Internationally-Educated Nurses’ Experiences with a Practical Nursing Bridging Program

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Greetings from Centennial College!

Background

• There will be an estimated shortage of 113,000 nurses in Canada by 2016 if current trends continue in the nursing workforce (Hoag, 2008).
• The shortage will continue over the next decade and beyond (Blythe & Baumann, 2008).

Image from: http://zarnywin.blogspot.ca/2008/07/cartoon-john-mcpherson-nursing-shortage.html

Background

• One partial solution is to help the relatively large group of internationally educated nurses (IENs), who recently immigrated to Canada, prepare for Canadian practice.

Centennial College’s Project

• We developed a fast track, Practical Nurse (PN) bridge program that awards nurses a Diploma in Practical Nursing.
  – Structured to enable graduates to pursue their degree at a later date.
• Two semesters of theory and clinical practice and a fifteen week preceptorship module where nurses work with a staff mentor in a clinical facility, full time, prior to graduation
• On-site prior learning and language assessment services before starting the program
• Students take English courses, Nursing in Ontario, alongside Theory, Clinical and Preceptorship courses
• Online review modules
• Life Skills Workshop

Review of Related Literature

• Technology for communication and advanced health care, interprofessional practice and nursing concepts (Sochan & Singh, 2007)
• Concepts of consumer rights, collaboration in delivery of care, and patient education (Yi & Jezewski, 2000)
• Entry-to-practice requirements
• English/French language fluency and lack of socialization and mentoring opportunities (Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2004)
Research Methods

- Objective: To explore nurses’ experiences with the new program and determining its effectiveness as graduates made the transition to the workplace.
- Study design: qualitative study, using focus groups and interviews.
- Sample:
  - All nurses in Cohort 1 (September 2010) and Cohort 2 (January 2011).
  - Nurses from Cohort 2 were included to capture the impact of minor curriculum revisions made after Cohort 1 completed their program.
  - Centennial College Research Ethics Board was sought and informed consent was obtained.

Research Methods – Data Collection and Analysis

- 24-item demographic survey.
- Focus group interview.
- Data were collected at three points:
  - ten weeks after the program started.
  - upon program completion.
  - three months after graduation.
- Nursing registration exam pass rates.
- Descriptive statistics using SPSS v18.
- Focus group interviews and the individual interviews with nurses were taped and transcribed.

Results - Demographics

- Number of participants from both cohorts: 46.
  - 53 (85.4%) of nurses in the program were women.
  - 33 (53%) had a college diploma.
  - 38 (61.5%) had practiced nursing outside Canada from one to ten years.
  - 27 (43.5%) reported their first language as Filipino/Tagalog/Philippine dialect.
  - Other languages: Fanti, French, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Luganda, Mandarin, Persian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhalese, Tamil, and Tigrigna.
  - 42 (67.7%) had never taken any type of Internet-based course.
  - A quarter of the class described their computer skills as beginner.

Results – Early Experiences

I found out that this school was offering RPN fast track so I think I’m fortunate to grab it, because it’s only one year and maybe some day I can be an RPN.

- Participant 1.

Results – Multiple roles: An overwhelming experience

A lot of us come to Canada or decide to move to another country and then they move there as a skilled workers. So, they move here with their family, so of course they need to take some refresher course or need some time to study to get a license back. But when they come here as a family, it’s not easy for us to go back to school, they need to work, so they do need money. So I think the government should help them for funding for those kind of people who are willing to go back because I know a lot of professionals move here and then they work in the kitchen because they need money.

- Participant 2.

Results – Lapse in study skills and a different educational approach

Some of the program has a lot of reflective journals... instead of doing that, teach us some skills and then put it in demonstration.

- Participant 4.
Results – The adult learner

Start from scratch.
- Participant 5

Ask the teachers to stand in our shoes.
- Participant 6

Results – Key Learnings

- Pathology, Health Assessment, lab practice and high fidelity simulation were regarded as the most useful program components
- Acknowledged the importance of a solid theoretical foundation for practice
- Hybrid course – Introduction to Nursing in Ontario
  - Nurses worked two hours in class with their teacher and one hour each week independently in a facilitated online discussion
  - Cohort 1 had mixed feelings about this course
  - Cohort 2 nurses were almost unanimously positive about the course

Results – End of program focus groups

- Heavy but worthwhile
- Gained relevant knowledge, skills and confidence that prepared them for practice in Ontario
- Preceptorship experience: acute care versus long-term care
- Online exam review
- Hybrid course
- Important courses: Health Assessment and Introduction to Nursing in Ontario

“... the concepts from CNO [College of Nurses of Ontario], it’s a big difference between back home. Here is the client-centred care; back home we just tell them what to do.”
- Participant 7

Results – Post graduation interviews

- All graduates had successfully completed their RPN registration exam and five had nursing jobs at the time the interviews took place.
- Absence of full-time work opportunities
- Lack of understanding on the part of employers in regards to the nature of the PN Bridging Program – Why is it only one year?
- Experience with nursing in Ontario
  - Canadian focus on patient/family-centered care
  - Role of the nurse on the interdisciplinary team
  - Use of technology
  - Sound English communication skills

Results – Program Strengths and Gaps from IENs’ p

- Focus on critical thinking
- Job preparation workshop
- High fidelity simulation practice labs
- Electronic documentation/learning/bedside technology
- Health assessment
- Extended, full-time preceptorship experience
- Teachers and preceptors who are knowledgeable about IENs and nursing
- Experience with diverse patient and staff population and the interdisciplinary team

Results – Recommendations

- More emphasis on professional communication for the workplace and for academic purposes
- Anatomy and physiology refresher course to prepare for pathology
- More focus on gerontology, dementia and Alzheimer’s
- More frequent and earlier simulation lab practice
- Provide clinical experience in acute and long term care sites.
- Do not increase program length – that will increase cost
- Send out information/marketing packages to the HR departments at the clinical sites to help them understand the bridge program and to realize what these nurses have to offer
- Spend more time using technology for documentation, writing etc.
Discussion and Conclusion

• Program course load
• Occupation-specific language training
• Barriers to learning
• Need for funding to support learners

Questions?