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Graduate Nurse Transition Programs in Western Australia: A Comparative Study of their Perceived Efficacy

Ce (Cecilia) Kealley

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GRADUATE NURSE TRANSITION PROGRAMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THEIR PERCEIVED EFFICACY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Nursing by

Ce (Cecilia) Kealley, RN, BaSc (HProm), Grad Dip (HSM), M (HSM)

School of Nursing
The University of Notre Dame, Australia, Fremantle

2012
STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis is my own work and contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis. All research procedures reported in the thesis have received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee.

Name: ___________________________________________

Signature: _______________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This doctoral thesis is dedicated to my parents, who worked hard to ensure my siblings and I had the opportunities they did not. Were they still alive, I know their pride in me achieving this level of academia would have been immeasurable.

Eternal gratitude is extended to my partner, Chris, whose love, encouragement and support has been unfailing throughout.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF SOURCES I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS II
TABLE OF CONTENTS IV
LIST OF TABLES IX
LIST OF FIGURES XII
ACRONYMS XIV
ABSTRACT XVI

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Preface 1
1.2 Background to the Study 1
  1.2.1 Global Nursing Shortfall 9
  1.2.2 National Nursing Shortfall 12
  1.2.3 The Western Australian Context 15
1.3 Nature of the Study 17
1.4 Need for Research 19
1.5 Research Questions 20
1.6 Summary 21

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 22
2.1 Introduction 22
2.2 Factors Impinging on Nurse Numbers 25
  2.2.1 Ageing Population 25
  2.2.2 Ageing Workforce 28
  2.2.3 Health Profiles
    2.2.3.1 Patient Acuity 32
    2.2.3.2 Obesity 36
  2.2.4 Technology 37
  2.2.5 Workforce Composition 43
  2.2.6 Retention 45
2.3 Initiatives to Stabilise the Nursing Workforce 48
2.4 Graduate Nurse Transition Programs 51
  2.4.1 Nursing Education 54
  2.4.2 Western Australian Transition Programs 56
2.5 Research into Benefits of Graduate Nurse Programs 57
2.6 Framework for Research Methodology 62
  2.6.1 Mixed Methods 63
2.7 Context of the Current Research 68
2.8 Summary 69

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 71
3.1 Design 71
  3.1.1 The Triangulation Design 71
3.2 Study Populations 73
4.5.1.4 Current Employment Sector by Graduating University 120

