ERPA 2014

Lifelong learning perception metaphoric of nurses

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to reveal the perceptions of nurses about lifelong learning nurses via metaphors. Qualitative and quantitative study pattern was used. The cosmos of the research was constituted by all the nurses (N: 325) who worked in an official inpatient care institution affiliated to T.C Ministry of Health in Istanbul. Research was realized with 269 volunteer nurses without any pick of sample. An information form collecting data about age, gender, marital status, graduated programme, department worked, total years worked as a nurse, whether they willingly became a nurse to determine the characteristics of the nurses. Each nurse was asked to complete the blanks in the sentence, ‘Lifelong learning is like a/an.....................because..................’ to reveal the perceptions of the nurses about the lifelong learning. The metaphors were gathered under 5 conceptual categories in terms of purposes-important-benefit of lifelong learning on the basis of metaphoric expressions. Nurses produced 139 metaphors for lifelong learning. More than half of the metaphors (95) were represented by a nurse. The remaining 46 metaphors were expressed by 2-20 nurses. The top four metaphors were baby, water, tree, and children, respectively. Most of the nurses regard lifelong learning as a necessity of constant change and development while thinking that learning realizes at every age and every place either consciously or unconsciously and lastly, they render lifelong learning possible, only by learning to learn. According to these conclusions, metaphors may be utilized as a strong research mean in order to reveal, understand and explain individual perceptions and mental images. There is a need for a wide range of qualitative researches analyzing nurses perceptions of lifelong learning and metaphorical analysis of their thoughts concerning lifelong learning. Examination of these researches' results in education programs would provide a big profit in determining nurses points of view towards lifelong learning.

Keywords: lifelong learning; metaphor; perception; mental image; nurse.

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1. Introduction

In the present day, developing and recent technologies used in health care, rapid changes in patient care and treatment, augmented expectations of the individuals and the necessity regarding the reflection of scientific knowledge to the nursing practices cause the knowledge, skill and attitude gained in educational institutions insufficient in time. This demands from the nurses to update their knowledge and skills after the basic education in order to resume their individual and professional developments. In other terms, this is to render the lifelong learning process obligatory (Aspin & Chapman 2000; Coşkun & Demirel 2012; Ersoy & Yılmaz 2009; Goppe 2001, 2005; Haseski, Odabaşı & Kuzu 2011; Taşocak 2000; Turan 2005; Şenyuva, 2012). Also in the related sources, it is emphasized that the importance and necessity of the maintenance provided by nurses are believed to be important, in order to increase the quality of the care, however, their perception regarding the learning new knowledge and skills as an indispensable feature of their lives is not at the desired level (Aspin & Chapman 2000; Barnard, Nash & O'Brien, 2005; Gopee 2002, 2005; Stein 1998; Şenyuva, 2012). In this context, it is important to know the perception and the point of view of the nurses concerning the notion of lifelong learning.

In this respect, determining the conceptions of nurses about lifelong learning notion via metaphors and taking it into consideration in professional practices are crucially important as this will give the opportunity to; develop, change or interrogation of nurses' point of view about individual and professional development, making them create the nurse identity and to provide the effective marching of the service, care and practices of theirs in health care field (Bond & Urick 1999; Cook & Gordon 2004; Çakır 2009; Goodman 2001; Meng, Xiuwei & Anli, 2010; Saban 2008; Wurzbach 1999).

Analysis of metaphor which is utilized extensively at abroad to reveal detailed practical point of views (Bond & Urick 1999; Cook & Gordon 2004; Forceville 2002; Goodman 2001; Hangstrom et. all. 2000; McAllister & McLaughlin 1996; Meng et all. 2010; Wurzbach 1999), and experiences of profession members' is mostly used in the field of educational sciences (Cerit 2008; Çelik & Kahyaoğlu 2007; Erdoğan & Gök 2008; Firat & Kabakçı 2010; Güven & Güven 2009; Öztürk 2007; Saban 2004; Saban, Koçbeker & Saban 2006; Semerci 2007; Shuell 1990; Yob 2003), whereas, in field of nursery the usage is limited (Şenyuva & Kayda 2013). Moreover, to know the perception about lifelong learning notion bears attention in augmenting the awareness of importance of lifelong learning and structuring related educational programs. In the light of these explanations, this research is planned and aimed to reveal nurses' perceptions about lifelong learning notion via metaphors and to establish a source for relevant activities.

