



THE IMPORTANCE OF INVOLVING NURSES IN CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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Abstract:

During the last two decades, particular significance is given to employee training as part of a radical restructuring of work process, which primarily associates with rapid scientific and technological developments and their impacts. Within this context, Continuing Nurse Education is one of the basic conditions to meet nursing educational needs and consequently upgrades the quality of health services, achieves a better working environment and ensures job satisfaction of nurses. The basic aim of this study is to detect the attitudes and views on human recourses training but also to explore the possibility of transforming the educational needs of nurses in training programmes, within in-service training. The response rate of nurses in the survey questionnaire, which involved the recording of demographic, educational, scientific and employment data as well as the incentives for participating, was around 47%, an amount that deemed sufficient to draw conclusions. The analysis of survey results highlighted the need for Continuing In-Service Nurse Education that has to be updated, systematic and qualitative so as to meet the training needs and the scientific pursuits of nurses. In addition, through the assessment of results of such training the aim is to occur similar comparative studies and general conclusions in future.

Keywords: continuing nurse education, educational needs, nurses in-service training

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1. Introduction

In the 80's, the view which connected adults' education to leisure time reclamation and to supplement basic education, was replaced by a more recent view that adults' education is an integral part not only of supporting economic growth and strengthening competitiveness by providing better educated employees, but also of increasing employment and reassuring social cohesion. Lately, due to technological and scientific improvements, in addition to the abundance of information and the globalization of economy, it has been even more crucial to update the education level of human resources in order to highlight the importance and effectiveness of lifelong learning in improving social welfare (Jarvis, 2003).

Under these circumstances, continuing education acquires new dimensions and wider dynamics and equally occupies educators, businessmen, economists and employees and is evolved nowadays targeting to the countries of the European Union (Sipitanou, 2004).

2. Aim and methodology

In the last twenty years, special emphasis has been placed on educating employees as a part of a radical restructure of work process which is primarily connected to technological changes and their reverberations (Rogers, 1999). In order to plan educational programs for adults it is important not only to evaluate current conditions and specific data but also to scrutinize the individual and total educational needs of the target group.

Specifically, in the field of health services, continuous education is a process which takes place during the everyday professional work in the field of health services and is of great importance nowadays as continuous changes in society happen rapidly (Zmas, 2007; Peters, 2000; Lin & Chen, 2007). In other words, it is about a typical and natural procedure through which a professional adult in health services is demanded to manage his or her own experience (Russell, 2006; Jantzen, 2008) acknowledge his or her needs and keep up with current scientific advances (Makri & Sipitanou, 2010).

Adults' educational needs, in general, can be a) conscious and explicit that people know that they exist and express them b) conscious but not explicit that people know they exist but don't express them and c) wrong and obviously not explicit.

Through the process of investigating educational needs we end up in defining the educational content of an interference which is made in specific population and aims to deal with specific deficits of this content whereas the structure of the content's program is the specialization of the aim and the target of the educational program (Avdal, 2012; O'Shea, 2012).

Through this frame work, Continuous Nurse Education (CNE), is one of the fundamental prerequisites to fulfill nurses' educational needs in order to improve their existed knowledge and also improve the quality of service in health care, reduce work stress, improve critical thinking, self-confidence and initiative, eliminate work mistakes, accomplish better working condition and certify that there are skilled and satisfied nurses as well as satisfied patients-clients (Zimmerman & Pilcher, 2008; Collins, Hardesty, White & Zisblatt, 2012).

The importance of continuous nurse education has repeatedly been emphasized through relative bibliography (Pierrakos, Sarris, Amitsis, Kiriopoulos & Soulis, 2006; Sarris, Pierrakos, Amitsis, Kiriopoulos & Soulis, 2006; Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2006).

The purpose of this study is the investigation and probably modification of nurses' educational needs in educational programs in the framework of their Continuous Nurse Educationⁱⁱ.

Other goals of this study are:

- Recording of data and characteristics connected to nurses' attendance in continuous nurse education
- Detection of explicit and non-explicit nurses' educational needs
- Research on nurses' views about the fulfillment of their educational needs through CNE by operating and evaluating an office which will be administering their educational programs
- Promotion of the importance of finding the educational needs when planning educational business plans, in order to put into effect a special electronic platform designed by National Centre for Public Administration and Local Government (EKDDA). In this platform, every necessary data needed to determine educational needs will be recorded with the use of a specialized questionnaire in order to plan educational programs and to evaluate their resultsⁱⁱⁱ.