4.6 GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAMS 121

4.6.1 Graduate Nurse Program Commencement and Completion 121

4.6.2 Graduate Nurse Program Length 123

4.6.3 Rotation Characteristics 124

4.6.3.1 Specialty Unit Type 124

4.6.3.2 Specialty Rotation Length of Stay 129

4.6.3.3 Contracted Hours of Work 133

4.6.3.4 Support Provision in Specialty Rotations 138

4.6.3.5 Supernumerary Time to Full Patient Load Allocation 150

4.6.3.6 Perceived Benefits of Specialty Rotations 156

4.6.3.7 Perceived Problems in Specialty Rotations 158

4.6.3.8 Perceived Causes of Stress for Specialty Rotations 168

4.6.3.9 Other Specialty Rotation Comments 176

4.6.4 Benefits of the Graduate Nurse Program 181

4.6.5 Formal Evaluation of Graduate Program 186

4.7 GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAM INFLUENCE ON CAREER PATHWAY 187

4.7.1 Career Pathway Following Transition 187

4.7.2 Influence of a Permanent Contract on Choice of Employment 190

4.7.3 Five-year Professional Vision 190

4.8 REGISTERED NURSE INTEGRATION, FINAL COMMENTS 191

4.9 WEB-BASED SURVEY OF GRADUATE PROGRAM COORDINATORS 194

4.9.1 Graduate Nurse Coordinators Survey - Quantitative Data 195

4.10 SUMMARY 198

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION 199

5.1 INTRODUCTION 199

5.2 DEMOGRAPHICS 201

5.2.1 Age Groups 201

5.2.2 Gender 202

5.2.3 Prior Experience 203

5.2.4 Undergraduate Nursing Program 205

5.2.4.1 Participation in a Formal Transition Program Related to University 205

5.2.4.2 Current Employment Sector Related to University 207

5.3 COMPARATIVE DATA 207

5.3.1 Health Sector Employment Type 208

5.3.2 Types of Specialty Units Worked In 211

5.3.2.1 Acute Care Specialties 212

5.3.2.2 Mental Health 214

5.3.2.3 Aged Care and Community Health 216

5.3.2.4 Rural Nursing 218

5.3.3 Competence, Confidence and Support 219

5.3.3.1 Graduate Program Competence and Confidence 220

5.3.3.2 Preceptor Support 221

5.3.4 Full Patient Load 225

5.3.5 Performance Evaluation 229

5.3.6 Night Shift Participation and Preparation 230

5.3.7 Undergraduate Nursing Program Influences 233

5.3.7.1 Higher Education Contribution Scheme Debt 236
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAM EFFICACY</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1</td>
<td>Participation in a Graduate Nurse Program</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2</td>
<td>Graduate Nurse Program Length</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3</td>
<td>Specialty Rotation Characteristics</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3.1</td>
<td>Specialty Rotation Length of Stay</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3.2</td>
<td>Average Contracted Hours per Week</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4</td>
<td>Levels of Support</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4.1</td>
<td>Staff Development Nurse Support</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4.2</td>
<td>Clinical Coach</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4.3</td>
<td>Graduate Nurse Program Coordinators</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.4.4</td>
<td>Aspects of Support</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.5</td>
<td>Benefits of Specialty Rotations</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.6</td>
<td>Problems and Stressors of Specialty Rotations</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.6.1</td>
<td>Perceived Problems</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.6.2</td>
<td>Perceived Stress</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.7</td>
<td>Additional Perceptions from Specialty Rotations</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.8</td>
<td>Benefits of the Graduate Nurse Program</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.8.1</td>
<td>Graduate Nurse Program Improvements</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.8.2</td>
<td>Program Evaluation</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.8.3</td>
<td>Graduate Program Guidelines</td>
<td>284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.8.4</td>
<td>Transition Programs Innovations</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.9</td>
<td>Final Registered Nurse Integration Comments</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>CAREER PATHWAY FOLLOWING TRANSITION</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.1</td>
<td>Career Pathway Intention / Choices</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.2</td>
<td>Permanent Contract Influence on Choice of Employer</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5.3</td>
<td>Future Professional Pathway</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>COMPARATIVE STUDIES</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.1</td>
<td>Key Findings of Comparative Studies</td>
<td>301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2.2</td>
<td>Undergraduate Education</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>CONTEMPORARY GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAMS IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1</td>
<td>Key Findings from Contemporary Graduate Nurse Programs</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2</td>
<td>Increasing Options for Areas of Need</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3</td>
<td>Graduate Nurse Support</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3.1</td>
<td>Preceptor Support and Training</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3.2</td>
<td>Clinical Coach</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4</td>
<td>Graduate Nurse Program Guidelines</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4.1</td>
<td>Work-Life Balance</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4.2</td>
<td>Supernumerary Time to Full Patient Load</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>CAREER PATHWAYS</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Key Findings</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Career Advice</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>FURTHER CONCEPTS FOR GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAMS</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1</td>
<td>Out of Hours Support and Supervision</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2</td>
<td>Collaborative Models of Support</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 2.1. WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMPARISON ON NATIONAL HEALTH INDICATORS ..................... 34
