

## Educational Needs of Staff-Development Nurses in Japan

Mami Onishi<sup>1\*</sup>, Atsuko Watanabe<sup>2</sup>, and Katsuya Kanda<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Health Care and Nursing, Juntendo University, Japan.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing, Aino University, Japan.

### \*Corresponding author

Mami Onishi, Faculty of Health Care and Nursing, Juntendo University, Japan, Tel +81-47-350-3056; E-mail: mami-o@juntendo.ac.jp.

Submitted: 21 Nov 2016; Accepted: 11 Dec 2016; Published: 13 Dec 2016

### Abstract

**Background:** Staff development for hospital nurses is a critical issue in the provision of quality patient care. Staff-development nurses should have expertise in education in order to ensure its effectiveness. However, these nurses in Japan often do not have specialized training in this role. This study aimed to investigate the current status of work and educational needs of staff-development nurses in Japan with the purpose of designing a staff-development nurse educational program.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional survey was administered to 281 randomly selected, certified nurse administrators. The questionnaire design was based on the standards of continuing education and group interviews, and was concerned with the roles of staff-development nurses and accepted competencies for staff-development nurses.

**Results:** Responses were obtained from 101 nurse administrators, 60% of whom worked in a hospital with a full-time staff-development nurse. Eighty percent of the participants responded that their staff-development nurses were actively engaged in assessing nurses' needs and in planning, operating, and evaluating educational programs. Data on the perceptions of unit managers and nurses were frequently used in educational needs assessment and the evaluation of the educational program's effectiveness. Objective data, such as quality indicators, were not used often. Participants perceived that staff-development nurses should strengthen the roles of the educational needs assessment of the learner and the evaluation of programs. The most frequently mentioned competencies gained through specialized education were analytical thinking, data analysis, and planning.

**Conclusion:** The educational goal of staff-development nurses is systematic management of nurse-educational programs based on analysis and consideration of both subjective and objective data.

**Keywords:** Continuing education, Staff-development nurses, Nurse administrators.

### Introduction

Continuing education for nurses is critical in the provision of quality care. Many countries have license renewal systems every few years, which require a certain number of hours of continuing education or practice. In such systems, the quality of continuing educational programs is maintained to a certain degree by certification from professional organizations, such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) in the USA. In Japan, there are no such regulatory requirements for nursing license renewal or continuing competence development, except for nurses with special certification certified by the Japan Nursing Association. The effort that each hospital puts into continuing education and the quality of educational programs depends on the commitment of hospital administrators, hospital resources for education, and competency of staff-development nurses. Most large hospitals have nurses who are responsible for staff development and who contribute to planning and managing staff education and career development; however, their positions are often not full-time [1].

In fact, nurses in the staff-development position reportedly have difficulty in implementing their role, e.g., planning educational programs, communicating educational goals to staff nurses, evaluating educational plans, and cooperating with unit managers [2]. Staff-development nurses frequently perceive education and training as being supportive to their role [3]. However, they do not necessarily partake in specialized educational or training programs [2]. The American Nurses Association (ANA) & National Nursing Staff Development Organization (NNSDO) defined continuing education as “systematic professional learning experiences designed to augment the knowledge, skills, and attributes of nurses and therefore enrich the nurses' contributions to quality health care and their pursuit of professional career goals [4].” Phase one of the professional development process includes assessment; identification of issues, trends, and outcomes; planning; implementation; and evaluation [4]. To enhance the systematic and evidence-based practice of staff development, specialized training is needed for staff-development nurses. This study aims to investigate the current status of the work and educational needs of staff-development nurses in Japan in order to design a staff-development nurse-training program.

## Methodology

A cross-sectional questionnaire survey was administered to 281 certified nurse administrators, who were contacted based on stratified, random sampling with prefecture as the sampling unit (20% sampling rate). The questionnaire design was based on the current literature and group interviews on the roles of staff-development nurses and the processes of their activities. Based on the standards of ANA & NNSDO [4] and the Japanese Nursing Association, staff-development nursing roles were classified into 1) assessment of educational needs, 2) educational planning, 3) operation of the educational process, and 4) evaluation of the effectiveness of education. Among these, the respondents selected the current roles of their staff-development nurses and the roles that needed to be strengthened (multiple answers). Regarding educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation, the respondents were asked about the frequency of implementation of each educational program on a scale of “never” to “always.” In addition, they were asked about the data source of educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation used by their staff-development nurses, besides the expected competencies of staff-development nurses and competencies gained through specialized education.

## Ethical Considerations

The study was approved by the university’s ethics review board. A letter of invitation outlining the aims and giving further details on the study accompanied each questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent directly to the subjects. Consent to participate was assumed on the basis of a returned questionnaire, which did not contain any personal information that could be used to identify the respondent.

## Results

### Participant Demographics

A total of 101 questionnaires were returned (35.9% response rate). Most of the respondents worked at hospitals with 200–499 beds, and 37% of them were assistant nursing directors, 30% were unit managers, and the majority of the remaining respondents were directors of nursing. Over 80% of the respondents had held nursing management positions for 10 or more years. Among the hospitals to which the participants belonged, 60% had full-time staff-development nurses.