2. Methods

2.1. Aim

The aim of the study was to reveal the perceptions of nurses about lifelong learning nurses via metaphors.

2.2. Design

Qualitative and quantitative study pattern was used.

2.3. Participants

The cosmos of the research was constituted by all the nurses (N: 325) who worked in an official inpatient care institution affiliated to T.C Ministry of Health in Istanbul. Research was realized with 269 volunteer nurses without any pick of sample. The data were collected in between June–September 2013.

2.4. Data collection

An information form collecting data about age, gender, marital status, graduated programme, department worked, total years worked as a nurse, whether they willingly became a nurse to determine the characteristics of the nurses.
Each nurse was asked to complete the blanks in the sentence, ‘Lifelong learning is like a/an.....................because..................’ to reveal the perceptions of the nurses about the lifelong learning. For this purpose, each nurse was given a blank sheet which only included the above sentence at the top of the paper and was asked to convey his/her thoughts by focusing on a single metaphor. ‘Like’ is usually used in metaphor studies to create a clearer association between the subject of the metaphor and the source. In this study, ‘because’ was used to give opportunity to the participants to produce a reason or a reasonable basis for their own allegory. The nurses were given an indefinite time to develop their own metaphoric images and were asked to write down their perceptions about the concept of lifelong learning. The compositions hand-written by the nurses constituted the basic resource of data for this study.

2.5. Ethical considerations

Legal approval was issued on March 15, 2013, from the Ethics Committee of T.C Ministry of Health Bakirköy Dr. Sadi Konuk Education and Research Hospital. Institutional approval was received from T.C Ministry of Health Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Health. In addition, verbal information given to participants before data collection and written informed consent were obtained; participation was voluntary and confidential.

2.6. Data analysis

Initially, 273 nurses participated in the study. Four participants were excluded from the study as they failed to produce a reasonable basis despite using a metaphor and one participant was excluded due to lack of any association between the subject and source of the metaphor given. Metaphors of 269 participants were taken into consideration for the study. The metaphors developed by the nurses were analysed and interpreted at five stages: (1) classification stage; (2) elimination stage; (3) reorganizing and compilation stage; (4) category development stage; (5) ensuring validity and reliability stage; and (6) transferring the data to SPSS 16.0 package programme for quantitative data analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

2.7. Limitations

Research is limited with the nurses who work in an official inpatient care institution and they cannot be generalised.

3. Results

With regard to gender, 89.6% of our participants were female and 10.4% were male. Slightly more than half (59.5%) of the participants were single, and the average age was 34.25 ±7.01 years. With regard to education and work experience, 50.2% had bachelor degrees, and 27.9% were graduates of associate degrees; 27.9% work at surgery units, and 55.0% work at other units (emergency, intensive care etc.). Lastly, 21.9% had working experience of 6–10 years, and 20.8% had been working for 11-16 years. 67.7% of the nurses stated that they have chosen nursing voluntarily.

Nurses produced 139 metaphors for lifelong learning. More than half of the metaphors (95) were represented by a nurse. The remaining 46 metaphors were expressed by 2-20 nurses. The top four metaphors were baby (f:20, 7.4%), water (f: 16, 5.9%), tree (f: 15 5.6%) and children (f:10, 3.7%), respectively.

3.1. Conceptual Categories

3.1.1. Lifelong learning as constant change and development

It is seen that the category of “Lifelong Learning as Constant Change and Development” consists of 56 metaphors
(40.3%), produced by 99 nurses (36.8%). The most frequent metaphors used in this category are tree, baby, emergency service and river.

“In our age, as knowledge's quantity / quality constantly changes and knowledge constantly increases, we can't guarantee if our previous acquisitions or what we learned would not change or augment the next day.”