TABLE 2.2. QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ASPECTS APPLICABLE TO CURRENT MIXED METHOD RESEARCH .............................................................................................................. 65
TABLE 3.1. SUPPORT PERSONNEL IDENTIFIED AND RESPONSE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO GRNS ........ 80
TABLE 3.2. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE MODIFICATIONS ........................................................................ 81
TABLE 3.3. ADDITIONAL SURVEY QUESTIONS IN 2010 INSTRUMENT ................................................................................................................................. 84
TABLE 3.4. PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENT AGE GROUPS FOR INDIVIDUAL UNIVERSITY .............. 90
TABLE 3.5. THEMES USED TO CODE FIRST ROTATION PERCEIVED CAUSES OF STRESS ............... 92
TABLE 4.1. AGE GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS .......................................................................................... 100
TABLE 4.2. HEALTH SECTOR EMPLOYMENT TYPE ............................................................................... 102
TABLE 4.3. TYPE OF UNIT WORKED IN FOR TRANSITIONAL ROTATIONS ........................................... 104
TABLE 4.4. RESPONSE CHOICES FOR 2000 & 2010 QUESTIONNAIRES .................................................. 105
TABLE 4.5. AGREEMENT GRADUATE PROGRAM PERCEIVED TO IMPROVE COMPETENCE ............... 106
TABLE 4.6. AGREEMENT GRADUATE PROGRAM PERCEIVED TO IMPROVE CONFIDENCE ............... 107
TABLE 4.7. SATISFACTION WITH PRECEPTOR SUPPORT ........................................................................ 108
TABLE 4.8. SUPERNUMERARY TIME TO ALLOCATION OF A FULL PATIENT LOAD ................................ 109
TABLE 4.9. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION COMPLETED ........................................................................ 110
TABLE 4.10. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION INVOLVEMENT .................................................................. 111
TABLE 4.11. TIME PRIOR TO NIGHT DUTY ROSTERING ......................................................................... 112
TABLE 4.12. PREPAREDNESS FOR NIGHT DUTY .................................................................................... 113
TABLE 4.13. AGREEMENT THAT UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION PREPARED FOR RN ROLE .............. 114
TABLE 4.14. UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION IMPROVEMENTS ............................................................. 115
TABLE 4.15. HIGHER EDUCATION DEBT .............................................................................................. 116
TABLE 4.16. HECS DEBT INFLUENCE ON FURTHER STUDY ..................................................................... 116
TABLE 4.17. RESPONDENT AGE-GROUPS FOR INDIVIDUAL UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY .......... 118
TABLE 4.18. REASONS FOR NOT PARTICIPATING IN FORMAL TRANSITION PROGRAM ..................... 119
TABLE 4.19. MONTH AND YEAR OF GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAM COMMENCEMENT ...................... 122
TABLE 4.20. MONTH AND YEAR OF GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAM COMPLETION ............................. 123
TABLE 4.21. REASONS GRADUATE NURSE PROGRAM NOT COMPLETED ............................................ 123
TABLE 4.22. SPECIALTY UNIT OPTIONS ............................................................................................... 125
TABLE 4.23. FIRST ROTATION – UNIT TYPE, NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS ............... 126
TABLE 4.24. SECOND ROTATION – UNIT TYPE, NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS ............ 127
TABLE 4.25. THIRD ROTATION – UNIT TYPE, NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS............... 127
TABLE 4.26. ADDITIONAL ROTATIONS – UNIT TYPE, NUMBER AND PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS .... 129
TABLE 4.27. CHOICES AVAILABLE TO RESPONDENTS TO INDICATE ROTATION LENGTH ............ 130
TABLE 4.28. FIRST ROTATION – WEEKS SPENT IN SPECIALTY BY TYPE ............................................. 130
TABLE 4.29. FIRST ROTATION – PROPORTIONS OF TOTAL WEEKS SPENT ........................................ 131
TABLE 4.30. SECOND ROTATION – WEEKS SPENT IN SPECIALTY BY TYPE ........................................ 131
TABLE 4.31. SECOND ROTATION – PROPORTIONS OF TOTAL WEEKS SPENT .................................... 132
TABLE 4.32. THIRD ROTATION – PROPORTIONS OF TOTAL WEEKS SPENT ....................................... 132
TABLE 4.72. FIRST ROTATION – SECTOR TYPE, PROPORTION OF NEGATIVE COMMENTS ............... 177
TABLE 4.73. SECOND ROTATION – SECTOR TYPE, PROPORTION OF POSITIVE COMMENTS .......... 178
TABLE 4.74. SECOND ROTATION – SECTOR TYPE, PROPORTION OF NEGATIVE COMMENTS .......... 179
TABLE 4.75. THIRD ROTATION – SECTOR TYPE, PROPORTION OF POSITIVE COMMENTS .......... 180
TABLE 4.76. THIRD ROTATION – SECTOR TYPE PROPORTION OF NEGATIVE COMMENTS .......... 181
TABLE 4.77. BENEFITS OF GNP – COMMON THEMES AND INDUSTRY SECTOR ......................... 182
TABLE 4.78. NON-BENEFITS OF GNP – COMMON THEMES AND INDUSTRY SECTOR .................. 184
TABLE 4.79. IMPROVEMENTS TO GNP – TOTAL BY INDUSTRY SECTOR ............................... 185
TABLE 4.80. IMPROVEMENTS TO GNP – INDUSTRY SECTOR AND COMMON THEMES ............... 185
TABLE 4.81. FORMAL EVALUATION OF GRADUATE PROGRAM ......................................... 187
TABLE 4.82. CAREER PATHWAY FOLLOWING TRANSITION PROGRAM ................................. 188
TABLE 4.83. GNP INFLUENCE ON CAREER PATHWAY THEMES ......................................... 189
TABLE 4.84. FURTHER INTEGRATION COMMENTS RELATED TO SECTOR AFFILIATION ............... 192
TABLE 4.85. FURTHER INTEGRATION COMMENTS RELATED TO UNDERGRADUATE UNIVERSITY .... 193
TABLE 4.86. NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS INDICATING GRADUATE PROGRAM LENGTH ........... 195
TABLE 4.87. SPECIALTY ROTATION LENGTH AND NUMBER BY ORGANISATION SECTOR .......... 195
TABLE 4.88. FULL-TIME HOURS BY ORGANISATIONAL SECTOR ........................................... 196
TABLE 4.89. NUMBER OF GRADUATES PER UNIT BY ORGANISATIONAL SECTOR ...................... 196
TABLE 4.90. GRNS PER UNIT AND RATIO TO OTHER RNS ................................................... 197
TABLE 6.1. SUGGESTED TRANSITION PROGRAM GUIDELINES ............................................. 312
