

Dietetics capacity and practice in Africa: An analysis of the state of affairs

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Inadequate capacity is recognised as an important barrier to delivery effective nutrition interventions in Africa. Recent studies have identified the key deficits in nutrition capacity in specific settings on the continent including insufficient number of trained nutritionists/dietitians, lack of degree training programs in some countries, limited scope theory-based curricula, and infrastructure deficits in training institutions. There is still much to learn about what capacities need to be developed, how capacity building should be done, and how it can be done sustainably in settings where nutrition programming is also limited by inadequate funding. One critical aspect of Africa's nutrition capacity gaps is the lack of dietetic training in many countries. In some countries, there are virtually no trained dietitians. As a result, not much is known about the practice and capacity gaps for dietetics on the continent. However, current evidence shows that the continent is going through rapid transitions in nutrition leading to increased rate of diet-related NCDs alongside existing undernutrition. These conditions require not only public health interventionists but also dietitians with up-to-date knowledge and skills to provide care that leverages food and dietary knowledge and skills and how it is linked with individual biological situations as well as social and environmental dynamics. There are not many examples to look to that are relevant to the African continent, given that dietetics remains nascent in most African Countries, except a few. In Ghana, and South Africa, recent studies on dietetics practice and competence provide opportunity to develop and continent-wide framework that can be contextualized in various settings in order to begin building up dietetics competency on the continent. This paper will discuss the findings of the continental dietetics study of Africa, the study on dietetics in Ghana and the evolving changes in the nutrition and dietetics landscape in Ghana and South Africa as a basis for lesson learning.