Review

Indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey: An integrative review

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: In Australia Bachelor of Nursing programmes are delivered via both internal and distance modes yet there is little knowledge of the indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with the learning journey. This integrative review was undertaken to uncover the indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey.

Design: Integrative review. A review of key papers was undertaken. Only peer-reviewed papers published in scholarly journals from 2008 onwards were included in this integrative review.

Data sources: Pubmed, CINAHL, Google Scholar, Cochrane, Wiley Online and ProQuest Central databases were searched for relevant papers.

Review methods: 49 papers were appraised, by a minimum of two team members. CASP tools were used when evaluating qualitative research, systematic and integrated reviews while survey research was evaluated using a tool specifically developed for this purpose by the research team. All tools used to assess the quality of the research studies contained comprehensive checklists and questions relevant for the particular type of study. Data related to these checklists was extracted and the research team appraised the quality of each article based on its relevance to the topic, internal and external validity, appropriateness of data analysis technique(s), and whether ethical considerations were addressed. Seventeen papers were included in the final analysis. Data analysis involved a systematic approach using content analysis techniques.

Results: This integrative review sought to identify indicators of nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey. Authentic learning, motivation, resilience, support, and collaborative learning were identified by this integrative review as being key to nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey. Sub themes were identified within each of these themes that assist in explaining nursing students' views of their learning journey.

Conclusion: The findings showed that higher satisfaction levels are attained when nursing students feel included and supported during their learning journey.

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1. Introduction

Bachelor of nursing programmes are offered in Australia via both internal and distance modes to undergraduate students yet there is little acknowledgement in curricula as to the indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey (El Ansari and Oskrochi, 2006). This project examined research literature including systematic and integrative reviews relating to undergraduate nursing students' perceptions of and satisfaction with their learning journey. For the purpose of this integrative review the student learning journey is defined as a transformational learning curve undertaken during their studies that is supported by academic staff and activities of the university (CQUniversity Australia, 2013), To facilitate an understanding of student satisfaction with their learning journey the research team used Knowles (1978) work on adult learning as a sensitising concept when reviewing and analysing the literature sourced for this project. According to later work by Knowles (1984) adult learners exhibit five characteristics that enable them to move through their learning journey including self-conceptualisation, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation to learn.

Important to this integrative review was the fact that adult learner satisfaction has been addressed in many research reports produced since the publication of Knowles' initial work, yet today undergraduate students are still abandoning their studies part-way through their learning journey. It has long been understood that student attrition from university programmes is highest in the first year of their learning journey (Tinto, 1994). Theoretical perspectives, economic factors, organisational

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issues, psychological and societal influences (Braxton et al., 2000), as well as the direct classroom based academic experiences, have been identified in the research literature as key factors in student withdrawal from their undergraduate programme of study (Nora et al., 1996; Ramos et al., 2015).

Mature age students add complexity to student satisfaction with, and withdrawal from, their undergraduate programme of study. Failure to integrate into the university system and adult learning theories are two areas that have received attention in the literature in an attempt to explain high levels of attrition among this cohort (Kenner and Weinerman, 2011; Park and Choi, 2009). In addition it has been argued by several educational experts that the growth of online education in universities (Parsad and Lewis, 2008) has resulted in an increase in enrolment but little attention has been placed on retaining students studying online (Gazza and Hunker, 2014). There have also been many studies comparing attrition between on-line or distance students and on-campus learners, whether mature age or school leavers (Kember and McKay, 1996; Seifert et al., 2009), yet knowledge of indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey still eludes us.

While predictors of attrition may be linked to student satisfaction there may be more to be discovered looking at indicators of student persistence, and subsequent completion (Holder, 2007). Nichols and Dewerse (2010) researched whether the use of targeted interventions in student support services were reflected in higher retention rates in distance education at a New Zealand college. Nichols and Dewerse's study provided evidence that students' persistence is affected by internal factors (self-factors), course factors, and support services provided, although the student may not be aware of such influences. A recent integrative review of the literature, related to the retention of nursing students in undergraduate bachelor programmes, was conducted by United Kingdom researchers Cameron et al. (2011). These researchers found that nursing students stayed in bachelor programmes due to programme and personal issues including professional issues, support, student characteristics and family (Cameron et al., 2011).