“.... people are supposed to learn something constantly. Thus, they should renew their knowledge. Yet, in professions like nursing, doctor, teacher, they have to learn constantly as knowledge transforms rapidly in this age.”

3.1.2. Lifelong Learning as Learning to Learn

It is seen that the category of “Lifelong Learning as Learning to Learn” consists of 52 metaphors (37.4%), produced by 68 nurses (25.3%). The most frequent metaphors used in this category are children, musical instrument, human and fruit tree.

“Learning to learn. The only possible way to render lifelong learning possible. Individual who knows how to reach to knowledge has the opportunity to chase the knowledge which augments every single day.”

“One has to learn things all lifelong in order to continue his vital activities. This are not only instinctive ... Besides physical satiation, things learned makes him strong as well. It is important to learn learning and practice the learned for lifelong learning.”

3.1.3. Lifelong Learning as Autodidacticism

It is seen that the category of “Lifelong Learning as Autodidacticism” consists of 27 metaphors (19.4%), produced by 39 nurses (14.5%). The most frequent metaphors used in this category are water, children, puzzle and computer.

“We are able to learn every day, every moment, every minute.”

“One travels as one feels like, one sees as one travels, one learns as one sees. Until there is no place untouched, unreach, one touches every human, every animal, every tree, every object and learns.”

3.1.4. Lifelong Learning as Basic Necessity

It is seen that the category of “Lifelong Learning as Basic Necessity” consists of 21 metaphors (15.1%), produced by 37 nurses (13.7%). The most frequent metaphors used in this category are water, water drink, take a breath and eating.

“Since a human has to be nourished in order to conserve its biologic integrity ,continue its life and as a human can't handle his hunger without eating, one would not get away from monotonous, vicious cycle feeling without incorporating psychological and cognitive learning and change to its entity.”

“Flowers grow, flourish and spread as they are watered. They are convicted to death if they are not looked after, no matter how healthy they are. Human too, wonders as he/she lives, progresses with learning and becomes permanent. Otherwise, one is convicted to be bordered where it lives.”

3.1.5. Lifelong Learning as Obligation

It is seen that the category of “Lifelong Learning as Obligation” consists of 13 metaphors (9.3%), produced by 26 nurses (9.7%). The most frequent metaphors used in this category are baby, glass, plant and iron.

“Human learns all lifelong willy-nilly. A new born baby learns to talk and to walk whereas a middle-aged learns a lot during school life and thus, takes place and integrates to the society. Our age is information age, and we are in need of knowledge.”

“If we don't drive, don't put gas into it, the car won't move. So should we make effort to learn. ...”

Statistically, there were no significant differences between conceptual categories and age, sex, marital status, graduated education program, department worked in, total working year in nursing and choosing nursing profession voluntarily/involuntarily of the nurses (p>0,05).
4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal the nurses’ perceptions about the life long learning through metaphors which highlighted some important points. First of all, the nurses produced many metaphors to explain the life long learning (139). For example, the life long learning was defined by the nurses as “baby”, “water”, “tree”, “childeren” as well as “human”, “baby”, “emergency”, “flower”, “soil”, “river” and “take a breath”. As highlighted by Yob (2003, p. 134), metaphor is different from the concept it narrates, and although it provides a strong point of view for such concepts, it is usually less than the concept. To fill this gap, many metaphors are needed. Therefore, it is obvious that the life long learning cannot be explained entirely with a single metaphor.

Lifelong Learning or Informal Education Private Expert Commission Report (2001) indicates that, new change and development notions constitute the basis of the lifelong learning notion and due to new changes and developments, creation of profession members which would satisfy new work and skill demands is necessitated. In the research done by Gopee (2005), it is stressed that nurses adopt lifelong learning in order to adapt to changes and developments occurring in health care system, science and technology and to resume their individual and profession improvements. Also in the actual research, the conceptual category “lifelong learning as constant change and development” takes the first place among the metaphors used by the nurses about lifelong learning. These results can be considered to show the nurses are aware of the possibility of tracing constantly the individual, professional and social changes and developments, updating their knowledge and skills and apprehension/comprehension of important developments which would effect and transform their lives depend on lifelong learning (Akkoyunlu 2008; Barnard, Nash & O’Brien 2005; Haseski, Odabaşı & Kuzu 2011, Gopee 2001, 2005; Şenyuva, 2012).