In order to accomplish every goal of this study, a questionnaire was used which was separated into three units. The first unit contains informative questions as well as questions that follow the structure of the Likert method in a five-grade scale. In this unit, there is the recording of the views and opinions of nurses connected to their educational needs satisfaction in the framework of CNE and there is also the evaluation of the operation of the office in charge of nurses' education in the hospital they work.

In the second unit, there are questions about the infrastructure, the methods and the duration on the training as well as questions about the incentives and the obstacles

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ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ekdd.gr/ekdda/index.php/gr/2012-06-19-08-29-50>

of their education. The third unit is about their interest in various seminars covering different fields, lessons in the clinics, educational programs through a list of different topics and an open question with the nurses' suggestions for the effectiveness of the educational programs. 165 nurses took part in the research, from hospitals in Thessaloniki and in Northern Greece, from May 2011 to June 2011.

3. Analysis of results

As for the nurses' characteristics, the vast majority of those who took part in the research were 30-50 years old, who represent the 80%, there was a significant decline for those being 20-30 years old who represented the 13% while there was no nurse over 50 years old (1.1).

The majority of the nurses, 83%, were women while only 17% were men. This fact shows that being a professional nurse has traditionally been mostly a woman's choice and for the last years a man's option (1.2).

Concerning the education level, data has shown that 83% were tertiary education graduates, 3% were university graduates while 14% were of two-year vocational training graduates (1.3).

As for the years of working experience, 38% had 5-10 years of working experience in hospitals, 28% had 10-20 years of experience, 24% had 20-30 years of experience and 10% had 0-5 years and only 1% had 40-50 years of experience (1.4).

Investigating the continuous nurses' education the percentage that took part in conventions was incredibly high since 99% of those who were asked had taken part in at least 5 conventions in the last 5 years, which is a fact that shows their great interest in their work and the latest improvements in their field (1.7). It is worth mentioning that 52% of the nurses who attended conventions had presented 1-5 projects during the last 5 years while 10% had presented 6-10 projects. This fact shows that Greek nurses nowadays not only do they attend conventions but they also are active participants by making presentations (1.8).

As for the importance of the CNE 99% agreed that their training must be continuous and systematic during their career (2.1) while 92% agreed that continuous training-education should take place whenever there are new scientific advances (2.2). Also, 99% agreed that continuous education must take place according to nurses' educational needs (2.3).

Furthermore, the majority of nurses, 71%, declared that nurses' training in the hospital should happen at a specific time period in a nurse's career, during which the nurse should be off duty (2.4). In the question in which the nurses' agreement or disagreement was measured in correlation to whether their training in hospitals should take place during or not during their working hours, 47% of them stated that they totally agree that their training should not take place during their working hours (2.5).

As for the question of which is the proper implementation body of educational programs at hospitals, 74% stated that there should be cooperation between different bodies that held educational programs (2.6). On the other hand, 96% stated that they agree with the creation of an educational office which will notice the nurses' needs and transform them into educational programs (2.7) and finally, 96% stated that it is necessary to be trained in the hospitals (2.8).

Concerning the incentives to attend educational programs, 84% of the nurses stated that an incentive was the certification of their knowledge and skills, 36% considers an incentive being promoted or transferred to another position, 27% providing sabbaticals and 22% the financial incentives like a raise or subsidy (2.9). Furthermore, a considerable number of nurses, 56 people, said that through continuous education they ensure professional autonomy and self-confidence (2.11).

As far as the duration of educational programs is concerned, 52% expressed their preference in short programs, which would last less than a week and only 5% suggested attending programs which would last longer than four weeks. In any case, the vast majority prefers to attend programs no longer than a month (3.2).

About the lessons in the clinics, 56% of the nurses said that they would prefer taking part in such lessons quite frequently which is once a month (3.3).

