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Theme Session 8D
Student experience , engagement and achievement

8Di, 14:10 - 15:45, 3 September 2021
Research paper
Returning to clinical practice in healthcare: Student experiences on a return to practice programme: A qualitative study
Maggie Coates, Northumbria University

Promotional abstract: Nurses allow their registration to lapse for many different reasons. With the current emphasis on increasing nursing numbers, there is a need for a greater understanding of those seeking to return to the register through a Return to Practice programme (returnees). Much of the literature focuses on the nature of the provision of programmes, rather than experience of returnees. This session will report on the findings of a study which aimed to identify what returnees and stakeholders considered to be good practice, and to highlight how returnees could be better supported.

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: With the current emphasis on increasing nursing numbers, there is a need for a greater understanding of the experiences of those undertaking RTP programmes (returnees). The literature focuses on the nature of the provision of programmes, rather than experience of returnees. Reasons for healthcare professionals allowing their registration to lapse include a variety of reasons. McMurtie (2014) found that acceptance back in clinical practice and development of professional self-esteem and confidence were paramount in enabling a successful return to the workforce. A better understanding of the effectiveness of processes which support this could enhance RTP programmes.

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): A CIPP (Context, Input, Process, Product) Evaluation (Shufflebeam, 2003) was undertaken at one University which has been running an RTP programme for over 30 years. The aim of this formal evaluation process was to help identify the aspects of the programme which the returnees and stakeholders considered to be good practice, which could be shared to inform programme development across the sector, and highlight any areas of the programme which would benefit from an alternative approach.

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: In line with the CIPP framework, quantitative programme information was collated from programme records – the number of applicants, course completion rates, destination data. Qualitative data included reflections on the programme content and delivery from key stakeholders, including Practice Placement Facilitators who are employed to coordinate returnees' experience on the practice placement, academic members of the programme team, and returnees.

Key findings and recommendations: The study is currently in progress, and running concurrently with preparations for the programme re-approval in April 2020. Initial findings

indicate that consideration of returnees' identity and leadership in clinical practice settings are key factors impacting on the returnees' experience, and this session will present final findings and recommendations for future Return to Practice programme development and delivery.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- Articulates the complexities involved in delivery of Return to Practice programmes.
- Contributes to the sector knowledge on strategies to increase nursing numbers.
- Conceptualises the way in which returnees negotiate the challenges of returning to the professional register.

References:

McMurtrie, L.J., Cameron, M., Oluanaigh, P. & Osborne, D.Y. (2014) 'Keeping our nursing and midwifery workforce: Factors that support non-practicing clinicians to return to practice.' *Nurse Education Today*, 34(5), 761-765.

Keywords: Return to Practice, Evaluation, Clinical practice, Professional Identity.

8Dii, 14:10 - 15:45, 3 September 2021
Research paper
Listening to the voices of student Children's Nurses
Jenny Pinfield, Emily Baker and Jamie Brockett, University of Worcester

Promotional abstract: Children's Nursing is a popular field of nursing practice, with applications continually exceeding places available. Children's Nursing cohorts are small, compared with the Adult and Mental Health Nursing cohorts, who they study alongside. But attrition can be high and satisfaction with their studies variable. This presentation identifies and explores Children's Nursing students' reasons for applying for the course, their expectations, experiences and specific challenges they have faced, and examines the reasons why students may consider leaving their studies early. The findings have been used to develop a toolkit of ideas/resources to improve retention, particularly for first year Children's Nursing students.

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: Children's nursing involves meeting the health and care needs of babies, children and young people. It is a popular field of nursing practice, continually receiving more applications than places available. Children's Nursing cohorts are small, compared with other fields of practice, who they study alongside. At the institution where the project took place, Children's Nursing students had historically been the most satisfied of nursing students and had excellent retention. But 2019 saw a dip in NSS satisfaction and increasing levels of attrition, particularly during the first year.

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): The project aims to:

1. Identify and explore Children's Nursing students' reasons for applying for the course, their expectations, experiences and specific challenges they have faced.
2. Develop a toolkit of suggestions to promote retention in year one.
3. Identify potential strategies to improve the student experience.

