structure that could be used as classrooms for those two certificate classes. Alternatively, the pavilions could have been closed with wooden boards or blocks to protect the students from the harsh weather (scorching sun rays, rain, and strong winds) and distractions from birds, animals and humans that they have to endure throughout their two-year training in the college. Because of the open nature of the pavilions, anytime new ceiling fans are fixed in

those pavilions the blades of the fans get bent and broken within a month due to the external wind, thereby causing the money spent on procuring those fans to go waste.

Secondly, the college cannot boast of a toilet facility and decent urinals for students on campus, especially the day students. The students therefore resort to open defecation on campus. Why should community health nursing students who are supposed to advocate against open defecation are compelled to engage in the same unhealthy and demeaning practice? Successive student leadership has complained about this embarrassing issue to management severally but nothing has been done about it yet.

Similarly, the kitchen staff that cook for the students have no washroom and changes room. Indeed, the National Accreditation Board (NAB), now Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) recommended that we should build a washroom and changes room for the kitchen staff as part of the requirement for accreditation by the NAB in our quest to run the BSc Public Health Nursing programme. However, a number of years down the lane, that important portion of the recommendation has not been implemented. I honestly I believe the college is capable of fixing these issues and does not need sponsorship to be able to fix them.

NO STANDBY GENERATOR

The college currently has no standby generator. On a number of occasions examinations have had to be postponed or cancelled altogether because of power outage and lack of a generator to run photocopies of question papers. Similarly, some events such as student entertainment sometimes get disrupted because of power outage and lack of a generator in the college to supplement. In some instances, the college has had to borrow a generator from a staff of the college (Mad. Shirley) for our college activities. If a private person can buy a generator an institution like ours definitely has no excuse for not acquiring one. Even if the college cannot afford a bigger standby generator like the one purchased by Zuarungu Nursing and Midwifery Training College, I believe the college is capable of procuring a smaller generator that can at least be used to power photocopy machines or the auditorium for functions.

NO DESKS FOR SOME STUDENTS

A number of students in C19 and D10 classes lack desks to sit on. It is frustrating to see students stand on their feet throughout a whole lesson due to lack of desks. How can such students take notes during lectures? The students sometimes have to borrow plastic chairs from the Catholic Church to write quizzes and have to place answer booklets on their laps to write. How can we expect maximum performance from students under these conditions? I remember bringing this to your attention in your office. The students also say they have laid several complaints yet two semesters have elapsed and this issue is yet to be addressed. I wish to plead that urgent steps should be taken to address this issue.

NO PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM FOR LECTURES

The sizes of some of the classes are so huge that some of the students barely hear the tutors when they are teaching. There is the need for a public system to facilitate effective teaching and learning. This issue has been discussed in tutorial meetings on a number of occasions; however, this problem is yet to be fixed. In fact, sometimes the college has to borrow a public address system from the students' religious group for certain important functions in the college. This issue should kindly be looked at.

ADMINISTRATION

It is my humble opinion that the college is not ran as a system. I will therefore urge that we take steps as a college to improve that aspect. I will explain this under the following headings:

1. VICE PRINCIPAL'S POSITION

The vice principal is responsible for direct supervision of all academic activities and other activities assigned to him/her by the principal. He/she is expected to step in for principal in the absence of the principal. However, that is not what is practiced in our college.

i. No office for vice principal

You will agree with me that the vice principal of the college has not got a separate office. Is it reality proper that the one who is supposed to be second in command and therefore is expected to attend to other tutors and staff as well as visitors in the absence of the principal has no separate office? I personally do not have a problem sharing an office with others, because it gives one the opportunity to chat and share ideas with colleagues on constant basis. However, if the functions and duties of the vice principal is anything to go by, I believe for the sake of privacy when dealing with staff and visitors in the absence of the principal, there is the need for a separate office for the vice principal of the college regardless of whoever is the vice principal.

ii. No stamp for vice principal

On several occasions I have had to write important letters on behalf of the principal in his absence and have had to resort to Academic Coordinator's stamp to certify those documents because I have been denied a stamp. Is it not insulting and ridiculous to say the least for a vice principal to beg for a stamp from the academic coordinator, who under normal circumstance would not even report to the me directly but through the programme heads, to stamp official documents on behalf of the college?

