

The Academy of Health Sciences: Present situation and future prospects

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Background

Sudan is a big country with an area of about 2.5 millions kilometers (the largest country in Africa). The population was estimated to be 36,297,000 in 2006 (projected from 1993 census). The majority of population (69%) lives in rural areas. Administratively the country is governed by a decentralized federal system. Its health system during the last century had been considered as a model by many observers including the international health organizations. Sudan has always been pioneering in the health workforce training, the medical assistants school was opened in 1918, midwifery school in 1921, and Kitchener's school of medicine in 1924.

Nevertheless, during recent years, the statistics taken from strategic health plans showed the huge shortfall in human resources for health in the nursing and midwifery and other allied health cadres, the deficit in the nursing staff was approximated to be around (52.943), and (16.761) for midwives and health visitors, and (32.000) for medical assistants and other paramedics.

In order to minimize the effects of the above mentioned crises, a remedial step was taken when a historic document known as Sudan Declaration 2001 was signed as a joint initiative between Federal Ministers for Health and of Higher Education and WHO EMRO Director, and it was graced by the presence of the President of the Republic. The recommendations of that document mainly concentrated on the possible ways for the promotion of health services through educational programs and training of the nursing, midwifery

and allied health cadres. Sudan Declaration also called for upgrading the qualification of existing allied health workforce to diploma and B.Sc degrees by the year 2015. Due to several reasons, Sudan Declaration has witnessed slow implementation this puts pressures on the Federal Ministry of Health to establish Academy of Health Sciences (AHS), having a central headquarter and state branches in different parts of Sudan.

The Academy was inaugurated officially on 26th of November 2005, and honored by the presence of the Federal Ministers of Higher Education and of health besides EMRO Director. The AHS is considered as a good response to the Sudan declaration to meet the requirements of the strategic plan in bridging the gap and developing the health services with the acceptable quality.

Vision of the Academy

To be a leading institution in the professionally focused health sciences education and development of human resources.

Mission of the Academy

To scale up production of health personnel including nursing, midwifery and other allied health personnel; through provision of wide-base relevant and quality education to address the need in Sudan and beyond.

Values of the Academy

Excellence and professionalism: It is committed to the best academic, scientific and professional evidence based training and research. The AHS is providing education for free in order to promote nurses, midwifery and allied health disciplines.

Heritage: The academy students and the teaching staff are proud to have values being attributed to Sudanese heritage, culture, which based on virtuous ethics, and on the service approach adopted by the Sudanese Ministry of Health.

Creativity: The Academy encourages its candidates to be creative and unique in dealing with the national and international health problems.

Justice and fairness: AHS is committed to preserve the academic bases, cultural diversity, the objectivity and equality of opportunity.

Community Orientation: AHS contributes to developing sustainable programs oriented towards the health of urban and rural citizens.

Continuing Education: The academy is committed to continuing education for health workers to ensure the continuity of the growth and welfare of our society.

Academic Goals and Objectives

- To graduate health personnel who can contribute effectively to the delivery and improvement of health services.
- To equip candidates with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitude needed for standard professional competency.
- To provide in-service training and CPD activities necessary to keep health workers abreast of development in health services.

Strategic Direction

- To address the need for training in health sciences at basic and graduate levels.
- To contribute to the areas of health research and consultancy for health system and services.
- To achieve international status and recognition by international organization e.g. WHO etc..

Educational Philosophy system

The Academy is adopting an outcome-based approach, and the philosophy of education is based on problems solving. The AHS is accepting

students from the Sudanese higher secondary school certificate.

Curricula

The Curricula have been prepared by specialists in different aspects of Medicine and health sciences from the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Higher Education; these were approved by the WHO in a joined workshop at Gezira University. The Academy pursues a system of continuous curricular development and review; seeking to ensure quality of the educational process.

Academic Degrees

The AHS awards the following degrees:

- Technical Diploma equivalent to university qualification after studying six classrooms equivalent to 90 credit hours at least, including theoretical and practical training, 40% to 60% respectively.
- B.Sc after studying eight semesters equivalent of 120 credit hours; including theoretical and practical training, 40% to 60% respectively.
- Up-grading Old System Cadre: Four semesters equivalent to 60 credit hours; it includes theoretical and practical training, 40% to 60% respectively.

Programs taught by the Academy

They are 17 programs including general nursing and specialist nursing, assistant physiotherapy, dental technicians, ophthalmology technicians, medical laboratories, pharmacy technicians, health statisticians, psychiatric technicians, anesthesia technicians besides other programs.

Academic Structure

The structure of AHS is based on the decentralized system with a central Headquarter in Khartoum and state branches

Policy role of the AHS/HQ

- To develop educational policies, standards, guidelines and systems.
- To develop and revise Curricula.

- To train, develop and to build the staff capacities.
- To formulate system of supervision, monitoring and evaluation.

AHS Staff

We have full time and Part time staff with master and PHD degrees, while the tutors/Instructors are nursing and allied health staff with B.Sc.

Centers and Sites of Teaching

Teaching occurs within the hospitals; the AHS is making use of the training facilities there in accordance with its practice-oriented philosophy.

Figure 1: The Academy of Health Sciences HQ



States Branches

The AHS educational system is based on the existence of academic States branches distributed in most parts of the country. Established branches are:

- Kassala.
- Gadarif.
- River Nile.
- Blue Nile.
- White Nile.
- Sinnar.

Figure 2: Branch of the Academy in Kassala state:



Figure 3: Branch of the Academy in Blue Nile state



The state branches which will begin accepting candidate this year are:

- The state of North Kordofan
- The state of North Darfur
- The state of Gezira

Figure 4: Branch of the Academy in White Nile State



Figure 4: Branch of the Academy in Gezira State



Statistics

Table 1: Shows the number of students admitted to various academic programs at the Center and the States

Program	Admitted to Center	Admitted to States
Nursing Diploma	3,843	1,907
General Medical Assistants	---	272
Pharmacy Assistants	---	183
Laboratory Assistants	---	96
Health Inspectors	---	54
Public Health	---	42
Dentist	---	27
Operation Theater Attendants	---	30
Nurse Upgrading (Bridging)	513	87
Nurse Teachers Upgrading	208	---
Pharmacy Upgrading	177	---
Anesthesia Upgrading	85	---
Laboratory Upgrading	83	---
Dentist Upgrading	51	---
Total	4,960	2,698
Grand Total		7658

Challenges

- 1- Finance.
- 2- Expansion in states.
- 3- Curriculum development (review/new cadres).
- 4- Staff development and training.
- 5- Scarcity of Libraries/skill labs.

The way forward

- To develop a framework and pathway for clinical education based on competencies.
- To develop and maintain higher level of practice based on clinical competence, accountability and protecting the public from unsafe practice following the knowledge updates.
- To develop a monitoring system that evaluates every now and then the clinical practice and clinical competence supported and assessed by academically approved teaching staff.
- To develop a concrete applicable system of continuous training.
- To collaborate with other centers abroad and to be exposed to their experiences.