### Current and Future Expected Roles of Staff-Development Nurses

Figure 1 shows the respondents’ perceptions of current roles and roles that needed to be strengthened for staff-development nurses. Over 80% respondents answered that their staff-development nurses currently assumed all four roles. Apart from the assessment of educational needs, over 90% respondents answered that those were the roles of staff-development nurses. Regarding staff-development nursing roles that needed to be strengthened, the response for each role had different features. Sixty percent respondents perceived that educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation needed to be strengthened, and 30% perceived that planning and operation of educational programs

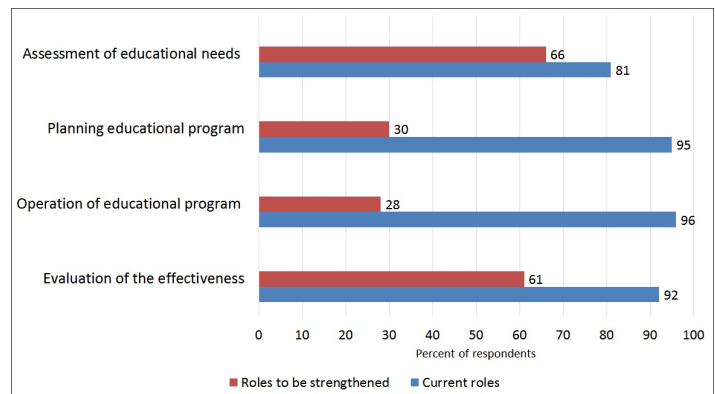


Figure 1: Perceptions of roles of staff-development nurses.

needed to be strengthened.

### Educational Needs Assessment and Effectiveness Evaluation

Figure 2 shows the frequency of implementation of educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation. Sixty percent respondents answered that educational needs assessment was conducted “always” or “in most cases” for planning of educational programs, whereas 30% answered “not often.” Regarding the evaluation of effectiveness, 90% respondents answered “always” or “in most cases.”

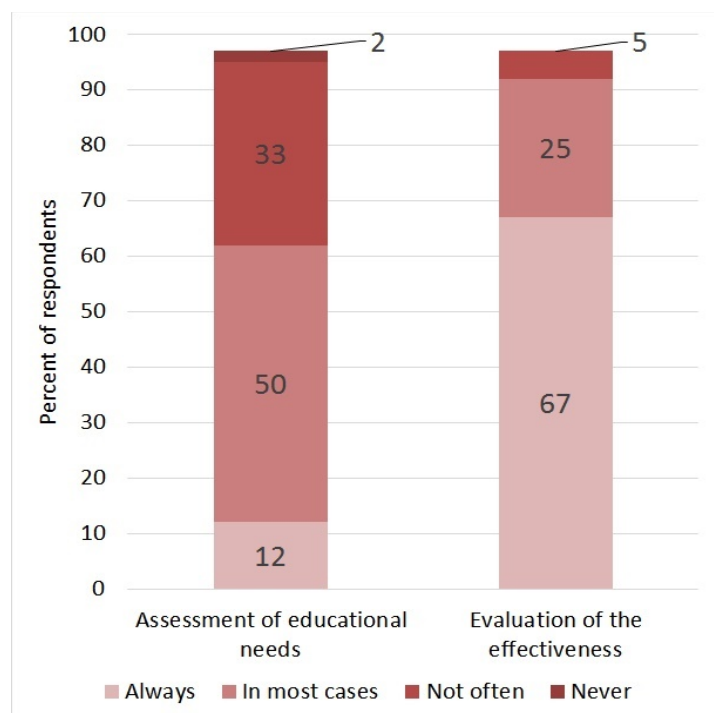
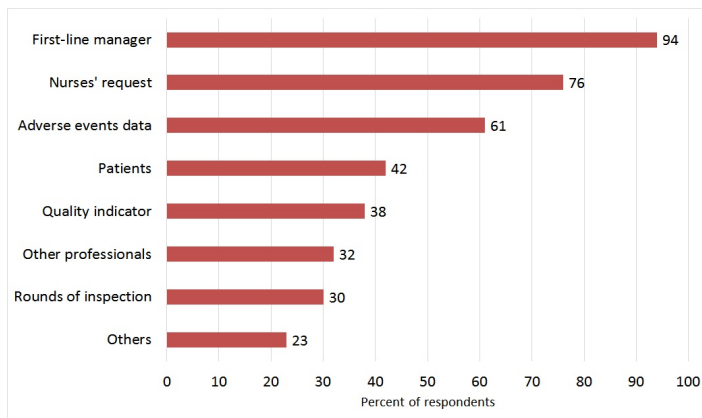


Figure 2: Perceptions of frequency of implementation of educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation.

