Nurses' and midwives' perceptions and preferences for lifelong learning

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Lifelong learning is essential for personal and professional growth and enables individuals to gain new knowledge and skills that keep them in touch with the advancements in their work and open new career prospects (McGreal & Olcott, 2022). In the healthcare sector, lifelong learning is integral to workforce development. Workforce development is critical to ensure that nurses and midwives maintain knowledge of best practice for improved care outcomes and sustain appropriate levels of skill competence. Recently, the Australia government has implemented a range of initiatives to support the development of short courses and micro-credentials designed to deliver lifelong learning that will upskill the labour market and meet the needs of the healthcare workforce (Varadarajan et al., 2023).

An Australian survey of 3,756 workers was undertaken by Deloitte (2020) to explore workforce attitudes toward lifelong learning. This study found that the majority of Health care and social assistance workers were relatively interested in further study (63%). The study also established that the majority of study-interested workers want flexible, bite-sized intensive learning that is linked to their jobs and industry (Deloitte, 2020). However, while lifelong learning is a requirement of nurses' and midwives' registration, little is reported on the motivational drivers, enablers and barriers associated with lifelong learning (Oliver, 2019). This Pecha Kucha reports on a study undertaken to better understand the motivational drivers of nurses' and midwives' engaging in lifelong learning and the enablers and barriers they face undertaking lifelong learning.

An online survey of nurses and midwives was implemented, to glean their perspectives on motivational drivers, enablers and barriers for lifelong learning. Convenience sampling was used to identify participants who were registered nurses and midwives in Australia, Mauritius or Singapore. Participants were recruited by email invitation distributed through professional networks as well as education and industry providers in Australia, Mauritius and Singapore.

The findings of this study confirmed that the motivational drivers for lifelong learning across the respondents were personal interest/development (62%), continuing professional development (62%) and career progression (51%). Participants noted their preference for undertaking lifelong learning was via a combination of face to face and online learning (56%). Their pedagogical preferences included interactive resources (56%), written materials (56%) and discussions with other participants (54%). Key enablers to success in lifelong learning was deemed to be flexibility in assessment submission (56%) and easy to use systems (52%). The barriers identified by respondents included work/life balance (52%) workload (49%) and cost (49%).

Digital technology in relation to lifelong learning can significantly promote enablers and nullify perceived barriers. Lifelong learning should be designed to maximise engagement at minimal cost to the participant. This can be achieved by providing interactive resources and digital materials that are easy to use, intuitive and can be utilised when convenient to the participant. Online discussions are ideal but these need to be asynchronous to ensure flexibility and support for learner scheduling around work/other life commitments.

These findings could be used by educators and learning designers to guide and inform the development of lifelong learning.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, nursing, midwifery, digital technology, micro-credentials

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