ONY BUTTERWORTH, head of one of the UK's leading schools of nursing, a pioneer of community psychiatric nursing, fellow of the Royal College of Nursing and general mover and shaker in the profession, has revealed why he chose nursing in the first place.

'My mother wouldn't let me be a farmer. She told me to get a proper job,' he says. The proper job in question was a nurse post at his local psychiatric hospital, Storthes Hall in Huddersfield, in the late 1960s.

It was the beginning of an influential career in mental health nursing and in nurse education, the past two years of which have been spent as chair of the Council of Deans and Heads of the UK University Faculties of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Professor Butterworth's stint in the elected post is coming to an end. It has been a stormy time for nurse education, with claims from the media and professionals that nursing has become too academic and students spend too long in the classroom and not long enough at the bedside.

This came to a head early this year when health secretary Frank Dobson blamed the academic emphasis of nurse education for discouraging potential recruits. The move towards an all-graduate profession became part of the controversy and there were fears that Mr Dobson would move nurse education out of higher education and back into the NHS.

This now looks unlikely, but Making a Difference, the government's recently published strategy for nursing, midwifery and health visiting in England, calls for more NHS involvement in selecting and supporting students.

Professor Butterworth agrees with this approach. 'When nurse education moved into universities, in many instances the NHS let it go,' he says. 'This meant some people didn't emerge with the right clinical skills. Some negotiating will need to be done so that we can offer good placements to students, but it need not be difficult. Nurse education will become more effective as a result, as long as it is a partnership of equals,' he says. One way of ensuring high quality clinical experience for students would be to appoint clinical deans to take charge of it, he adds.

Despite the controversy, Professor Butterworth remains convinced the move from the NHS to higher education was the right one. 'It has not been without difficulty, but in the longer term it will be to everyone's advantage,' he says.

Nursing students benefit from mixing with people who are studying other disciplines and become broader thinkers. 'It brings nursing out of being a mono-subject profession. It puts us into partnership with medicine, dentistry and pharmacy.' The move has also resulted in thousands of women entering higher education.

'The scheme worked well for young cadet nurse Butterworth. After gaining his RMN, he worked as a staff nurse for two years and then went on to gain his general nurse qualification, which he describes as the 'done thing' at the time.

He took jobs in orthopaedics and A&E at Manchester Royal Infirmary before moving back to mental health nursing in 1971 by becoming a community psychiatric nurse. 'I always had a stronger leaning towards mental health nursing,' he says. 'I suppose I have good interpersonal skills — my mother always said I was a charming boy.'

Professor Butterworth drew on those skills in his new role as part of a team based at the University Teaching Hospital of South Man-chester. But he found that his training in a large psychiatric hospital did not equip him fully for working in the community. 'We were expected to work in people's homes, where they were in charge. There was limited material to help us. That's what made me move into education,' he says.

Government criticism and bad publicity have made the past few months difficult for nurse education. Dina Leifer talks to the man who steered the UK nursing faculties through the tough times.
He began teaching a course in community psychiatric nursing at the then Manchester Polytechnic — only the second course of its kind in the UK. He also co-wrote a book, *Community Psychiatric Nursing*, which became a classic text.

Professor Butterworth spent 11 years at the polytechnic, developing advanced courses in mental health nursing, rising to the position of head of nursing. In 1987 he left to become the Queen's Nursing Institute Professor of Community Nursing at the University of Manchester and subsequently Dean of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

**New career move**

As well as his main job and being chair of the Council of Deans and Heads, Professor Butterworth also finds time to be a non-executive director of the Central Manchester Health Care Trust, to direct the WHO Collaborating Centre for Reference, Research and Education in Primary Health Care Nursing at the university and to be secretary general of the global network of WHO collaborating centres for nursing.

Whatever job he is doing, he carries a huge, battered briefcase with him, which he says contains his whole office. 'I feel lost without it. If I go home without it, I feel nervous.'

On the few occasions when he does leave his briefcase behind, Professor Butterworth is a motorcycle enthusiast and also owns a narrow boat. He takes great pleasure in 'watching Yorkshire thrash Lancashire' at cricket and is one of those rare creatures — a Manchester United fan who lives in Manchester.

One thing his busy schedule does not allow time for is clinical work, which he regrets. 'I could have an affection for doing it, but I would rather do it properly,' he says. It's not the sort of thing you can do for ten minutes a fortnight.'

Professor Butterworth's next career move will be in September, when he will give up his job as dean to become a pro vice chancellor of Manchester University. His responsibilities will include liaising with the NHS and the regional assembly for the north west of England when it is established.

He believes nursing will gain much from the high profile post. 'I am very pleased to have this kind of opportunity for nursing. It will be able to take its place alongside all the other subjects,' he said