Nursing Education in Ghana: Developing Nursing Curriculum to Improve Competency

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Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- Describe the expansion of nursing curriculum in Ghana
- Explain the challenges of seeking advanced nursing education/licensure in the United States
- List several ways that nurses educated in Ghana can meet U.S. educational and training standards

Education in Ghana: Quick Facts

Population
33.8 Million
2023, WHO

Language of Instruction
English
(and Indigenous languages in elementary education)

Compulsory Education
Completion of grade 9

Academic Year
August – May

Overview of Nursing Education in Ghana

- Elementary Education (6 years) → Basic Education Certificate (Junior Secondary Education) (3 years)
- → West African Senior Secondary School Certificate (Senior Secondary Education) (3 years) → Bachelor (University Nursing Education) (4 years) → Master (University Nursing Education) (1-2 years) → PhD (University Nursing Education)) (3 years)
- → Nursing Certificates (Assistant/Enrolled Nurse) (2 years) → Diploma in Nursing (Professional Nurse/ Midwife) (3 years) → Bachelor (University Nursing Education) (4 years)

Note: Not all award or study patterns are included.

Licensing Pathways for Nurses in Ghana vs. the United States

Ghana

Assistant/Enrolled Nurse

- Complete 2-year certificate program
- Pass the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) licensing exam
- Register with the NMC
- **Work as Assistant/ Enrolled Nurse**

Professional Nurse/Midwife

- Complete 3-year diploma or bachelor's degree in Nursing
- Pass the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) licensing exam
- Register with the NMC
- **Work as Nurse or Midwife** Opportunities to pursue specializations

United States

Licensed Practical Nurse

- Complete 1-year certificate program
- Pass the NCLEX-PN
- Licensure with a state board of nursing
- **Work as LPN**

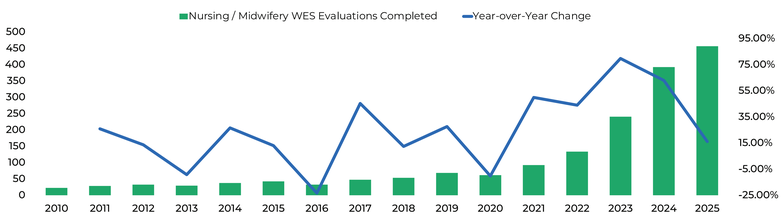
Registered Nurse

- Complete 2-year associate degree or bachelor's degree in nursing
- Pass the NCLEX-RN
- Licensure with a state board of nursing
- **Work as RN** Opportunities to pursue specializations (including midwifery)

Selected Highlights in Nursing Education Development and Curriculum Expansion in Ghana

- **1945** – Qualified registered nurse training was established during British colonization but was discontinued in 1968.
- **1972** – The Nurses and Midwives Council of Ghana was established through legislation to regulate the nursing profession.
- **1982** – The University of Ghana awarded the first bachelor's degree in nursing.
- **2005** – The University of Ghana awarded the first Master of Science in Nursing.
- **2007** – The University of Ghana led an initiative to award diplomas for study completed at nursing colleges because of formalized affiliations with the university.
- **2008 – 2018** – The numbers of nurses working in Ghana nearly quadrupled after the Ministry of Health expanded training and incentives through a formal Human Resource for Health Strategy. (Asamani, et al., 2018)
- **2011** – The Ghana College of Nurses and Midwives created the development of specialist clinician tracks at the post-baccalaureate level.
- **2013** – The Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act (857) regulated, standardized, and monitored the training, licensing, and practice of nursing and other health care professions. The Nurses and Midwives Council of Ghana updated its name to Nursing and Midwifery Council.
- **2017**
- **2023** – The Ghanaian-Diaspora Nursing Alliance is an international professional networking association which aims to connect nurses through collaboration, training, and health care innovation. Its president and co-founder, Yvonne Commodore-Mensah, PhD, is a professor at Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.
- **2025** – The University of Ghana awarded Ghana's first PhD in nursing..

Ghanaian Nursing Credential Evaluation Trends at World Education Services



Source: WES Internal Data

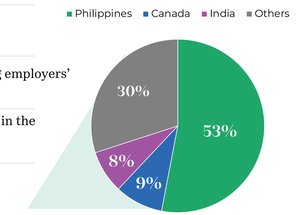
Key Takeaways

- There is a robust and growing number of WES applicants who studied nursing in Ghana.
- The growth in completed WES evaluations accelerated in years immediately following the COVID-19 pandemic.
- However, the rate of year-over-year growth decreased in 2025, indicating untapped potential for more growth in the future.

Barriers to Licensure and Employment in the U.S.

- There is a complex web of state-level nursing regulations.
- There are significant processing delays for employment-based (EB-3) worker visas.
- The filing fee for new H-1B specialty occupation visas increased, limiting employers' ability to sponsor prospective employees.
- Patient care technologies like electronic medical records are mandatory in the U.S., while paper medical charts are still common in Ghana.
- Established pipelines for internationally trained nurses favor certain countries, such as the Philippines and India.
- The unique U.S. health insurance model requires specific documentation for reimbursement, unlike the Ghanaian National Health Insurance Scheme.

Internationally Educated Nurses in the United States by Country of Origin



Source: BCM Nursing

Recommendations to Maximize Credentials for Licensure and Employment

1. Join professional associations like the Ghanaian-Diaspora Nursing Alliance to support professional network growth and expansion across the globe.

2. Review the mandatory requirements for internationally educated nurses, such as the NCLEX-RN and credential evaluation, set by each state's nursing board.

3. Bridge knowledge gaps in technological documentation standards and electronic medical records by exploring free and open-source software.

4. Enroll in bridging programs that meet specific state licensure requirements if offered by accredited institutions, especially to prepare for the NCLEX-RN.

5. Nurses seeking employment should highlight their clinical experience and advanced training when speaking to prospective employers.

Overall Takeaways

- The U.S. has a nursing shortage, and internationally trained nurses can help fill this gap.
- The expansion of recruitment from outside the conventional pipelines (the Philippines) will lead to a larger pool of qualified applicants for licensure and eventual employment in the U.S.
- Robust nursing training and education initiatives in Ghana led to graduates with the academic and clinical skill set to seek opportunities abroad.
- The significant growth in WES evaluations for Ghanaian nurses since 2010 demonstrates that this emerging and qualified group is ready and eager to seek professional opportunities in the U.S.

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