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: The study was completed as a 'student as academic partners' project. It involved a Nurse Academic and two Children's Nursing students. Focus groups were completed with each Children's Nursing cohort, facilitated by a student and academic. Participants were also able to provide anonymous comments via a drop-box. The students then transcribe the interviews. In partnership with the Nurse Academic the data was analysed to identify themes. As ethical issues related to potential power imbalance existed, ethical approval was sought and granted by the University Ethics Committee.

Key findings and recommendations: The initial findings include:

- Too much focus on Adult Nursing in shared modules;
- Need for skills and simulated learning activities to recognise the needs of children's nurses: Children's Nursing not always being what the student expected prior to starting their studies;
- The specific needs of children's nurses not always recognised by the wider course team;
- Placement-related issues;
- Perceived lack of children's nursing leadership;
- Not feeling their voice was heard.

The project team are currently exploring the findings in more depth to identify strategies to improve the student experience and retention. But quick fixes have already been identified including having dedicated course management committee meetings for the Children's Nursing cohort, so their voice can be heard. Identifying specific child-focused skills to include during skills and simulation weeks, ensuring Children's Nursing students are allocated a Children's Nurse Academic for their final year dissertation.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- A student as academic partners project - working with student children's nurses on a project of significant relevance to them.
- Development of a toolkit of strategies to improve student experience and retention.
- Adds to limited literature which specifically focuses on experiences and attrition in Children's Nursing Education.

References:

Wright, J. & Wray, J. (2012) 'Exploring the experiences and expectations of year 1 children's nursing students.' *Nursing Children and Young People*, 24(4), 24-8.

McKeever, S., Whiting, L., Anderson, D. & Twycross, A. (2018) 'Causes of ATtrition in CHIldren's NursinG (CATCHING): An exploratory mixed method study.' *Nurse Education in Practice*, 32, 44-51.

Keywords: Children's Nursing, Experiences, Attrition, Toolkit.

NHS policy and nurses' Post-Registration development: Considerations of data availability and generation

Nicola Fisher, University of Nottingham

Promotional abstract: Post-Registration development for nurses has been shown to be a key intervention for retention, and to improve the quality of care. In the UK, it is the responsibility of employers, governed by national policy. Therefore, a review of national policy (1989-2020) documents using discourse analysis was conducted to consider influences on Post-Registration development. Overall, there were constant changes in direction and a lack of clear responsibility. Equally problematic is the lack of data used to inform policy decisions. If nursing workforce problems are to be resolved, sustainable policy and better workforce data are needed.

Background, including underpinning literature and, wherever possible, the international relevance of the research: Whilst the COVID pandemic moved the development of the nursing workforce further up the policy agenda in the UK (Buchan, Ball and Shembavnekar *et al.*, 2020), nurses' post-registration development remains fragmented and lacks national cohesion. National policy is the overarching mechanism for employers, who remain responsible for nurses' post-registration development. Post-registration development for nurses has been shown globally to be a key intervention for retention, and quality of care improvement. Employers work in partnership with local higher education institutions (HEIs) to meet workforce demand and requirements set by policy. Therefore, exploring policy is key to understanding why development is fragmented.

Aim(s) and/or research question(s)/research hypothesis(es): To explore policy influences upon nurses' post-registration development in the English NHS.

Research methodology/research design, any ethical issues, and methods of data collection and analysis: Document analysis of UK (pre-devolution) and England-only NHS policy documents (1989-2020) focusing on the nursing workforce. This generated 34 policy papers, which were analysed using an abductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Key findings and recommendations: The policy landscape is characterised by changing priorities, as well as unclear responsibility and accountability. This is coupled with a lack of dedicated funding and recurring short-term quick fixes. More fundamental is a chronic lack of data to enable informed decisions about workforce planning and modelling. This makes developing strategy for post-registration development of nurses impossible because the fundamentals of the workforce are not understood. The nursing workforce is being constituted by numbers, without the data to inform such decisions. To generate the quality and quantity of data that is needed for appropriate and effective workforce development planning, there are challenges in understanding 'work done' within nursing, which are overlooked in policy. If nurses' work is not recognised in its entirety, then workforce planning, particularly demand modelling, which focuses on understanding the future needs of a service (Gibson, 2021), is more difficult. This compounds the problems with post-registration development data, policy and strategy. Policy makers need to move away from the short termism that has characterised nursing workforce strategy and focus on developing long-term sustainable polices, including data generation and quality, that invest in nurses' development beyond registration.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

- NHS nursing workforce policy has been characterised by short-termism, changing priorities and a lack of funding which has led to fragmented post-registration development across England.
- A more fundamental issue is the lack of core data on the nursing workforce, which makes developing post-registration career structures and progression very challenging.
- Reliable data is needed to underpin policy generation and application in order to help employers and HEIs develop and retain nurses.

