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Integrating a Career Planning and Development Program into the Baccalaureate Nursing Curriculum: Part III. Impact on Faculty's Career Satisfaction and Confidence in Providing Student Career Coaching

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Abstract: As career satisfaction has been identified as a predictor of retention of nurses across all sectors, it is important that career satisfaction of both new and experienced nursing faculty is recognized in academic settings. A study of a curriculum-based career planning and development (CPD) program was conducted to determine the program's effects on participating students, new graduate nurses, and faculty. This third in a series of three papers reports on how the CPD intervention affected faculty participants' sense of career satisfaction and confidence in their role as career educators and coaches. Faculty who participated in the intervention CPD intervention group reported an increase in confidence in their ability to provide career coaching and education to students. They further indicated that their own career development served to enhance career satisfaction; an outcome identified as a predictor of faculty career satisfaction. Study results suggest that interventions such as the one described in this paper can have a potentially positive impact in other settings as well.

Keywords: faculty career satisfaction, career planning and development, curriculum, faculty career coaches

The current shortage of nursing faculty in North America is predicted to worsen over the next decade as rates of retirement increase and employment opportunities outside of academia multiply for doctorally prepared nurses. Consequently, it is imperative that innovative recruitment and retention strategies focused on academic nurse

educators be developed in the nursing profession. As career satisfaction has been identified as a significant predictor of retention of nurses across all sectors, it is also important that the need to attend to the career satisfaction of both new and experienced nursing faculty is recognized in academic settings. Knowledge is limited, however, regarding effective strategies aimed at enhancing nursing faculty's sense of career satisfaction. In this study addressed the gap of faculty's sense of career satisfaction by exploring how participating in a career planning and development intervention affected nursing faculty's sense of career satisfaction and confidence in their role as career educators and coaches for students.

Background

The growing concern that an increasing shortage of qualified nursing faculty is a multifaceted issue that encompasses more than the fact that a significant cohort of nursing faculty is nearing retirement age (CASN, 2014; Hinshaw, 2001; McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2012; Nardi & Gyurko, 2013). The retirement of faculty members in nursing is also characteristic of other academic programs (Rhan, 2007). Studies have also noted that fewer nurses are entering the academy and more are leaving as other employment opportunities proliferate for doctorally prepared nurses (Feldman, Greenburg, Jaffe-Ruiz, Kaufman, & Cignarale, 2015; Hinshaw, 2001). Furthermore, nursing continues to be a primarily female-dominated profession, and female faculty members have the highest attrition rates (Ambrose, Huston, & Norman, 2005; August & Waltman, 2004). This problematic situation, therefore, demands a greater focus on developing creative strategies to initially recruit and then retain nurses within academia (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013).

Hinshaw (2001) suggested that ongoing professional development opportunities to engage in stimulating

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discussions with faculty colleagues and students, and discovering what individual faculty would enjoy in terms of enhancing their development are key factors in fostering satisfying careers for nursing faculty. Strategies that Hessler and Ritchie (2006) proposed to recruit and retain younger faculty members included building social networks, facilitating collaboration, and promoting the development and education of current faculty. To better understand issues of retaining female faculty in academia, August and Waltman (2004) examined factors that contributed to career satisfaction for tenured and non-tenured faculty members. They found that the quality of faculty's relationships with students, as well as serving as student mentors and advisors, were predictors of career satisfaction for all tenured and non-tenured participants (August & Waltman, 2004). Faculty have also stated that the degree to which they can control their own career development is an important aspect of career satisfaction (Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995).

Given findings of the positive impact that the faculty's role had on the student experience (Waddell et al., 2015), it is reasonable to assume that the faculty–student relationship may have a similar influence on the career satisfaction of faculty members themselves. Professional development opportunities, such as paying attention to their own career development and developing student-focused career educator/coaching competencies, may enhance their career satisfaction and serve as an innovative retention and recruitment strategy.