Similarly, the program heads who are supposed to directly supervise the clinical and the academic coordinators have no stamps.

iii. No official laptop for vice principal and programme heads

The vice principal of the college has never been given an official laptop obviously because the position is not respected in the college. No laptops have been assigned to the programme heads

as well. I recall ever requesting for an official laptop when the college was making some procurement plans and the question the Principal asked me was “What do I need a laptop for?”. He concluded I did not need one; hence it was not factored into the plan. If really the college was working as any educational institution is supposed to function where everything related to academic form academic coordinator, clinical coordinators and programmed heads are expected to get to vice principal before it gets to the principal, I am not sure principal would have asked me such as question.

iv. Principal not handing over or informing vice principal before traveling

I humbly think that best administrative practices require that the principal should usually hand over to the vice principal or at least inform the vice principal when he is travelling. On several occasions you (principal) would be out of town for FOUR (4) or more weeks without even notifying me as your deputy let alone to officially hand over to me. And usually during that period when you are away, you not communicate with me. The question I ask myself is “Who do you usually communicate and give instructions for the day to day running of the institution during the period of your absence?” And whenever you return from such journeys, you do not get me informed that you are back so I could come and brief you on any happenings in the school in your absence. That gives me the impression that the Principal has sidelined the vice principal’s position (probably because of the person who is currently occupying that position) and dealing directly with officers who are supposed to be reporting to the Vice Principal.

2. NO RESPECT FOR LINE OF AUTHORITY/CHAIN OF COMMAND

It is my humble opinion that there is no respect for chain of command in this college and I will urge that something should be done about it. This lack of respect for chain of command is both from top to bottom and from bottom to top. For example, Sir, you hardly pass any information or instructions regarding academic activities through me, as the vice principal and therefore your immediate subordinate. You bypass me and give instructions directly to people I am supposed to be supervising and they also report back to you directly.

Also, the lack of respect for chain of command from bottom to top ranges from planning of academic activities, writing of memos for allowances due tutors and for other academic activities, hiring of part-time tutors, to taking important decisions and communicating same to students by the academic and clinical coordinators without consulting their immediate supervisors; that’s, the Programme Heads.

Similarly, some of the Programme Heads are yet to appreciate the fact that they have an immediate supervisor; that is, the Vice Principal, whom they are expected to report directly to. It is rather ironical that some of them (programme heads) complain bitterly and sometimes confront the coordinators when the coordinators take decisions without consulting them yet oftentimes they also fail to consult the Vice Principal on issues that are brought to their attention

by the coordinators. Even sometimes, they also unilaterally take **key** decisions related to their specific programmes and communicate same to students or report same to the principal without the prior knowledge of the vice principal.

I am aware that every important academic issue is supposed to get to you, as the principal of the college. However, the phenomenon where the said officers bypass their immediate supervisors and deal directly with you, the principal, should not be tolerated in an academic institution which is supposed to be operated based on protocols and by people who are supposed to be learned. This very concern has been discussed on two occasions in management meetings and a number of times in tutorial meetings where it was agreed that that the academic/clinical coordinators should not submit memos on behalf of tutors without the active involvement of the programme heads and the vice principal but this continuous to happen.

Another example of disregard for line of authority is the instance where the Academic Coordinator permitted a student, without consulting the programme head of that programme, the vice principal or even you, the principal, to join his colleagues in class after the said student was unable to report to school at the beginning of the semester and was absent for TEN (10) consecutive weeks out of a fourteen-week semester due to ill-health. Indeed, it was the academic coordinator who verbally approved absence of leave request from the said student's parent without instructing them to officially write to the school and without informing the programme head, the vice principal or even you, the principal. I brought the said issue to your attention and suggested that the student be made to defer the course and join his juniors the following academic year since he learnt virtually nothing in that semester and had also missed quizzes, assignments and mid-semester examination. At the time he reported some tutors had concluded lectures with his class. My suggestion did not yield any result since you allowed the said student to join his colleagues. But as you indicated during our discussion on the said issue, even a colleague student of the student in question called you, Principal, to enquire whether in this college it was possible for a student to be absent for that long and comes back to join his colleagues. That for me was an indictment on the school authority. I believe that we all have a responsibility to ensure that quality nurses are produced since nurses deal with the lives of individuals. That decision that was taken set a bad precedence such that it will be unfair in the future to compel any other student to defer the course due to absenteeism as a result of ill-health.

