How Canada can integrate and retain internationally educated nurses

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Factors that Support the Successful Integration and Retention of Internationally Educated Nurses into the Canadian Healthcare System

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The views expressed herein are those of the researchers and participants and do not necessarily represent the views of Health Canada.
Research team

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Purpose

Identify factors that support IENs’ successful integration, career advancement (including upward mobility) and retention within the Canadian health-care systems.

Three phases
Phase 1: 3,794 questionnaires returned (2,693 usable)
Phase 2: 76 IENs interviews
Phase 3: 7 stakeholders interviews
Conceptual Framework

Context in Canada (support from family and colleagues, financial situation, etc.)

Professional Integration

Work Environment (mentorship, orientation, etc.)

Workforce Integration

Workplace Integration

Career change, work climate, continuing education

Organizational Retention

Individual Characteristics (language ability, education, sex, race, etc.)

Bridging Program/Exam Preparation

Exam and Licensure

Job search support

Employment

Orientation program

Probation

Context in Country of Origin (previous work experience, type of immigrant, etc.)
Phase I
Sample Distribution by Jurisdiction of Registration (n=2,693)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province or Territory</th>
<th>IEN n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>369 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>625 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>134 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>260 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>875 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>454 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Brunswick</td>
<td>25 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>107 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Edward Island</td>
<td>4 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</td>
<td>21 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yukon</td>
<td>3 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territories or Nunavut</td>
<td>8 (&lt;1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered in multiple jurisdictions</td>
<td>202 (7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sample Demographics (n=2,693)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>M=47 years (Range=24-81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married or Common-Law</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children in Home</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth Country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Philippines</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- United Kingdom</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- India</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- France</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of Immigration</td>
<td>M=1999 (Range=1957-2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Landed Immigrants</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
IENs’ Use of Resources to Prepare for Licensing Examination (n=1,139)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources Used to Prepare for Examination</th>
<th>n(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>325(29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Colleagues Who Had Passed the Examination</td>
<td>283(25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nurses Studying for the Examination</td>
<td>278(24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Employer</td>
<td>155(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Tutor</td>
<td>124(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a Review Course</td>
<td>585(51)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Facilitators of Passing Licensing Examination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>High n(%)</th>
<th>Very High n(%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participating in a bridging program</td>
<td>239(20)</td>
<td>371(31)</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring nursing experience in Canada</td>
<td>356(21)</td>
<td>460(27)</td>
<td>1,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having help from colleagues and friends</td>
<td>386(20)</td>
<td>445(23)</td>
<td>1,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior level of nursing education</td>
<td>759(30)</td>
<td>1487(58)</td>
<td>2,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior type nursing experience</td>
<td>724(28)</td>
<td>1201(47)</td>
<td>2,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior amount of nursing experience</td>
<td>707(28)</td>
<td>1178(46)</td>
<td>2,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehend and speak English &amp;/or French</td>
<td>728(28)</td>
<td>1567(60)</td>
<td>2,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the provincial health-care system</td>
<td>660(26)</td>
<td>483(19)</td>
<td>2,543</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Outcomes of Participating in Bridging Programs (n=756)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>High n (%)</th>
<th>Very High n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understand the roles and responsibilities of nurses in Canada</td>
<td>290(38)</td>
<td>267(35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop skills needed to communicate with coworkers and other health-care providers</td>
<td>264(35)</td>
<td>158(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire clinical nursing experience in Canada</td>
<td>240(32)</td>
<td>200(27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learn about the Canadian health-care system</strong></td>
<td>263(35)</td>
<td>281(37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop competencies need to practice nursing in Canada</td>
<td>267(35)</td>
<td>202(27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obtain mentorship</td>
<td>202(27)</td>
<td>167(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfect my language skills (English &amp;/or French)</td>
<td>192(25)</td>
<td>136(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn the professional vocabulary used at work</td>
<td>249(33)</td>
<td>158(21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for the nursing examination</td>
<td>225(30)</td>
<td>214(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the conditions of employment (for example, salaries, work schedule, benefits, union)</td>
<td>184(24)</td>
<td>119(16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Proportion of IENs per Area of Practice
Prior and After Immigration

- **Administration**: 3% After Immigration, 2% Prior
- **Ambulatory Care**: 3% After, 1% Prior
- **Cancer Care**: 3% After, 2% Prior
- **Community Health**: 8% After, 7% Prior
- **Critical Care**: 12% After, 17% Prior
- **Geriatrics**: 2% After, 4% Prior
- **Home Care**: 2% After, 4% Prior
- **Maternal Child**: 5% After, 9% Prior
- **Medical Surgical**: 24% After, 40% Prior
- **Mental Health**: 5% After, 4% Prior
- **Occupational Health**: 1% After, 1% Prior
- **Pediatrics**: 2% After, 4% Prior
- **Perioperative**: 5% After, 8% Prior
- **Rehabilitation**: 3% After, 1% Prior

- After Immigration (N=2274)
- Prior to Immigration (N=2241)
Participants’ Preferences for Achieving Career Goals (n=2,693)
IENs’ Participation in Career Development Activities as Compared to Canadian-Educated Nurses (n=2,393)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Less Often</th>
<th>As Often</th>
<th>More Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Opportunities</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Integration

• On average participants felt very integrated into their workplace \((n=2,414, M=8.57, SD=1.9, \text{Range}=1-10)\).