This paper is a report of the faculty component of a larger longitudinal mixed methods study aimed at examining (a) the influence of a career planning and development (CPD) program compared to a standard curriculum (without CPD) on the development of career resilience in baccalaureate nursing students up to graduation and at 12-months post graduation (new graduate nurses) and (b) the impact of a career education/coaching development program on faculty's perceived confidence in providing student career coaching and education (Waddell et al., 2015). In addition to the career education/coaching program, the intervention group participants were also provided a career planning and development program focused on their own career. This paper will report the influence of the program on their sense of career satisfaction. Findings from a pilot study conducted by one of the authors indicated that faculty members lack confidence in their ability to provide CPD education/coaching, therefore this study also explored the influence of the program on faculty's perceived confidence in delivering CPD education and coaching to students.

Research questions

Two research questions guided the faculty component of the total study:

1. What is the influence of a career education and coaching intervention on faculty participants' perceived confidence to provide CPD education/coaching when compared to those faculty who did not receive the CPD intervention?
2. For intervention group participants, what is the impact of a career education and coaching intervention on perceived career satisfaction?

Methodology

Design

A randomized control trial design was used for this qualitative component of the larger study. Eligible nursing faculty who consented to participate were randomly assigned with allocation concealment to one of two conditions: (a) a career educator/coach intervention group or (b) a control group.

Sample

The sample consisted of nine female faculty members, of whom four were in the intervention group and five in the control group. Participation in the study was voluntary. Faculty participants, who were recruited from each of the three academic sites of a large urban collaborative nursing degree program, included both tenured and non-tenured faculty in both groups.

Procedures

After the study received ethics approval from each of the three sites, the study research assistant (RA) sent an email to all faculty members across the sites inviting them to participate. The study's purpose, time commitment, risks, and benefits were described in the email. After completing the study consent, the participants were randomized into either the control or the intervention group.

Faculty in both groups were asked to participate in a focus group or individual interview (in person or by phone) at the beginning of the study and once again at study completion. The group discussions and interviews

were directed by a semi-structured interview guide consisting of questions related to faculty's perceived confidence to provide CPD education/coaching to students. Discussion began by garnering the participants' general perceptions of their perceived level of confidence to provide CPD education/coaching and then proceeded to considering more specific details related to factors contributing to their confidence to provide student-focused career education/coaching. Following study completion the intervention participants alone were asked additional questions related to the impact of involvement in the career planning and development program on their sense of career satisfaction.

Intervention group

The intervention consisted of a five-part program that included the following: (a) a 3-hour CPD workshop in which faculty focused on their own individual career development, (b) a day long career education/coaching workshop that provided them with the knowledge and skills to facilitate student CPD workshops and provide career coaching, (c) a 2-hour session in which faculty were given a demonstration of how to facilitate a student-centered CPD workshop, (d) the experience of observing two to three CPD student workshops conducted across program years, and (e) the opportunity to facilitate two to three supervised student CPD workshops. Part (a) of the faculty intervention was facilitated by an external expert in career coaching. Parts (b) to (e) were led by the Principal Investigator (PI) of the overall study, who has expertise as a career educator and coach.

The students engaged in these workshops were intervention participants in the student component of the larger study (Waddell et al., 2015). In the context of their program year, the students were guided through a process in which they developed their own career vision, completed a self-assessment, scanned the health care environment, and developed a career plan with specific goals and the steps necessary to reach them. The PI facilitated the student CPD workshops and coaching sessions that the faculty intervention participants observed, and subsequently supervised sessions facilitated by faculty participants. The latter shifted from the role of observer to facilitator of CPD workshops/coaching sessions when both they and the PI agreed that they were ready to do so. As the PI observed all sessions, she provided post-facilitation feedback to faculty participants following each supervised session. Strategies for ensuring standardization of CPD workshop sessions and coaching

sessions included a comprehensive training program, supervised career education/coaching, and a CPD guide (Waddell, Donner, & Wheeler, 2009).

