Magnet Facility Nurses: Pursuing a Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing

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Background

In the 2011 Future of Nursing report the IOM cited increasing complexity of healthcare and improved outcomes in facilities with predominately baccalaureate degree nurses increasing the proportion of nurses with a BSN to 80% by 2020. Subsequently, the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) encouraged all Magnet Facilities to meet this goal.

Barriers to returning to school:
- Competing professional & personal priorities (Altman, 2011).
- AD & diploma RN lack of understanding what could be gained from further education (Orsolini-Hain, 2012).

Facilitators to enrolling & completing school:
- Flexible work schedules.
- Financial and personal support.
- Appropriate classroom environment & support from classmates (Altman, 2011; Warren & Mills, 2009):

Research Questions:
A 500-bed twice designated-Magnet facility with a 60% baccalaureate staff posed the following research questions in an attempt to meet the IOM recommendations:
1. What were the incentives and barriers for diploma/AD educated staff nurses to consider returning to school?
2. When a nurse returns to school, what factors predict graduation with a baccalaureate degree?

Methods

Descriptive analysis
- Key constructs for returning to & staying in school were identified (Altman, 2011; Warren & Mills, 2009):
  - Individual characteristics
  - Organizational influences
  - Academic factors
  - Mediated by perceived effort & personal commitment.

Ethical Considerations:
- Institutional Review Board granted exempt status.

Measure:
- Survey
  - Demographic-age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational status, & work history.
  - 14 multiple choice/rank ordered items and one-open ended question.
  - Questions addressed:
    - Barriers and facilitators of returning to school.
    - Those who had never gone back were asked to select the main reason for not returning to school.
    - Respondents were asked to address in their own words why nurses choose or do not choose to obtain a baccalaureate degree.

Procedure:
- Survey Monkey was used for online delivery & responses.

Data analysis:
- Descriptive analysis completed using SPSS 20.
  - The open-ended question analyzed using general thematic analysis.

Results

Demographics
- Approximately 20% of hospital’s nurses (N=191) responded to the survey.
- Demographics:
  - Worked in 20 different units.
  - 78% in RN practice more than 10 years.
  - 70% were 41 years of age & older.
  - 78% entered nursing as AD or Diploma; 84% had already completed or were currently enrolled in a BSN/MSN program.
  - Time to return to school ranged from immediately to 43 years.
  - 14.7% reported no intention of returning to school.

Facilitators & Barriers:
- Barriers most frequently selected were financial concerns (47%), no effect on competence (38%), & ability to succeed were reported for 16%.
- 80% of nurses selected support of other nurses as the most important facilitator in returning to school.

Qualitative findings
- 161 out of 191 responded to the open-ended question “why do nurses choose or do not choose to get a BSN.”
- Most frequent were nurse-related factors: e.g. time, finance, & positive or negative attitudes toward BSN.
- Employer expectations accounted for 36% of facilitators.
- Choosing to pursue were related to personal goals, not wanting to be left behind.
- A frequent theme related to not returning to school was a perceived lack of value of baccalaureate degree.
- Employer factors mentioned by many including tuition reimbursement & worry about future employability.
- 11 nurses specifically mentioned the Magnet push for baccalaureate degree as an impetus for returning to school.

Discussion

- Our findings led us to clarify some of the relationships among the conceptual underpinnings.
- Personal goals that do not include enhanced education may not be able to be overcome the obstacles of going back to school.
- A positive culture toward education may exist in a Magnet facility that may motivate nurses towards returning to school.

References


Orsolini-Hain, L. (2012). Mixed messages: Hospital practices that serve as disincentives for associate degree-prepared nurses to return to school. Nursing Outlook, 60(2), 81-90. doi:10.1016/j.outlook.2011.05.007