I will therefore suggest that the Organogram that was given to us by the National Accreditation Board (NAB) during one of their visits to our college to use should be posted on the notice board fall all staff to know who they are supposed to report directly to. Since we were given that organogram by NAB and instructed to use, it has since been shelved. It has not been displayed for the staff to be familiar with it and we have never discussed it either let alone to use it as an institution.

NO ORIENTATION OF NEW TUTORS/NO MENTORSHIP

I wish to suggest that fresh tutors joining the college should be oriented and be mentored by senior tutors who are more experienced since they are mostly inexperienced regarding certain issues and happenings in academia. That is currently not the practice in our college. In fact, I have seen tutors join this college from the clinical area without being introduced to the programme heads and the vice principal under whose supervision they are expected to work.

NO VETTING OF EXAM QUESTIONS

The best practice regarding exam questions in every academic institution including universities is that questions and marking schemes are first vetted by a group of experienced lectures before they are administered to students. However, this is not practiced in our college despite the fact that I have suggested this on a number of occasions in tutorial meetings. I have on a number of occasions during conference marking discovered some questions that were ambiguous and others with grammatical errors or inadequate marking scheme. These go a long way to affect students' performance. I therefore humbly suggest that we institute vetting of exam questions in our college.

NO ACTION AGAINST STUDENTS WITH POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND STUDENTS WHO ABSENT THEMSELVES FROM SCHOOL FOR A LONG PERIOD

It is a common knowledge that the indiscipline among students of our college is getting out of hand. It is now a common practice where some students absent themselves from school for many weeks without obtaining permission from the school and nothing is done about it. Besides, unlike other schools where students who consistently perform poorly academically are usually demoted and sometimes dismissed, we in our college continuously push these students through the system. Indeed, we are on record to have admitted some students that we knew were dismissed from other nursing training colleges due to very poor and in fact questionable academic performance based on their WASSCE results that qualified them for the diploma programme. Some of these students cannot even construct any simple sentence correctly or even write any simple words correctly. Why should such people be admitted in the first place and be helped to pass through the system? Under normal circumstances such category of students should have their WASSCE results investigated. But if that is a complex process then the system should be able to sieve them out. However, that is not the case in our school. In my opinion that is the root cause of the indiscipline because the students know they will still go through the system no matter their performance or rate of absenteeism.

INADEQUATE SECRETARIAT STAFF (ONLY A SINGLE SECRETARY)

Currently the college has only a one secretary. She has been the only one in the secretariat for many years. Though she is hard-working, whenever she is absent from work the secretariat is mostly closed thereby making it impossible for staff to access the service of the secretary. This for me is unacceptable in an academic institution where tutors and students mostly require the

services of the secretary. I therefore suggest that the college should hire a casual worker with secretariat skills to assist the secretary while we make efforts to get a permanent staff. Alternatively, the school can always lobby for national service personnel to be posted to the college to assist the secretary. .

ENDORSEMENT OF DOCUMENTS FOR STUDENTS AND PAST STUDENTS

I wish to suggest that the vice principal should be delegated to endorse some documents for students and past students in the absence of the principal. A number of times students and past students get stranded, especially those from distant regions, when the principal is unavailable to endorse their documents such as logbooks, registration forms, and other documents that are supposed to be endorsed by the college. Sometimes they have to lodge in guest houses for a number of days waiting for the principal to return and sign their documents. This is not only inconveniencing to the students but also makes them incur a lot of cost.