Control group

The control group did not receive any parts of the intervention.

Data Analyses

All focus group and individual interviews were conducted by the study RA and audiotaped. The data were transcribed, and the research team used thematic analysis to systematically search the data for recurring themes (Morse & Field, 1995). Initial themes were developed based on responses to questions related to the outcomes of faculty members' confidence in the roles of career educator/career coach and of their career satisfaction. The initial themes were refined through an iterative process in which the research project coordinator and a study RA independently analyzed the data and then discussed their coding strategies and emergent themes with one another. After this initial review and identification of codes and themes, the PI completed a blind review to validate data interpretation and identification of themes. This data analysis process was followed for the pre-intervention (Time 1) and post-intervention (Time 2) focus group/individual discussions.

Results

The themes that emerged from the group discussions/interviews were categorized according to the study's two research questions. Descriptions of each theme, as well as participants' observations, will be presented, first from the intervention group and then from the control group.

Research Question #1. It is worth noting that there were little to no differences in the themes that emerged from the Time 1 control and intervention focus group discussions specific to the first research question related to confidence in providing career education/coaching. The common theme that emerged from both groups during the Time 1 discussions was a sense of confidence in providing career-related education and coaching to nursing students. Themes that emerged from the two groups at the end of the study (Time 2), however, reflected notable differences in the faculty report of confidence in providing career education and coaching. Given that the

themes at Time 1 were similar, the detailed findings presented here focus on those from the Time 2 data.

What is the influence of a career education and coaching intervention on faculty participants' perceived confidence to provide CPD education/coaching when compared to those faculty who did not receive the CPD intervention?

Intervention group

Key themes related to faculty's perceived confidence in providing career coaching and education to students included: (a) improved responsiveness to students and using a student-focused approach, (b) a focus on developing knowledge and skills, (c) self-reflection, and (d) familiarity with the CPD model.

Improved responsiveness to students and using a student-focused approach

Participants reported that, as a result of the intervention, they were more responsive to students and placed an enhanced emphasis on a student-centered approach. Faculty spoke about shifting away from a focus on their career experience to developing a keener awareness of students' experiences, wishes, and wonderings in relation to their career:

My philosophy for teaching has really been about engagement and an interaction between students and faculty, and I truly try to remain student focused. What are the students' needs, how do I meet those needs. I apply being student centered into my teaching now, the informal discussion, the need to be student focused rather than faculty focused.

I try to be much more aware that when students call me, to ask to talk to me, that they have an idea, and they want to talk to me about it. I try to really focus myself on what the purpose of the discussion is. Trying to really analyze and understand what they need rather than to just sit down and talk to them about my experiences. So now it's more like, what are your possibilities and what are your options, as opposed to saying these are your possibilities and these are your options.

I give less advice. Focus on listening ... being in the intervention group, I was much more organized with the model, because I have seen how it allows the individual to generate their own ideas and it's much more theirs, and it is less dependent. It is not the spoon feeding approach ... I don't think that I realized how important a shift in my practice surrounding this issue could be. The difference I saw in how students reacted was good and positive.

Focus on developing knowledge and skills

Intervention participants reported drawing upon their emerging knowledge and skills in career coaching and education, which enhanced their perceived confidence when engaging in career discussions with students. Faculty also acknowledged the need to continue developing these skills and knowledge to be able to interact meaningfully with students in discussions about careers:

I have a higher attention to actively listening ... hiding your background and not being ready to share everything about yourself to the students ... there is so much I feel I want to share with students that it will excite them that they will see all the opportunities, but I understand that this does not translate to active listening.

I think it's more a situation where a novice nurse learns the nursing process, and you feel like you need to go step by step, until you are comfortable with it. And that you have to go to an intermediate or expert level, you know that the nursing process is not a one way system. So the more skills and confident you are at that skill, the easier it is for you to play with the model ... you know what the basic principles are. So it is the principles that should be guiding you and not the steps.