In the question about the teaching methods, most suitable method was proved to be lessons in the clinics, supported by the 90% of the nurses. The round-table discussion was supported by 49%, 24% chose lectures, 10% preferred being informed in paper and a small percentage, 8%, distance learning. It seems that nurses are not keen on using computers and would rather be trained in small groups (3.4).

Besides, 42% said that educational programs should be based on practical certified scientific data, 18% in case studies, 16% in research reviews, 13% in reviewing up to date bibliography and 10% in presentations of articles of the same interest (3.5).

Most nurses, 55 people, said they would like to be informed about educational programs available in their hospital in person (3.6).

In respect of the character of continuous education, the majority of nurses, representing 61%, said that attending educational programs should be optional and only be imposed in special cases (3.7).

According to nurses' opinions, important obstacles in taking part in educational programs are lack of staff, which stands for 66%, 59% is lack of time, 58% for financial reasons, 37% for family reasons, 25% for bureaucracy, 21% for participation conditions, 19% for lack of interesting programs, 15% not enough incentives, 13% lack of personal interest, 10% for illness and 6% for venues (3.8).

Searching nurses' educational needs it was found that the fields that were of the most interest, which stood for 70%, was emergency nursing care. In that framework, especially in demand was Cardio-Pulmonary Refreshing (CPR) followed by neonatal resuscitation, seminars on handling emergency in obstetrics, Advanced Life Support

and Pre-hospital Trauma Life Support. Following in order, other educational needs are work safety for 41%, prevent hospital infections for 28%, care critically ill patients for 24% and tackling health needs for 23% (4.1).

In respect of showing interest for seminars in various fields, the majority of nurses, which stands for 44%, have chosen the quality of health services. 41% has chosen anxiety management scope -fatigue syndrome and what follows is the field of communication and interpersonal relationships for 25%, the field of administration of health services for 24%, conflict resolution for 22%, adults' education for 13% and consultation for 10% (4.2).

Finally, suggestions for a more effective and improved continuous training and to maximize its positive results are mostly about:

- The need to create education offices which will search for nurses' educational needs, will plan, organize, hold and evaluate educational programs, coordinate nurses' education and cooperate with different bodies to implement educational programs,
- Expanding a network of clinic instructors, which will support educational actions, in the framework of CNE
- Certify and reward knowledge and skills acquired by attending seminars and conventions in correlation with continuous update of the nurses' files
- Evaluation of the results of continuous education and encouragement to take part in educational programs and finally
- The necessity of nurses' education with new programs that abide by the theory of adults' education and are based on their needs (Bonnell, Starling, Wambach & Tarnow, 2003; Olson, Stedman-Smith & Fredrickson, 2005).

4. Conclusion

This study investigates on nurses' educational needs and their views on satisfying these needs in the framework of continuous nurse education. By investigating these needs, active nurses' participation is reassured and effectiveness is improved.

Besides, the study's goals are to find and record all the necessary data that lead to plan educational programs, allowing the evaluation of education's results in order to induce new studies.

The study is about the framework of Continuous Nurse Education in order to provide specific education with relevant programs. The results of the study are used in order to learn and record nurses' educational needs and transform them into educational programs.

As for the importance of Continuous Nurse Education, it is admitted and emphasized that it should be continuous, up to date, systematic, time-bound and

applied either from different bodies or from one body, so as to satisfy educational needs.

The fact that Continuous Nurse Education is a prerequisite in order to improve and ensure the quality of health care services is supported of the majority of nurses. Even though nurses are motivated to attend educational programs in order to update and certify their knowledge and skills to upgrade their status, the obstacles they are challenged to overcome, like lack of staff or lack of interesting programs, undermine their attendance in such programs.

The various educational programs offered either in the form of lectures or lessons in clinics, through the framework of nurse education, should not be either obligatory or compulsory, depending on the original planning.

Seeking a wide range of educational methods, the creation of a special office and of a network of instructors in clinics, in order to support systematic educational actions and plans is demanded. The certification and reward of knowledge and skills acquired in such programs, is of great interest. The results of these programs should be evaluated in order to encourage further and continuous nurses' participation.

It is worth mentioning that there is great interest, expressed by the majority of nurses, in notable and interesting programs. Undoubtedly, the need to satisfy and cover nurses' educational needs imposes the planning, organization and application of educational programs.

5. About the authors

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