

Do nurses take charge of their career? Perceptions of nurses and their employers about responsibilities for managing career development

Ms Julia Philippou

Cyprus

Session 3B

12/3/2010

Introduction: Contemporary career theories emphasise a shift of responsibility for career management from the organisation to the individual. Increasingly employees are expected to “take charge” of their career as a requirement for their development in their current job as well as for their future employability.

Purpose: This research examined the perceptions of nurses and their employers about their responsibilities in managing nurses’ career development and the implications these views may have on workforce retention.

Design: Data were collected via a cross-sectional questionnaire survey. 805 nurses and 58 employers working in five NHS Trusts across London returned a completed questionnaire. 50 nurses and employers were followed up through a semi-structured interview aiming to provide a more in-depth and comprehensive picture of responsibilities for nurses’ career management and development.

Findings: Human capital, individual, interpersonal, and family determinants impact on nurses’ career management and development. Both female and male nurses report employment characteristics and human capital to facilitate their career development while interpersonal phenomena as introducing challenges to their careers. In addition, findings reveal that similarities and differences exist between nurses’ and managers’ perceptions of responsibilities for nurses’ career management. Findings reveal that, despite the prevailing rhetoric that nurses must take responsibility for their own career development, employers are still heavily involved in the career management of their employees.

Conclusion: It is argued that careers are enclosed into professional identity, prior career histories and boundaries imposed by organisations and job opportunities. Career management and development is a “joint responsibility” with implications for both nurses and their employers. Nurses need to focus on employability as a way forward in their career development, take responsibility for managing their careers, and maintain readiness for change as required by the landscape of healthcare environment. Similarly, organisations that want to remain competitive and to attract and retain good quality workforce need to be creative with their career development practices.