NO REGULAR STAFF AND MANAGEMENT MEETINGS

Sir, I want to kindly suggest that regular meetings should be held in the college. There should be a schedule for meetings every semester which should duly be followed. For example, we have not had any tutorial or staff meetings for the past three semesters. Hence, pressing issues that need to be discussed are not discussed and therefore remain unresolved. This does not augur well for an academic institution in my opinion. In the absence of the principal, I think the vice principal by default should step in and chair those meetings. The lack of meetings is one of the reasons why I have had to use this medium to outline all these issues that I strongly believe need to be addressed.

NO INTERNET SERVICE IN TUTORS' OFFICES EXCEPT THE ADMINISTRATION BLOCK

The importance of internet service in an academic environment cannot be overemphasized. Currently the internet service on campus which was facilitated by the Ministry of Health about a year ago is limited to only the administration block premises. The college has not extended the service to the auditorium area where the tutors' offices as well as some classrooms are located; hence, tutors as well as students in those classrooms within the auditorium area are unable to access the internet in their offices and classrooms respectively. I understand that an additional internet booster is all that is needed to serve that purpose. I wish to therefore urge, you, Sir, to kindly address this issue to facilitate academic work.

POOR MAINTENANCE CULTURE

I wish to state that the current maintenance culture in our college is very poor.

On several occasions tutors use their own money to replace their office door locks, fan regulators, electric sockets, and extension cords as well as repair fridges. This is because anytime those issues are reported nothing is done about them. The students who stay in the school hostels also

give similar complaints. Most of the air conditioners in the various offices and the BSc block are became non-functional due to lack of maintenance barely a year after installation. Furthermore, most of the tutors have to make do with broken chairs.

The skills laboratory and the tutors' office attached to the skills lab have been abandoned and locked under key because that block has been heavily infested with bats and is leaking too. A lot of the items that we donated to the school by Japaigo as well as bed sheets, blankets, beds and mattresses have been stained by bat droppings. Even the simulator, worth thousands of Ghana cedis, has been badly stained as well. The final year students are preparing to write their licensing exams yet they cannot use the skills lab to practice nursing procedures because of the state of the lab.

I therefore wish to suggest that a tutor be appointed as Estate Officer or a Tutor in charge of Maintenance to take care of that. Meanwhile, there is the need to fix the skills lab and the adjoining tutors' office as soon as possible because the place is an eye sore.

NO OFFICE SPACE FOR SOME TUTORS

About six (6) tutors of the college currently have no office space. The office they were occupying is leaking and infested with bats as well making it inhabitable. As a result that office has been locked up and those tutors have been without offices for two semesters now. Despite the fact that this issue has come to the attention of the principal and therefore the school authority the issue has not been addressed. Some of those tutors now sit in the student library to do academic work. Others do not stay on campus for long after they are done with their lessons for lack of office space. How much at all will it cost this college to refurbish that office for the said tutors if really we have our tutors at heart? I wish to therefore urge the school authority to as a matter of urgency fix this problem.

NO PUNITIVE MEASURES AGAINST STAFF WHO CONSISTENTLY ABSENT THEMSELVES FROM WORK

Sir, I have noticed that some few staff consistently absent themselves from work, sometimes for months, yet no punitive measures has been taken against such staff. I do not think it is proper for anyone to be taking salary for free. But more importantly, if such culprits are not sanctioned to put them to order, will the school authority have any moral right to sanction others who may decide to emulate such deviant behavior?

NO FUNCTIONAL COMMITTEES IN THE COLLEGE

Sir, you will agree with me that there is no single committee in the college that is currently functional despite the bashing that the school authority received from the Upper East Regional Health Directorate some few years ago for not having functional committees in place and not operating the school as a system, when the principal and some staff were invited by the Regional

Director of Health Services. The school authority received the same bashing if not worse when staff of the national accreditation board came to our college to assess the readiness of the college to run the degree programme we were seeking accreditation for. I wish to urge that steps be taken to make committees in the college functional.