Figures 3 and 4 show the data sources of educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation. Half of the respondents referred to the opinions of unit managers, requests of staff nurses, and adverse events data in educational needs assessment. The most referred to data source was the opinion of unit managers,

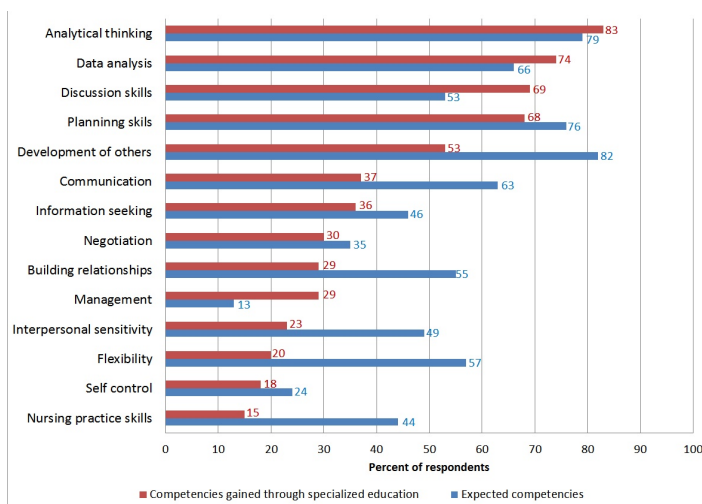
followed by the requests of staff nurses. Evaluation of program participants, change in practice based on the nurses' opinions, and knowledge or skill testing were used by most of the respondents in effectiveness evaluation.



**Figure 3:** Data sources of educational needs assessment.



**Figure 4:** Data sources of effectiveness evaluation.



**Figure 5:** Expected competencies for staff-development nurses.

### Expected Competencies for Staff-Development Nurses

Figure 5 shows the respondents' perceptions of the expected competencies for staff-development nurses. Most competencies were referred to as expected ones for staff-development nurses. More than half of the respondents referred to analytical thinking, data analysis, discussion skills, planning skills, and the development of others as being gained through specialized education.

### Discussion

Among the survey's respondents, 60% had full-time staff-development nurses in their hospitals. All four classified roles of staff-development nurses were perceived as being currently implemented; however, educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation were regarded as being especially important and roles that needed to be strengthened. Based on adult learning principles, needs assessment is an important foundation for learner self-motivation and active enhancement of learning activities [5]. Furthermore, the evaluation of effectiveness contributes to the continuity and improvement of educational programs. However, in Japan, because these are not necessarily full-time positions, there is inadequate time to investigate and analyze nursing needs. Based on the perspective that education should be a systematic process, staff-development nurse training should emphasize educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation.

The most utilized data sources on educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation were the opinions of unit managers or nurses. The utilization of objective data, such as incident data and knowledge or skill testing, were lower, and that of quality indicators was limited at 20%–30%, which may be why the respondents perceived educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation as roles that needed to be strengthened. Of course, subjective data gained from each unit or staffs are important; however, objective data are equally important when considering and showing the contribution of educational programs to quality improvement. Objective data also appeal to the effectiveness of nursing education to the stakeholders, such as hospital administrators. Such efforts also help to justify full-time, staff-development nurses.

Analytical thinking, data analysis, and discussion skills were competencies gained through specialized education that were frequently referred to and were considered as being necessary for clarifying educational needs and the effectiveness of educational programs by sharing the results with administrators or unit managers. The results reflected the respondents' perception that educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation are roles of staff-development nurses that need to be strengthened. Communication, building relationships, and the development of other skills were also perceived as needed for staff-development nurses; however, they were not as frequently referred to as competencies gained from specialized education. These findings suggest that the staff-development nurses at the respondents' hospitals already placed emphasis on the opinions of unit managers and staff nurses, and communicated well with them. Furthermore,

---

this study suggests that competency can be gained and developed through daily nursing work experience.

### Conclusion

This study showed that staff-development nurses in Japan are expected to strengthen their roles in educational needs assessment and effectiveness evaluation, and that this requires the development of competency for staff-development nurses in analytical thinking, data analysis, discussion, and planning of skills.

### Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all nurses who participated in this study for their time and support. This work was supported by Jsps Kakenhi Grant Number 26670944.

### References

1. Mashino S, Konishi M, Nagashima M, Takemoto K, Sasatani T, et al. (2009) Current status of continuing education for nurses in hospitals: exploring collaboration between hospitals and a university. University of Kindai Himeji School of Nursing 2: 31-39.
2. Shimazawa N, Miyamoto C, Suenaga Y, Ando M, Sakamoto S (2013) Activities of educators who are in charge of new graduate nurses residency program and factors that complicate these activities. Tokyo Healthcare University 1: 21-29.
3. Gregg MF, Yagi K, Tamada M, Maeda C, Kawato M, et al. (2016) Support for clinical nurse educators in teaching newly hired nurses. Bulletin of Kobe City College of Nursing 20: 5-13.
4. American Nurses Association & National Nursing Staff Development Organization (2010) Nursing professional development: Scope and standards of practice. Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Association.
5. American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation (2012) The value of accreditation for continuing nursing education: Quality education contributing to quality outcomes. Silver Spring, MD: American Nurses Credentialing Center.

**Copyright:** ©2016 Onishi M, et al. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.