• Overall participants felt very integrated into the nursing profession in Canada \((n=2,410, M=8.61, SD=1.83, \text{Range}=1-10)\).
Retention

• On average participants were very satisfied with their decision to become regulated nurses in Canada ($n=2,316$, $M=8.61$, $SD=1.9$, $Range =1-10$).

• Overall participants intend to remain in the nursing profession in Canada ($n=2,255$, $M=42.03$, $SD=7.66$, $Range=15-48$).
Phase II
Number of Interviews per Province and Territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province/Territory</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New-Brunswick</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwest Territory</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nunavut</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>76</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Successful Integration of IENs from their own Perspective

• Confidence

“You’ve proven competence in your workplace, people are confident in your work, they come and ask you questions, you’ve got a good rapport with your team, the patients and the multidisciplinary team, you feel comfortable that any job that you apply for, if you feel you meet the qualifications that you’d have a good chance in getting that job” (Participant MB97).
Factors Associated to Successful Integration

• Education – formal & informal

• Opportunities
  “being able to apply on job postings, which allows the opportunity to move within the organization if desired” (Participant ON2329)

• Personal characteristics

• Support
Expectations of a Nursing Career in Canada

“I think I was really naïve. I was very open-minded. I didn’t think it could be any different from what I knew. So I didn’t have any expectations built up in any way, shape or form” (Participant SK3656).
Discrimination as a Hindrance to Career Advancement

Overt

• [Told by a colleague] “I am a first world nurse, not a third world nurse” (Participant ON2329).

• [Told by a human resources person at a nursing agency] “IEN nurses tend not to do well here” (Participant ON2949).

Covert

• Judged because of their accent
• Jokes about ethnic groups
• Excluded from discussion at lunch
Strategies Used by IENs to Achieve their Goals

• **Goal attainment**
  - “focusing on what you want, in this case to be a registered nurse” (Participant AB862)
  - “applying for a job even if I didn’t think I would get it” (Participant QC1800)

• **Openness**
  - “different is not wrong” (Participant MB88).
Structures that Can Help with IEN Integration

• Offering:
  - Specifically designed orientation program for IENs
  - Mentoring program
  - Specific courses (communication)
  - Outside support (finding daycare, applying for SIN)
Retaining Internationally Educated Nurses

• Several mentioned that in their view, retention was an issue affecting all nurses, and did not see it as an issue specific to IENs

• Strategies include:
  - Offering educational activities
  - Making housing available through the hospital
  - Offering full time work with the possibility of being permanent after one year
Phase III
Seven (7) stakeholders

• From British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec.

• Representing: union, bridging programs, employer and recruitment agency.
Biggest Challenges Faced by IENs when Integrating the Canadian Workforce

• Communication
  “It was a nightmare learning to communicate because it’s completely different… I don’t know if it’s that Hollywood rub off or impact. They [people living in a specific Canadian province] talk incessantly about nothing. I mean, if you don’t have that skill, you don’t know what to say then” (Participant 304).

• Differences in Roles and Responsibilities

• Working in Unfamiliar Settings

• Tension and Fear
Successful Integration of IENs from Stakeholders’ Perspective

• The Ability to Transfer Competencies
• The Ability to Secure Full-Time Employment
• The Ability to Get Promoted
Factors Associated with Successful Integration

• Personal Characteristics
  ➢ Hope as predictor of successful integration
    “a lot of immigrants very quickly start to forget what they’re capable of … because they’re now facing all these obstacles, barriers and failures and that really impacts their self-confidence… and it impacts hope and their ability to move forward, so then the integration stops” (Participant 303).

• Prior Work Experience

• Integration as a Two Way Street
Role of Employers in Supporting IEN Integration in the Workforce

- Making IENs Feeling Welcomed
- Offering Tailored Orientation
- Providing Reference Documents and Tools
- Support for Both IENs and Employers
- External Social Support
Strategies to Support IEN Retention

• Similar to strategies for other nurses
  - Have IENs work where they have an interest and some expertise;
  - Discuss with IENs their career plans, and how those match with career prospects within the organization;
  - Encourage IENs to apply on temporary assignment or short-term project within the organization;
  - Allow part-time or full-time leave to allow IENs to return to school.
Challenges to IENs Career Advancement

• Not Understanding How to Advance One’s Career
  ➢ Limited network
  ➢ Not knowing how to promoting oneself

• Not being provided with the opportunity
  ➢ Career advancement not entirely contingent on the IEN
Recommendations
Governments/regulatory colleges

- Examine whether English Language Proficiency tests are helpful in assessing language proficiency;
- Explore the possibility of further streamlining the credential verification process and assess whether steps can be removed;
- Exploring ways to increase the accessibility of bridging programs;
- Explore the possibility of having a government agency or not-for-profit organizations in place to provide ongoing support to both employers and IENs.
Employers

Workplace Integration

• Continue with initiatives aimed at improving IENs verbal and written communication;
• Prepare employees so that they are hospitable to IENs;
• Ensure that integration is a two-way street;
• Offer IENs tailored orientation; and
• Offer reference documents.
Employers

Career Advancement

• Educate IENs on how to advance one’s career in Canada;

• Put in place an “evaluation practice” to explore who is advancing within the organization and why.
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Upcoming Webinar

What the latest workforce and supply numbers mean for nursing

November 18, 2015 – 12 to 12:40 pm ET
Thank you!