Self-reflection

In addition, participants observed that using the self-reflective process embedded in the CPD model in their discussions with students not only helped to turn the focus of career discussions onto the student, but also became an opportunity for them to engage in their own self-reflection and self-evaluation of their personal career goals:

Watching this interaction between faculty and student really allowed me to reflect upon how I interact with students and how that flow happens ... before this study, it was very much a one-way conversation. I had conversations stating these are your options and these are things that you can think about, but not really sitting back and allowing students to tell me what they are thinking.

It was meaningful because I was observing, yet also participating. I was doing reflection and visioning, and I learned things about my own career. And that enlightenment showed me things about my own career and how it can get people thinking in a different manner.

Familiarity with the CPD model

Participants reported that being exposed to and becoming familiar with the CPD model allowed them to use a formalized structure and systematic process when engaging

in career discussions with students. Using the CPD model not only provided a guide to their career conversations with students, but also enhanced their ability to focus on the students and to be active listeners with them:

I think it has given me a plan, it has given me a process, as opposed to pulling things out of the air and talking about career planning ... it also gives me a starting point. Now I would say that a few times, because that process is in my head, I am able to keep students on track and focused as to why they are here.

It has helped me to be a stronger facilitator and to be more focused. I always go into the discussion feeling positive, [but] I am not sure if I was as helpful as I should have been. After my participation with the intervention, I was more confident.

Control group

The key themes related to faculty's perceived confidence in providing career coaching and education to students that emerged from the control group data included: (a) responsiveness to students and using a student-focused approach, (b) focus on faculty's own experiences and knowledge, (c) lack of formal training, and (d) knowing their students and building rapport.

Responsiveness to students and using a student-focused approach

Similar to the intervention group, faculty in the control group reported a perceived sense of confidence in relation to being responsive to students and using a student-focused approach when meeting with them for the purpose of career planning and development:

If a student does not know where they want go, it is a matter of helping them to uncover and to determine what is important to them. Is it geographical area that is important or type of institution that you work at? Are you wanting to work in an acute care centre? Helping them to see what their pathway might look like and providing further clarity to them if they do not really have a sense of where they want to go.

It has always been more informal or one-on-one with students where questions have come up during 4th year clinical conferences and we have gone from there ... but it is usually based upon the students' needs and I have been used to this informal structure.

Focus on faculty's own experiences and knowledge

Those in the control group described the circumstances in which they would talk about careers with students.

Faculty also spoke about focusing on their own experiences, gained throughout their nursing career, and on their existing knowledge of the profession in their career conversations with students:

I will talk to students about my own experiences, especially students who are finding they really want one area but only a certain one is available when they graduate, because this is essentially what happened to me when I graduated ... I will use some of my own experiences as an example, in that way.

More coming from my own experience ... and what's worked well for me and what hasn't worked well for me, and that's really what I go by to provide information for my students.

Lack of formal training

The data suggested that the lack of familiarity with the CPD model and lack of formal training related to serving as a career educator/coach for nursing students also had an impact on faculty's perceived confidence to provide career coaching and education. Participants described that, without the formal resources and training, their approach to career conversations was more by happenstance than planned:

I would say I definitely need more training in this area. It would be minimal knowledge because I typically speak from my own personal experience, I don't have enough knowledge to be objective and to provide tailored type of support for students.

I'm fine to work with the students in this capacity because I feel that it's one of our roles as being a teacher and faculty advisor. I think I'm doing a good job, given I work with my own experience, but I think I would do an excellent job if I had more knowledge and certainly more skill in doing this.

Control group participants further indicated that they believed their ability to be effective resources for students in terms of career planning and development would be enhanced by learning and applying a structured model and process to guide their career discussions with students.

Knowing their students and building rapport

The control group identified that knowing their students and building meaningful rapport with them also played a role in their perceived confidence to provide career coaching and advice:

Definitely, the relationships that I had with the students, it does become an ongoing discussion. The more I talk with them, the more I understand what they are going through and the relationship becomes easier. So, there is that rapport.