WORKSHOPS/TRAINING

i. External workshops

I wish to state that the current happening in our college where the Vice Principal is not usually informed of any invitation to external workshops let alone given the opportunity to suggest which tutor/s should attend does not speak well of an educational institution. Because of the current happenings, some particular tutors keep attending a lot of workshops while others are deprived of such opportunities. I therefore wish I to suggest that the Vice Principal, whose role is to directly supervise tutorial staff and academic activities in the college, should be consulted before selecting tutors to attend workshops. If the Vice Principal is consulted he/she will also consult the Programme Heads and the right people will be selected to attend workshops.

ii. Internal workshops/training

Since I joined this college in 2014, I can only remember a single in-service training that was organized some years ago on Home Visiting. As an academic institution I think we should take steps to have regular internal workshops at least once every academic year if we cannot afford to have one every semester.

DELAY IN PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCES/RELEASE OF FUNDS FOR CLINICAL ACTIVITIES AFTER APPROVAL OF MEMOS

Another issue that needs to be addressed is delay in payment of allowances/release of funds for clinical activities after approval of memos. I believe that the accountant is always consulted before memos are approved, yet there have some instances where the processing and release of funds for clinical activities are delayed thereby frustrating the organization of those activities. This needs to be fixed.

ONLY ONE OR TWO STAFFS RUNNING ERRANDS FOR THE COLLEGE

I have observed that only a few staffs are made to run errands for the institution. I appreciate the effort of those staffs but I wish to suggest that more staffs should be involved in running errands for the college because it is one of the ways to motivate staffs since these travels come with travelling allowances. For example, anybody from the academic board (which is made up of the programme heads, the academic coordinator, the vice principal and the principal) can be sent to the Nurses and midwifery council (NMC) to have students indexed, registered or to pick any forms from NMC. As a matter of fact all those who form the academic board are academic positions, hence any of them can even represent the school in any academic-related workshop or training. Currently, some tutors get the opportunity to travel more than four times within a single

semester on official duties while others have never travelled on any official duty since they joined this college. That is not fair enough.

Also, I believe that any tutor at all including the clinical coordinators, academic coordinator, programme heads, and so on can be asked to send students for psychiatric clinical affiliation. Currently, that is not what is practiced. We need to make a conscious effort to make everyone feel part of the school.

NO NOTICE BOARD FOR TUTORS/STAFF

I wish to suggest that a notice board be provided for staff. This can be mounted in the conference room. Currently the Whatsapp platform is the main medium through which information is communicated to staff. Though it is helpful, we cannot rely mainly on Whatsapp as an institution to share information since sometimes people have issues with their phones and therefore are out of Whatsapp for some time. Besides, people post all manner of unnecessary things on the Whatsapp platforms which sometimes make people miss pieces of important information. I made this suggestion in a tutorial meeting about three years ago and everybody agreed it was a good idea. You assured us it would be provided but it has not been done yet. This is a reminder.

NO WRITTEN GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT OF INTERNAL EXAMS AND INVIGILATION

I wish to suggest that the academic board should develop some guidelines for the conduct of internal examination and invigilation which should be communicated or made available to students. Currently there is none in the school.

EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE BY STUDENTS

There is a growing trend among our students where they write copious notes on their desks to copy during exams. After every paper they scrape the desks with a blade and write on them for the next paper. I wish to suggest that the desks be painted with some black oil paint if possible to reduce this malpractice.

The academic board should also ensure that standard spacing between desks on all axes is maintained during exams since most often the students sit so close to each other and thereby virtually copy each other's work. The rampant indiscipline and absenteeism by students is partly because they know they will always have the opportunity to copy from their friends.

In conclusion, I wish to state that I'm bringing all these to your attention with good intentions. I believe that if we all fix our small corners it contributes to fixing the country. It is important that we follow protocols as an academic institution that is aiming at running a degree programme. In any case, what is the use of creating positions and not respecting those positions? It is therefore

my hope that the issues raised will be given the necessary consideration that they deserve. I will be more than willing to expatiate any of the issues raised here if necessary. Thank you, Sir!

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E.A.', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

Ezekiel Apasera
(VICE PRINCIPAL)

Cc:

Programme Heads (PHN, RCN, NAP), CHNTC, Navrongo
Clinical Coordinators, CHNTC, Navrongo
Academic Coordinator, CHNTC, Navrongo
The Accountant, CHNTC, Navrongo
The Procurement officer, CHNTC, Navrongo
The Storekeeper, CHNTC, Navrongo
The Matron, CHNTC, Navrongo