TABLE APP F.1. PROGRAM INNOVATIONS AND CHANGES .................................................. 367
TABLE APP F.2. FURTHER COMMENTS FROM GRADUATE NURSE COORDINATORS ............... 369
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1. AUSTRALIA, POPULATION STRUCTURE, AGE AND SEX, 1990-2010 .................................................. 26
FIGURE 2.2. POPULATION PERCENTAGE OF 60+ AGE GROUP (WESTERN AUSTRALIA) ............................. 28
FIGURE 2.3. REGISTERED AND ENROLLED NURSES BY AGE GROUP, 1999, 2005 AND 2009 ................. 29
FIGURE 2.4. REPLACEMENT REQUIREMENTS OF RNS FOR AUSTRALIA OVER 10-YEAR PERIOD ........... 30
FIGURE 2.5. EMPLOYED GRADUATE REGISTERED NURSE REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPLY ................. 30
FIGURE 2.6. AUSTRALIAN RNS, UNIVERSITY PROGRAM COMMENCEMENTS & COMPLETIONS ............ 31
FIGURE 2.7. THREE MAJOR RESEARCH PARADIGMS, INCLUDING SUBTYPES OF MIXED METHODS RESEARCH .......................................................... 67
FIGURE 3.1. TRIANGULATION DESIGN: DATA TRANSFORMATION MODEL .................................................... 73
FIGURE 4.1. UNIVERSITY ATTENDED AND GENDER OF RESPONDENTS .................................................... 117
FIGURE 4.2. PROPORTIONS OF GRADUATING NURSES PARTICIPATING IN TRANSITION PROGRAM .................. 119
FIGURE 4.3. DISTRIBUTION OF GRADUATING UNIVERSITY ........................................................................ 120
BY EMPLOYMENT SECTOR IN 2010 .................................................................................................................. 120
FIGURE 4.4. EMPLOYMENT SECTOR DISTRIBUTIONS BY GRADUATING UNIVERSITY ........................... 121
FIGURE 4.5. COMPARISON OF 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD ROTATION, NUMBERS OF GRADUATES IN SPECIALTIES ......................................................................................... 128
FIGURE 4.6. COMPARISON 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD ROTATION, AVERAGE HOURS GRADUATES CONTRACTED TO WORK ........................................................................................................ 137
FIGURE 4.7. LEVEL OF PERCEIVED SUPPORT TO GRNs IN FIRST ROTATION ............................................ 142
FIGURE 4.8. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM PROGRAM COORDINATOR ........................................................................................................ 145
FIGURE 4.9. 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM PROGRAM COORDINATOR IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR ........................................................................................................ 145
FIGURE 4.10. 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM PROGRAM COORDINATOR IN THE RURAL SECTOR .................................................................................................. 146
FIGURE 4.11. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM SDN ................ 146
FIGURE 4.12. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION BY SECTOR; PERCEIVED SDN OCCASIONAL & NEGLIGIBLE SUPPORT ............................................................................................. 147
FIGURE 4.13. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM CNM/S/C ...... 147
FIGURE 4.14. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM PRECEPTOR/ MENTOR ......................................................................................................................... 148
FIGURE 4.15. COMPARISON OF 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD ROTATION, PERCEIVED EXTENSIVE AND VERY GOOD SUPPORT FROM ALL CATEGORIES .................................................................... 149
FIGURE 4.16. COMPARISON OF 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD ROTATION, PERCEIVED OCCASIONAL AND NEGLIGIBLE SUPPORT FROM ALL CATEGORIES ........................................................................ 149
FIGURE 4.17. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, SUPERNUMERARY DAYS TO FULL PATIENT LOAD ........................................................................................................................... 152
FIGURE 4.18. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, BY SECTOR, ONE DAY TO FULL PATIENT LOAD ............................................................................................................................... 153
FIGURE 4.19. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, BY SECTOR, 4-7 DAYS TO FULL PATIENT LOAD ............................................................................................................................... 153
FIGURE 4.20. COMPARISON OF 1ST AND 2ND ROTATION, BY SECTOR, 7-14 DAYS TO FULL PATIENT LOAD ............................................................................................................................... 154
# ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIHW</td>
<td>Australian Institute of Health and Welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIN</td>
<td>Assistant in Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANF</td>
<td>Australian Nursing Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANMC</td>
<td>Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNM/S/C</td>
<td>Clinical Nurse Manager/ Specialist/ Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoHA</td>
<td>Department of Health and Ageing</td>
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<td>ED</td>
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<td>EN</td>
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<td>Health Workforce Australia</td>
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<td>ICN</td>
<td>International Council of Nurses</td>
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<td>ICU</td>
<td>Intensive Care Unit</td>
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<td>LOS</td>
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<td>National Nursing and Nursing Education Taskforce</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NMBA  Nurses and Midwives Board of Australia
NMBWA  Nurses and Midwives Board of Western Australia
NMO  Nursing and Midwifery Office
OMR  Optical Mark Recognition
PCA  Patient Care Assistant
RN  Registered Nurse
SDE  Staff Development Educator
SDN  Staff Development Nurse
SRN  Senior Registered Nurse
UK  United Kingdom
USA  United States of America
UWA  University of Western Australia
WA  Western Australia
WACHS  Western Australian Country Health Service
WHO  World Health Organisation
ABSTRACT

