Exploring the Career Experiences of Internationally Recruited Nurses at the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust

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Abstract : In the UK, since the early 1950s when the NHS was founded, international staff in the NHS have played an important role. Currently, they represent 16% of the workforce within the NHS in the UK. Furthermore, to address the shortfalls in nursing staff, international recruitment programs have been essential to reduce the gaps in the UK nursing workforce over the last two decades. The NHS Long Term Plan (2019) aims to have a significant reduction of nursing vacancies to 5% by 2028. However, in 2021 and 2022, Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) reports stated that there is inequitable Career Progression (CP) among Internationally Recruited (IR) nurses as compared to British counterparts. In addition, there is sufficient literature exploring the motives and lived experiences of IR nurses, which underpins the findings. Therefore, the overall aim of this report is to conduct a scoping project to understand the experiences of the IR nurses who joined the NHS in the South East of England within the last 5 years. Methodology- This document is based on the data from a survey developed by Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust using Microsoft forms and consisted of 23 questions divided into four themes, staff background, career experience, career progression and future career plans within Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust. The descriptive analysis provided the initial analysis of the quantitative data. As a result, 44 responses were collected and evaluated by utilising Microsoft excel. Key findings: Career experiences; 72% of respondents felt that their current role was a good fit, and in a subsequent question, the main reason cited was having "relevant skills". This indicates that, for the most part, the prior experience of IR nurses is a large factor in their placement, which is viewed positively; the next step is to effectively apply similar relevance in aligning prior experience with career progression opportunities. Moreover, 67% of respondents feel valued by the department/team, which is a great reflection of the values of the Trust being demonstrated towards IR Nurses. However, further studies may be necessary to explore the reasons why the remaining 33% may not feel valued; this can include having a better understanding of cultural perceptions of value. Perceived Barriers: Although 37% of respondents had been promoted since commencing employment with the Trust, the data indicates that there is still room for CP opportunities, as it is the leading barrier reported by the respondents. Secondly, the growing mix of cultures within the nursing workforce gives the appearance of inclusion. However, this is not the experience of some IR nurses. Conclusion statemen: Survey results indicate that this NHS Trust has an excellent foundation to integrate international nurses into their workforce with scope for career progression in a reasonable timeframe. However, it would be recommendable to include fast-tracking career promotions by recognizing previous studies and professional experience. Further exploration of staff career experiences and goals may provide additional useful data for future planning.

Keywords : career progression, International nurses, perceived barriers, staff survey