Again, it's being connected with the person. Being responsive to their needs and allowing the person whom I'm talking with to take the lead. I'm really a facilitator, supporter, and guide.

Research Question #2. At Time 2 intervention participants were asked additional questions that focused on the impact of the intervention on their sense of career satisfaction.

For intervention group participants, what is the impact of a career education and coaching intervention on perceived career satisfaction?

Participants who received the intervention emphasized that it provided them with significant opportunities to reflect on their own personal careers and on the experiences that have led them to their current academic positions. Moreover, just as the intervention enhanced their sense of confidence in providing career education and coaching to students, so too did the data reveal that their sense of satisfaction with their own career increased after receiving the intervention and facilitating the CPD program with students. Key themes that emerged to suggest the positive influence the intervention had on faculty's perceived career satisfaction included (a) self-reflection and self-assessment and (b) creating meaningful student experiences.

Self-reflection and self-assessment

In addition to the eventual benefits that the CPD program would have for students, it also provided faculty with opportunities for self-reflection and self-assessment, and enabled them to organize their thinking differently. This process fostered faculty's commitment to professional growth and ongoing development of skills and competencies related to career coaching and education, as was highlighted in the following excerpts:

It has reminded me that I need to self-reflect upon my own career goals, and that I need to reflect on where I want to be in the next 10 years. I am here now, where do I want to be next. So that visioning exercise, where will I live – those types of questions. Even when I have been thinking about my own job future. What would it be, look like to be doing this every day? It has basically been a wake-up call. Certainly, discussions about a career being ever-evolving and ever-changing. We have to be self-reflective when we are not moving forward.

I need to understand what I value in my position and what opportunities I should look for, for growth in my current position that will make me happy:

It has forced me to look at how I can use my current position to keep me interested and to keep me here.

Creating meaningful student experiences

After participating in the intervention, faculty reported an enhanced sense of career satisfaction because the program enabled them to make a significant difference by contributing to students' academic experiences and career journey:

I feel like my discussions are more meaningful and helpful for students. Really holding back the discussions on me, and allowing the student to see their own possibilities and knowing that they are actively reflecting, and knowing that it's about them and not me. Even though, maybe they come to you because you have certain experiences that you want them to know about. The nature of the interaction with the student to try to problem solve is important. This has impacted positively on my work with the students.

I really do think that it has enriched my thinking especially practical. I am heavy into evidence-based practice, but if it is not applicable to the real world, then it's useless. This is a very practical approach that I have seen some evidence of effectiveness.

It's been very positive because I have never felt overly confident that I have been doing as good as I can with giving students career counseling. In terms of walking away with a good feeling, after a coaching session ... they happen at the end of the day. I would sometimes wish I didn't have the session to do. After the end of the session I felt reenergized, it really finished the day in a nice way. I felt terrific. I really enjoyed it.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature by exploring the benefits that nursing faculty derived from engaging in their own career development while acting as career educators and coaches for students in a CPD program. August and Waltman (2004) highlighted the importance of retaining female faculty in higher education and understanding what factors foster a greater sense of career satisfaction for this faculty cohort. Faculty who participated in the current study's intervention perceived it as having a positive impact on their sense of career satisfaction. Furthermore, they reported that participating in the career coaching and education intervention changed the way they teach and mentor nursing students.

Prior to the intervention, participants in both control and intervention groups reported similar levels of confidence in their ability to provide career coaching and career

education to students. That confidence grew for intervention participants, who emphasized the importance of using a structured model to guide and enhance their career conversations with students. At the conclusion of the study, the intervention group observed that as a result of participating in the five-part career educator and coaching program, they developed greater insight regarding the competencies and attitudes required to provide effective CPD support to students. Consequently, that group shifted their perspective and *modus operandi* and spoke about using students' experiences and perspectives to frame and focus career conversations. In contrast, those in the control group continued to highlight that they used their own experience, knowledge, and perspectives to guide career discussions with students.