This research compares the findings of a survey questionnaire sent to 858 newly graduated Registered Nurses (RNs) in 2010, with those from a similar study conducted 10-years previously. The purpose of the present was threefold. Firstly, to investigate how current transition programs compared to those of 10-years ago; second, to gain insight into how well formal programs assisted the transition of the novice nurse into the workforce; and thirdly, to examine what effect transition programs have for making decisions to remain in the nursing workforce.

A mixed methods triangulation design was selected to investigate the research questions. Additional questions to those used in 2000 were incorporated into the study to determine the degree to which a supportive program may have had an effect on the novice RN’s intended career trajectory. A small web-based survey of graduate nurse coordinators was utilised to corroborate selected aspects of participant findings.

Findings indicated that the novice nurses’ experiences differed on several measures in the period between the two studies. The 2010 nurses indicated that a robust transition program was conducive to becoming a confident and competent practitioner. Adequate and appropriate support was found to be the most consistent theme respondents perceived as necessary for satisfactory transition. Data revealed that current programs are much more structured, and that nurses are more satisfied with their efficacy. The research findings also demonstrated that supportive transition programs positively influence the nurse’s career pathway, and their tenure within the nursing workforce. Due to the increase in the complexity of nursing science, findings also indicated that undergraduate education was not able to
comprehensively prepare the student nurse for all aspects of nursing practice. Suggestions are presented for addressing this concern.

To ensure that all nurses graduating from universities as a Registered Nurse are appropriately supported in becoming competent practitioners, a mandatory period of transition ought to be considered; one based on a robust framework and comprehensive guidelines. This research provides a platform for the development of such guidelines.