Although Cameron et al. (2011) add to what is known about the retention of nursing students no similar systematic review or integrated review could be found on the indicators of undergraduate nursing students' satisfaction with their learning journey. This research thus fills a gap in the knowledge by undertaking an integrative review on this important topic.

1.1. Objective and Research Question

The aim of the project was to evaluate available research evidence to identify the indicators of undergraduate level nursing student satisfaction with their learning journey.

The research question that guided this integrative review was: What are the indicators of undergraduate nursing student satisfaction with their learning journey?

2. Methods

An integrative review was conducted to uncover evidence related to the indicators of undergraduate nursing student satisfaction with their learning journey. According to Whittemore and Knafl (2005) an integrative review is differentiated from other literature reviews on the basis that it allows for the inclusion of combinations of research methodologies, including experimental and non-experimental studies, qualitative research, theoretical data, as well as previous systematic and integrative reviews, in a single review. Performing the integrative review involved identifying, selecting, appraising, and synthesising research (Souza et al., 2010) in a structured format that can be replicated. While the systematic nature of this process has led to enhanced data collection and extraction it is also suggested that analysis and conclusion drawing within integrative reviews are often "poorly formulated" (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). Accordingly, an appraisal tool specifically designed to promote quality and rigour in analyses was used to ensure that examination of the data was undertaken in a planned, methodical and meaningful way.

2.1. Search Strategy

A review of key papers on the topic enabled the research team to devise a search strategy based on keyword searches and filters detailed in Table 1. These searches were undertaken in Pubmed, CINAHL, Google Scholar, Cochrane, Wiley Online and ProQuest Central to identify relevant papers published between 2008 and 2015. The searches were then refined, using search terms such as "nursing", "student" and "undergraduate" where appropriate, to target relevant publications more closely. The terms baccalaureate and undergraduate are used synonymously throughout the literature and therefore studies with either nomenclature to describe the entry-level degree, conferred by a university or college, were included in the search. The extent to which search strategies needed to be refined depended on the database. For example, searching for the keywords "indicators", "success" and "nursing" in Pubmed returned 130 results, while the same search in Google Scholar returned 167,000 results. To manage this, keyword searches were conducted on the title of the article only in Google Scholar. For the above example, this strategy subsequently returned seven articles of relevance.

A number of filters were applied to the returned papers as outlined in Table 1. The number of filters reflects the number of papers returned in each search. For example, searching Pubmed for "teaching

Table 1
Search strategy.

Initial keyword(s)	Actual search term	Filters (and/or)
Course, subject evaluation	Evaluation AND nursing	retention, student, predict*, indicat*
Student satisfaction	Student satisfaction AND nursing	retention, predict*, indicat*
Learning outcome	Learning outcome AND nursing AND student	bachelor, baccalaureate, predict*, retention
Undergraduate nursing	Undergraduate nursing	retention, predict*, success, complet*
Teaching evaluation	Teaching evaluation AND nursing AND student	retention, success, complet*
Grade	Grade AND nursing AND student	bachelor, baccalaureate, predict*, retention, success, completion
Clinical placement/work integrated learning/ clinical practicum	Clinical placement AND nursing AND student; Work integrated learning AND nursing AND student; Clinical practicum AND nursing AND student	satisfaction, evaluation
Indicators of success in nursing programme	Indicators, success AND nursing	n/a
Online learning	Online learning AND nursing	satisfaction, success, complet*
Mode of study/delivery	Mode delivery OR mode study	nursing, student
Measurements of satisfaction	Measurement satisfaction AND nursing AND student	n/a
Student motivation	Student motivation AND nursing	n/a
Student resilience	Student resilience AND nursing	n/a