

Lifelong Learning in Nursing Science and Practice: A Bibliographic Review

Stergiani Petaloti
Coronary Unit Nurse G. H. Serres

SUMMARY

Learning is not a simple absorption of information, facts and theories, but the development of critical thinking to cope with the overabundance of information that we are overwhelmed with. Nurses work in an environment of rapid change, which requires them to update their knowledge and skills to prepare them for a different domain of knowledge. To acquire the required knowledge they are integrated in educational programs which consist of 'adult' students. The objective of this bibliographic review is to explore the prospects of continued vocational training of nurses in the field of health.

This bibliographic review, which was carried out for this aim, was based on the Greek and International bibliography in respect to lifelong learning of nurses and the implementation of this in Greece.

Retrospective studies were sought in published Greek and International scientific journals. The Internet was used as a primary bibliographic withdrawal tool. Keywords set for the search were: Lifelong learning, In-service training, Professional development, Quality health services, Continued vocational training.

The modern nurse must learn continuously. While their original, basic education is the obvious prerequisite for professional competence, participation in continued educational programs and thirst for learning are the hallmarks of their increased professional conscience. The benefits of lifelong learning for professional nurses are, other than having access to new knowledge, the possibility of expanding their qualifications, abilities and skills to enable them to cope with the multitude of changes, new technologies and the successive development of the field of health.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, In-service training, Professional development, Quality health services, Continued vocational training.

I. Introduction

The development of human resources, especially the modernization of skills and the expansion of lifelong learning is crucial in knowledge based economy. Training is a set of actions designed for the acquisition of the necessary established professional knowledge and skills. Particularly, continued vocational training, consisting of a continuous process, which aims to ensure that the

knowledge and skills of individuals are adapted continuously and meet the evolving requirements of employment and labour market needs. Therefore, continued education is aimed at maintaining, renewing, upgrading and modernizing professional knowledge and skills (National Technical University of Athens).

Reference to the Past

Continued education as an independent term first appeared in the Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1960s and prevailed in being indicated as this in offer of vocational training for university graduates. It was clear that for 'scientific professions' this knowledge should be enriched with new scientific discoveries which were directly related to the proper performance of professional functions and the effort of enrichment taken on their own initiatives the

national in scope scientific societies (EPEAEK II).

By the late 1980s, Continued Vocational Training (CVT) was a rather minor object of collective negotiations in most European countries. CVT employees started acquiring more importance, which was particularly evident by the mid-1990s. This development was due primarily to changes, which were realized in the approach of administration functions (Soumeli, E.).

Quality of Health Services

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Lifelong Learning

A reason why 'lifelong learning' has become so important is the rapid development of science and technology. 'Lifelong learning' is subjective and is associated with whether someone can be open to new ideas, decisions, skills or attitudes.

Worldwide there is a wealth of skills and qualifications, which essentially, reflect the socio economic level of each country. For each country, structured detection is considered necessary for skilled and qualified nursing staff and proven programs already adopted in other countries in the implementation and evaluation of the adequacy and decision

making of professional nurses as skilled or specialized.

With the aim of improving the quality of care and patient safety in European context, it is imperative that all nurses participate actively in knowledge and nursing practice. The nurses have individual responsibility and assume leadership to improve the quality of care. The requirements for quality improvement, responsibility and efficiency of nursing practice underline the necessity of continued interest on the part of the nurses to continuously update new knowledge, techniques and developments concerning the profession.

Continuous Professional Development

Continuous professional development is part of 'lifelong learning' and is defined as the continuous process of personal development to improve the capacity and recognition of maximum capacity of health professionals in the workplace. All this can be achieved through the

acquisition and development of a broad range of knowledge, skills and experience, which are usually not acquired during training or everyday practice, which together develop and maintain competence in the implementation of their job.

In-Service Education

In-service education is defined as: 'The education which is delivered in a structured work environment and which strengthens the individual to become more efficient professionally'. Thus, the person (in this case the health professional) has the potential to develop further in competency in relation to knowledge on technical subjects, in order to maintain and broaden the educational and technical content and the processes in a changing environment with a view of developing their personal abilities.

Continuous in-service education helps health care providers (nurses) to acquire, maintain and improve their abilities and skills in specialized areas of nursing.

Continuous in-service nursing education is undoubtedly necessary in the clinical area. The use of appropriate

capabilities may help greatly in the effort to broaden knowledge and improve skills of the nursing staff (Meeting Minutes of the Pan-Cyprian Association of Nurses and Midwives, 2007).

F. Nightingale in 1860 noted the need for continued education of nurses, but this is still being carried out occasionally and without gravity (Yfanti, E., 2006).

It is imperative, therefore, that nurses today broaden their knowledge with continued education (Albani, E., 2006). In the field of health, where many developments occur daily, each health professional requires to be equipped with modern knowledge and skills (Papageorgiou General Hospital). The monitoring programs of continuous education will contribute to the validation of the nurse as a responsible health professional (Albani, E., 2006).

Job Satisfaction – Continued Education

The phenomenon of job satisfaction in nursing has been studied extensively in recent years. Job satisfaction relates to the degree that the person is pleased in their job.