References:

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2). 77-101.

Buchan, J., Ball, J., Shembavnekar, N. & Charlesworth, A. (2020) *Building the NHS nursing workforce in England. Workforce pressure points.* London: The Health Foundation.

Gibson, A. (2021) *Agile workforce planning. How to align people with organisational strategy for improved performance.* London: Kogan Page Limited.

Keywords: Nursing, Post-Registration Development, NHS Policy, Data, Retention.

8Div, 14:10 - 15:45, 3 September 2021
Innovation paper
Academic study skills and community of support: Targeted interventions to improve the student experience
Dr Jamie Adam, Belmont University

Promotional abstract: Nursing student retention is a global concern with rates as low as 50% in the US and 30% internationally. One facet of student retention is academic success. High-stakes assessments without proper preparation in study skills may result in students failing courses or struggling through coursework. Many students report feeling overwhelmed and fears of failure. Interventions targeted at supporting academic study skills in a nurturing community have the opportunity to improve student retention and the overall student experience. Implications exist for using similar interventions in all Healthcare training programmes and improving the learning experience for the Healthcare students of tomorrow.

Background, context and evidence base for the innovation, including, where possible, its international relevance: Nursing student retention is a global concern with rates as low as 50% in the U.S. and 30% internationally. One facet of student retention is academic success. High-stakes assessments without proper preparation in study skills may result in students failing courses or struggling through coursework. Many students report feeling overwhelmed and fears of failure. Interventions targeted at supporting academic study skills in a nurturing community have the opportunity to improve student retention and the overall student experience. Implications exist for using similar interventions in all Healthcare training programmes and improving the learning experience for the Healthcare students of tomorrow.

Aim/focus of the innovation: A study skills workshop was designed to teach students a 4-step strategy for how to study and prepare for exams in Nursing school. After the workshop, students are invited to join a virtual community for support in implementing the study

strategies, getting feedback and encouragement from peers from Nursing students across the country.

Implementation of the innovation: The workshop was first offered in Fall 2019 and has been repeated each semester, virtually and live. Approximately 200 students have participated in the workshop and 112 have joined the virtual community.

Methods used to assess the innovation: Students are asked to provide written feedback after the workshop and after participating in the community at least 1 month. In Summer 2021, I will be piloting a pre- and post-survey tool to assess students' knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding study habits.

Key findings: Student feedback themes include, increased confidence in study skills, increased confidence in their ability to successfully complete the nursing program and an increased sense of belonging from peers.

Three key points to indicate how your work contributes to knowledge development within the selected theme:

1. A literature review of the retention factors reveals the need for a multi-faceted approach to improving student retention.
2. Academic preparation begins with learning how to learn, a factor not addressed in many Nursing programs.
3. The shift to virtual learning has created the need for innovative ways to maintain a sense of belonging and community for students.

References:

Bakker, E.J.M., Kox, J.H.A.M., Miedema, H.S., Bierma-Zeinstra, S., Runhaar, J., Boot, C.R.L. & Roelofs, P.D.D.M. (2018) 'Physical and mental determinants of dropout and retention among nursing students: Protocol of the SPRiNG cohort study.' *BMC Nursing*, 17, 1–9. doi:10.1186/s12912-018-0296-9.

Fontaine, K. (2014). 'Effects of a retention intervention program for associate degree nursing students.' *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 35, 94–99. doi:10.5480/12-815.1.

Mooring, Q.E. (2016) 'Recruitment, advising, and retention programs—Challenges and solutions to the international problem of poor nursing student retention: A narrative literature review.' *Nurse Education Today*, 40, 204–208. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2016.03.003.

Walker, L.P. (2016) 'A bridge to success: A nursing student success strategies improvement course.' *Journal of Nursing Education*, 55, 450–453. doi:10.3928/01484834-20160715-05.

Watson, D., Monson, K. & Marshall, B. (2019) 'Working on nursing students' resilience.' *Kai Tiaki Nursing New Zealand,* 25, 14–16.

Keywords: Student Retention, Study Skills.