The Road to Excellence in Nursing Education

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Description

Student satisfaction is recognized as an important indicator of quality in the tertiary higher education sector. Satisfaction commonly refers to students' subjective assessment of the overall educational experience and individual outcomes. An earlier theory-based definition specified that satisfaction is a psychological state based on a consumer experience one that results from an individual's comparison-related expectations and experience of performance.

The notion of measuring student satisfaction has been translated from the manufacturing industries where efforts were instituted to improve quality through better understanding of consumer needs. Students, as the primary customer of higher education institutions, have participated in similar investigations to explore their attitudes and determine their satisfaction with academic education. Student satisfaction metrics have gained importance because they are linked with both institutional rankings and student retention. The problem of attrition in healthcare students, which continues to be high in nursing, has been labelled as 'wicked' due to the highly complex, important, and tenacious nature of the problem when students leave early. There is a loss to students, the university and also to broader society.

Although the concept of student satisfaction with education has been thoroughly explored in research over recent decades, it remains poorly understood. A multitude of related elements have been identified: learning environments; student motivation to learn; student and teacher accountability; classroom diversity; assessment approaches. A lack of consensus around the key elements and also variation in regard to their impact across different conceptual models is evident.

In early research Alves and Raposo used structural equation modelling to confirm a conceptual model of satisfaction derived from a survey of 2687 university students in various courses. They reported that the most influential variable in relation to student satisfaction relates to institutional variables: 'Image', 'Value' and 'Quality perceived'. Although the variable 'Expectations' was a negative influence in the conceptual model, a main consequence of satisfaction was student loyalty. Loyal students have a positive effect on teaching through active participation and dedication to study, and word of mouth recommendations about their institution.

In exploring nursing student satisfaction, most reports feature numerical satisfaction metrics derived from student surveys. For example, Cant et al. reviewed international studies of nursing student clinical education evaluations which revealed an average (mean) student satisfaction rating of 83.2 %. Few contemporary nursing studies have examined the issue more broadly, for example, by investigating the elements underlying satisfaction. Especially lacking is explanation of the factors that may help to form satisfaction in nursing students. Should these be better known, nurse educators in the higher education sector could strive to further improve the curriculum and students' education experiences.

Evidence-based nursing refers to using the best available evidence to make nursing care decisions, combining with nurses' clinical expertise, the client's values and preferences and the available resources. By bridging the gap between nursing researches and nursing practice, evidence-based nursing could effectively reduce the nursing care discrepancy, improve the nursing care quality and patient safety, reduce healthcare costs and promote nursing professional development.

Studies showed that most nurses hold a positive attitude toward evidence-based nursing. Nursing evidence based on high-quality studies and theoretical frameworks guiding evidence-based nursing has been developed for decades. However, evidence-based nursing has remained a challenge for clinical settings for decades, with the condition that most clinical nursing practices are still based on conventions and experience rather than best evidence.

Many studies explored the barriers to evidence-based nursing which could explain the limited evidence-based nursing. A systematic review summarized that there were institutional barriers, intra disciplinary barriers and individual nurse-related barriers to evidence-based nursing. Lack of knowledge and skills in evidence-based nursing, an individual nurse-related barrier, was the crucial barrier and shown in almost all studies which explored barriers to evidence-based nursing. Meanwhile, many cross-sectional studies, which indicated low evidence-based nursing competencies of nurses and nursing students, also verified the key barrier to evidence-based nursing - lack of knowledge and skills of evidence-based nursing. Evidence-based nursing competency, as the foundation element for evidence-based nursing, could be improved by high-quality education on evidence-based nursing.

Although increasing evidence-based nursing courses and training programs emerged in tertiary nursing education and academic organizations (Joanna Briggs Institute, Cochrane), the quantity and quality of evidence-based nursing education programs and evidence-based nursing teachers still could not meet the need of a large number of nursing students and nurses. Meanwhile, studies found that nursing students' competency in evidence implementation is low even after completing the evidence-based nursing course and training programs. The reason may be that most evidence-based nursing education programs are provided by faculty in academic organizations (schools of nursing in universities) who lack clinical experience and resources for evidence implementation. Therefore, to deal with this problem, it is important to involve clinical nurses in evidence-based nursing education and increase evidence-based nursing education in clinical settings.

Academic-practice partnerships were originally endorsed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in the 1990s. Academic-practice partnership is defined as formal or informal arrangements between cooperating parties to advance mutual interests. Based on a systematic search, the researchers found seven systematic reviews discussing the benefits, models, processes, structures and influencing factors of academic-practice partnerships in nursing education and/or research. Meanwhile, the researchers are conducting a systematic review on literature related to academic-practice partnership on evidence-based nursing practice to provide evidence about how academic and clinical sides collaborate to promote nursing practice based on evidence. However, there is no specific information about academic-practice partnerships in evidence-based nursing education in these systematic reviews.