From a survey carried out in six public and two private hospitals in Attica, an important factor, which seemed to be linked to feelings of resentment of participants from the workplace were the limited possibilities of continued education.

The participants in the survey seemed to acknowledge

the need for continued education, as they linked this not only to the strengthening and professionalism of the nursing role, the improvement of quality and safety of nursing care, but also to the strengthening of feelings of satisfaction, confidence and competence (Karanikola, M., and associates, 2008).

The Hospital environment is characterized as an area of 'intense labour' and human resources are the means by which the complex mechanism moves. The Nursing Staff

because of the nature of working in intense situations stress and cancellations. Nurses are the most vulnerable emotionally and psychologically of all health professionals. Therefore, creating incentives for their dynamic activation is imperative.

An incentive consequently, is the investment in the systematic professional development of the employees, a way of activation towards positive attitudes. Continuous training, seminars, advanced educational programs and participation in conferences gives rise to change and development.

According to a survey of Ms Kontogianni, A., (2007), in two public Pediatric Hospitals in the pediatric departments of two General Hospitals in Greece, concerning the conflicts between nursing and medical staff, a management proposed

settlement of these conflicts, is continued education and scientific research, because individuals and groups will come closer and with closer cooperation one will respect the work of the other.

From research carried out by Ms Michaelidou, L., (2005) in 79 Hospitals of Greece, concerning the participation of health service users in Greek public hospitals, respondents felt that continued education and staff training deserves documented improvement, suitable training of employees was particularly emphasized, since respondents have an important dividend in the success participation of health service users and in education.

Enthusiasm, desire, patience (job satisfaction) and leadership in conjunction with the relevant know-how, it is possible to lead to small or big changes.

Culture and Nursing Education

Today's society is composed of many different groups, including people with different racial, national and socio-economic background. This results in the existence of social groups from different cultures and different civilizations and different cultures. Culture is integral to both health and disease. Therefore, nurses should be informed about the different cultural needs of different individuals in order to effectively understand and contribute to their satisfaction.

However, according to research, the lack of cultural education of health professionals causes a loss millions every year and sometimes, has a result of misdiagnosis of a patient's problem. Therefore, it is worth stressing the necessity of the provision of Continued Nursing Education to nurses, with an aim covering the educational needs concerning Intercultural Nursing (Gerogianni, G., Plexida, A., 2008).

An effective health system depends mainly on the

competency and quality of the health staff. Constant reference must be made to the special education which must be provided to all the staff of health services. For this education funds will be needed, however; the economy of this money is considered to be made directly from the efficiency of the services (Polyzos, N., Yfantopoulos, I., 2000).

According to the Press Conference of Ms Linou, A., there are inequalities-differences in education/training, lifelong learning and continued education of health services in EU countries.

Despite the differences, according to research carried out by Ms Turimou Prodromou H. and associates, (2007), Nurses acknowledge the importance of continued professional education. They state that continued professional education must be compulsory for all and optional only in specific and specialized cases.

Modern Tools of Education in Nursing Practice

The health area is especially important, not only for the community and health professionals, but also for the image of a country. Staff and health organizations must not fear the introductions and use of computers and new technology, but they must support it (Madgana, B., 2008).

In the last decades, not only a worldwide rapid increase in the production of scientific knowledge has been observed, but also pioneering methods of transmitting this knowledge to health professionals. Electronic Learning as a pioneering tool of learning might constitute a means to lifelong learning of nurses contributing to their professional and personal development and to the upgrading of the services offered in the health system (Halaris, I., 2006). The aim of the

program for learning through the internet is the provision of knowledge, information on new practices and innovations, support and cooperation amongst those interested (Mallidou, A., 2005).

The new possibility of the Internet, for instance Distant Learning, as a main vehicle of continued education, has acquired new meaning in the context of the Internet. There is a possibility of same intensity and pace of studies independent of the physical presence of an instructor and trainee at the same place and time. Easy access to all global sources and the possibility of using them gives each person interested the ease to search for advice, influences and mentors in the field which they are interested in (Taraktis, A., 2002).

Epilogue

Modern nurses must learn constantly. Although their initial and basic education is an obvious prerequisite for their professional competency, their participation in continued educational programs and their thirst for learning consist hallmarks of their increased professional conscience (Theofanidis, D., Fountouki, A.).

Continued Education is needed for professional development, strengthening and autonomy in decision making. For an organization to be made competitive and attractive to maintain a highly trained nursing staff, it must adopt continued education, which is a means of ensuring quality (Findings, 14th Pan-Cyprian Convention of Nursing and Midwifery, 2007).

What is needed is, awareness-raising for Nurses so

they can be constantly updated, the operation of the continued education service in every Nursing Institute, correct staffing with trained staff, moral staff, so professional development of staff is made possible with incentives for learning (Meeting Minutes of the Pan-Cyprian Association of Nurses and Midwives, 2007).

The Offices of Hospital Education can organize advanced programs on focused interest in the context of an overall strategic in-service training. A prerequisite for the successful participation in activities of continuous training apart from the mood of the nurse for training, is the practical convenience and moral encouragement from all the levels of the nursing hierarchy (Theofanidis, D., Fountouki, A.).

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