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Title: *From the bedside to the classroom: Exploring the lived experiences of internationally educated nurses as nurse academics in the United Kingdom*

Background:

The contribution of internationally educated nurses (IENs) to address the nursing workforce crisis in the United Kingdom (UK) has been widely acknowledged. The Health Foundation (2020) notes that the UK's reliance on IENs is more than double the average of high-income countries. Whilst the experiences of IENs and their contributions to nursing care has been widely researched, there is a paucity of literature on how IENs contribute to nursing education in the UK. The transition from clinical practice to academia is a significant career change that presents both challenges and opportunities. Some IENs transition from clinical practice to nursing academia in UK universities but little is known about their transition experiences as nurse academics, and how they contribute to the training of the next generation of UK nurses.

Purpose of the study

This study provides a unique contribution to the literature on transitioning from clinical practice to academia by exploring the lived experiences of IENs who have made the transition from clinical practice to nursing academia in the UK.

Methods:

The study adopts Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) underpinned by Intersectionality Theory to explore the lived experiences of IEN academics. IPA is

concerned with how people make sense of their lived experience (Smith et al., 2022). Intersectionality hinges on the need to account for multiple facets of identity that has implications for social justice (Crenshaw, 1989).

Ten IEN nurse academics from universities across the UK were invited to hour-long semi-structured interviews over Microsoft Teams. As an IEN researching IENs, the researcher's interpretative role in IPA require a declaration of positionality and a continuous reflexive approach of self-reflection and self-awareness (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). This was incorporated throughout the research process and through reflexive journalling to ensure rigour and transparency of the study.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Researcher immersion in the data was achieved through reading the transcripts several times. The heuristic data analysis framework by Smith et al (2009) was employed to analyse the data. Due to the idiographic nature of IPA, data analysis was done from one case to another to enable a detailed analysis of the experiences of the IENs.

Discussion of Findings:

Preliminary analysis of the experiences of two IENs have been presented here as data analysis is ongoing for the researcher's PhD. Themes discussed below.

1. Support with transitioning.

Although the IENs were experienced clinicians, they needed personalised support to enable them to adapt to the academic culture. The allocation of experienced academic mentors to support IENs in the transitioning was found to be helpful

particularly if the mentor was also an IEN. McDermid et al., (2016) and Hunter and Hayter (2019) emphasise the crucial role of mentorship in navigating the complex terrain of academia.

2. Contribution to decolonising the nursing curriculum and inclusive teaching.

The IEN academics believed that they brought global perspectives to their teaching by leveraging their experience of nursing practice from their home countries. Traditional nursing curricula has been criticised as promoting western ideals whilst sidelining diverse perspectives (Rosario et al., 2024). The IENs state that their modest contribution to decolonising the nursing curriculum includes simple changes to their teaching content as reported by an IEN; *“I have started reflecting on every content I build. Instead of ‘Mr Smith’ I use diverse names to reflect the international students in my class’.*

3. Systemic Barriers

Restrictions imposed on IENs because of their immigration status was reported as discriminatory. It was reported that visa restrictions delayed career progression as institutions favoured colleagues with settled status or British citizenship. This finding aligns with research showing how immigration policies create barriers in IENs seeking career advancement (Newton et al., 2012). Attainment of British citizenship was acknowledged as liberating and empowering as noted by this IEN *“This small thing that you are a British citizen has boosted my confidence so much...I don’t have to fear anymore”*

Conclusion:

This study highlights the unique challenges faced by IENs whilst also underscoring their invaluable contributions to nursing education in the UK. By leveraging their unique contributions, IENs do not only enrich the learning experiences of their students but also contribute to the development of a more inclusive nursing profession and nursing academia. The findings call for actionable changes in policy and practice that will create an inclusive and enabling environment for IENs to thrive as nurse academics.

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Keywords

internationally educated nurses, intersectionality, nursing academia, IPA