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The nurse apprentice (RNDA) experience of their programme: a systematic review

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Shepherd, P¹.

Corresponding author:

Paula Shepherd

pshepherd@bournemouth.ac.uk

Author Affiliation:

Bournemouth University.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Support - None.

Review Stage at time of this submission - Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria.

Conflicts of interest - The author is an experienced practice educator who has some experience of supporting the registered nurse degree apprentice (RNDA) in practice. There is a potential of conflict of interest if the assumption were to be taken that all learners' needs and experiences are the same. The purpose of the study is to seek understanding of the apprentice experience in order to develop and inform practice. The potential conflict of interest is precluded by the recognition of the need to understand the RNDA experience.

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Amendments - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 17 October 2023 and was last updated on 17 October 2023.

INTRODUCTION

Review question / Objective The registered nurse degree apprentice (RNDA) programme is a recent introduction to healthcare education in the United Kingdom(UK). Utilising the PICO (population, phenomena of interest and context) framework the research question was developed. Apprenticeships are a key government strategy in developing the future healthcare workforce. In readiness for increased scale of programmes, this is an opportune time to evaluate the pedagogies and support strategies currently employed. The study aim is to research the RNDA experiences of their degree programme. The aim of this systematic review is to evaluate the current evidence base of the apprentice experience.

Rationale The registered nurse degree apprentice (RNDA) programme was established in 2017; Bournemouth University commenced delivery of the programme in February 2021. The RNDA programme combines work, practice placement and theory in order to achieve professional registration and a degree in the chosen field of nursing (NMC 2018; Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) 2021).

Whilst the greater number of students continue to follow the 'traditional' route of loan-based degree, the government views apprenticeship as a key strategy in developing the future healthcare workforce (NHS England 2023). The objective is that apprenticeships will increase by more than one hundred percent to 16% of all professional programmes by 2028. By completing a systematic

review, current understanding can be explored and evidence base critiqued.

In exploring opportunities to support retention and prevent attrition in pre-registration healthcare programmes, Lovegrove (2018) sought to appreciate the factors that contributed to a decision to continue or leave a programme. An apprentice programme differs from the established programme in that it is employer led, including both 'on the job' and 'off the job' learning (IfATE 2021). The apprentice is both an employee and a learner, necessitating an understanding of how roles and responsibilities may differ in this different approach to professional education. There is a risk that assumptions can be made with regard to support, guidance and the learning opportunities that aid successful completion of the RNDA programme. Pressley and Garside (2023) recognise that a range of factors influence nurse retention; with an 11.9% vacancy rate in the UK nursing workforce, the need to reduce attrition in pre-registration education is essential for the NHS long-term workforce plan to be realised (NHS 2023; Buchan et al. 2020) Investigating what is currently understood of the apprentice experience has the potential to aid understanding of the pedagogies and employment practice that can enhance the RNDA experience.

Condition being studied Although apprenticeships are not a new phenomenon, the introduction of higher apprenticeship, of which the RNDA programme is one, is a recent innovation. The apprentice experience is being studied to understand the educational pedagogy and support frameworks that support effective learning and professional development.

METHODS

Search strategy To ensure the systematic review was not being replicated a search of PROSPero, JBI and InPlasy was conducted.

Terms used were registered nurs* AND experience OR perceptions OR attitudes OR views OR feelings OR qual* or perspective*; degree apprentice experience OR perceptions OR attitudes OR views OR feelings OR qual* or perspective*; Health* degree AND experience OR perceptions OR attitudes OR views OR feelings OR qual* or perspective*; apprentice OR higher apprentice* OR apprentice* training; degree apprentice* OR higher apprentice OR apprentice* training And experience OR perceptions OR attitudes OR views OR feelings OR qual* or perspective*.

Participant or population The RNDA, nurse, health and social care apprentices.

Intervention The experiences of apprentices.

Comparator In the context of their programme.

Study designs to be included Original studies.

Eligibility criteria Inclusion Criteria: The professions included social work, psychotherapy, nursing, radiography, anaesthesiology, police and STEM programmes. These were deemed appropriate as they require knowledge, skills and professional attributes reflective of nursing practice. In addition, foundation degrees were included as they are OFSTED regulated and, due to affiliation with an approved educational institute, are subject to the same quality assurance processes. An international search was completed as healthcare apprenticeships are not limited to the UK. Exclusion Criteria: To ensure veracity of the evidence only primary research would be included. Case studies and opinion pieces, whilst they could inform and contribute to the discussion, do not robustly inform the evidence base and thus pose a risk to subjectivity. Limiters of 2017 to present day, full text, peer reviewed and English were applied.

Information sources The search was conducted using EBSCOhost, incorporating CINAHL, Cochrane Library, Directory of Open Access Journals, Embase, PsychINFO, MEDLINE with Full Text, SCOPUS, Web of Sciences and ETHoS (British library).

Main outcome(s) Data that demonstrates insight into the apprentice experience that may include retention, satisfaction, challenges, attributes, professional development, and other factors that contribute to the learner perceptions of their programme.

Additional outcome(s) By undertaking an international search, there is the potential to appreciate the transcultural nature of learning.

Data management The search findings will be maintained in Endnote and duplicates removed. To illustrate the initial results, a PRISMA diagram will be used illustrating the number of articles included and excluded. An adapted Matrix (Kable et al 2012) will be used as a tool to evaluate the individual research articles. A rationale for inclusion and exclusion will be provided.

Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis Each study will be further evaluated GRADE-CERQUAL framework. Work will be reviewed by Phd supervisors.

Strategy of data synthesis Based upon Cormack (2013) a data extraction tool will be used to standardise the review of the key characteristics of each research article and will include study type and aims, outcome and recommendations. A narrative comparison and synthesis of the findings will be developed to identify outcomes and considerations for further investigation.

Subgroup analysis Not planned.

Sensitivity analysis Not identified.

Language restriction English.

Country(ies) involved England (English).

Keywords Nurse apprentice; experience; Registered nurse education; Higher degree apprentice; perceptions.

Dissemination plans The intention is to disseminate findings at conference, educational events and publish in a peer reviewed journal.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Paula Shepherd - Responsible for the development of the systematic review protocol, completion of the search and review.
Email: pshepherd@bournemouth.co.uk

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