This study's findings suggest that, while faculty members may have already been engaged in career-related conversations with students, using a model provides a more organized approach that guides discussions in ways more meaningful for students and gives faculty more confidence in this area. Employing the CPD model allowed faculty to use a frame of reference and approach that focused on students, rather than on themselves, thus improving their responsiveness to students' needs. Control group participants also recognized that having a model and process would be helpful in fostering their sense of confidence in their role as career educators/coaches.

In relation to their own career development, faculty's involvement in this study prompted self-reflection about their unique career and goals – a process that encouraged them to identify their strengths and areas for professional development in terms of their role as an educator. It also fostered a commitment to their professional growth and to promoting students' successful evolution into professional nurses. The process of self-reflection and involvement in their own and students' ongoing development served to enhance their sense career satisfaction; an outcome that has been identified as a predictor of faculty career satisfaction (August & Waltman, 2004).

It is evident that faculty members have a significant impact on students' sense of engagement, confidence, and development in relation to their academic achievement (Kuh, 1995; Thompson, 2001). According to Cotten and Wilson (2006), benefits arising from the faculty – student relationship can extend beyond the classroom to interactions related to the student's professional career. Findings from the student and new graduate nurse components of the larger study of which the current study is a part suggest that, for students, faculty can play an important role in their sense of engagement and in helping them to achieve their career goals, beginning

during their academic program (Waddell et al., 2015). Such nurses who are career resilient have the ability to adapt to change, navigate, and take control of their careers in dynamic work environments (McGillis Hall, Waddell, Donner, & Wheeler, 2004). Faculty's observations in this current study have not only corroborated findings about the CPD program's benefits for students (Waddell et al., 2015), but also provided evidence of the related CPD interventions positive impact on faculty's perceived self-confidence to provide career education and coaching to students, and on enhancing their own career satisfaction. These results align with Hinshaw's (2001) findings that faculty members' sense of career satisfaction is enhanced by the opportunity to influence the development of new and early career professionals.

Limitations

The small number of faculty who participated this study makes it difficult to generalize the findings to the larger population of nursing faculty across academic settings.

Implications

Researchers examining faculty retention and satisfaction advocate for the importance of focusing on university-specific variables versus system-level variables to improve faculty retention (Ambrose et al., 2005; August & Waltman, 2004). Therefore, the results of this study have implications for faculty and curriculum development. CPD programs such as the one in this study could be included as a standard part of the curriculum not only for the benefits that accrue to students' career resilience, but also for the demonstrated career-related outcomes for faculty (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Kuh, 1995; Thompson, 2001). Innovative strategies to recruit and retain qualified nursing faculty are needed in light of the high number of experienced faculty members who will be retiring in the next decade and the increasing variety of competing career opportunities that can attract potential faculty away from academia. Results from this study offer one approach by demonstrating how providing faculty members with professional development opportunities that expand the scope of their work with students can enhance their sense of confidence in it, as well as their perception of career satisfaction. The use of a structured model and process such as that presented in this study could be considered to promote these outcomes.

Study findings have been utilized at the study's sites to inform faculty and curriculum development. Faculty intervention participants now serve as members of a program-wide career educator/coach team who provide CPD workshops scheduled within one core course in each year of the curriculum. Program career educators/coaches also engage in individual/small group career coaching on request from program students. Faculty control group participants and other interested faculty members have been offered the individualized CPD workshop and the career educator/coach program and at the time of writing, eight additional faculty members have joined the team. The career planning and development program that has been integrated into the nursing curriculum is being extended to other undergraduate and graduate programs at the university academic site. In addition, an online version of the CPD program is under development to be used for 4-year collaborative program students as well as post-diploma and graduate students. Given the growing challenges concerning recruitment and retention of nursing faculty at national and international levels, interventions such as the one described in this paper could potentially have a positive impact in other settings as well.

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