Özer (1998) emphasizes that in order to realize effective learning, first of all, individuals should learn to learn. Learning to learn is defined as, individual's recognition of self-learning features and also, knowing, choosing and using the strategies utilized for learning. Thereby, learning to learn is shown amongst the key notions regarding gaining the skill of lifelong learning (Kara & Kürüm, 2007). Also in literature it is stated that lifelong learning gives individuals the opportunity to get the education appropriate for their interests and needs, learning to learn, creating new opportunities and offering advanced level education opportunities (Ersoy & Yılmaz 2009; Demirel 2009; Hayatboyu Eğitim veya Örgün Olmayan Eğitim Özel İhtisas Komisyonu Raporu 2001). Additionally, in the International Commission report prepared by UNESCO (1996) concerning 21. century education, one of the four basic units of lifelong learning is “learning to learn” which provides lifelong education opportunities (Ersoy & Yılmaz 2009; Şenyuva, 2012; Taşocak 2000). Gooe (2002) points out that in order to become a lifelong learning profession members, nurses have to have the skills concerning constantly learning, and in context of self development, they have to be skilled at learning to learn. In the research, “lifelong learning as learning to learn” conceptual category was emphasized secondarily. This result may be interpreted as the nurses having the conscious regarding the importance of learning to learn in order to validate the opportunities of lifelong learning. In the research done with teacher candidates by Kara & Kürüm (2007), most of the students perceived lifelong learning as an unconscious, auto-realized way of learning. Also in the present research, it has been pointed out that the nurses conceive lifelong learning as ways of learning occurring in school or out-of-school which are unplanned and spontaneous. This result can show that the nurses are aware of the features of the lifelong learning (covering all the life of the individual, flexible, democratic, integrating formal and non-formal education) which are necessary for lifelong learning to be perceived and generalized correctly, thus, preferring it towards the last can be conceived as an affirmative result.

In the literature, it is stressed that developed and recent technologies used in health care services, rapid changes in patient cure and care, individuals’ expectations of a better health service, reflection of rapidly emerging scientific knowledge to nursing practices, necessity of updating nursing knowledge and skills, augmentation in tendency towards specialization etc. are the reasons nurses to see lifelong learning as an indispensable/basic feature of their lives (Aspin & Chapman 2000; Barnard, Nash & O’Brien 2005; Gooe 2002, 2005; Stein 1998; Şenyuva, 2012). Also in the research, nurses’ description of lifelong learning as a “basic necessity” is another attention grabbing point. This result may be interpreted affirmatively as nurses place lifelong learning to a very important level in their individual and professional lives.
As Florence Nightingale pointed out, “Lifelong learning is an obligation for the nurses.” (Şenyuva, 2012). Indeed in the research, it is attention grabbing that nurses define lifelong learning as “obligation”. The positive side derived from the result may be perception of lifelong learning as an obligation, however, challenging side would be that obligation’s ranking is low.

Statistically, there were no significant differences between conceptual categories and age, sex, marital status, graduated education program, department worked in, total working year in nursing and choosing nursing profession voluntarily/involuntarily of the nurses (p>0,05). This makes think that age, sex, marital status, graduated education program, department worked in, total working year in nursing and choosing nursing profession voluntarily/involuntarily of the nurses do not effect nurses' creation/production of metaphors about lifelong learning.

5. Conclusion

Most of the nurses regard lifelong learning as a necessity of constant change and development while thinking that learning realizes at every age and every place either consciously or unconsciously and lastly, they render lifelong learning possible, only by learning to learn. According to these conclusions, metaphors may be utilized as a strong research mean in order to reveal, understand and explain individual perceptions and mental images. There is a need for a wide range of qualitative researches analyzing nurses perceptions of lifelong learning and metaphorical analysis of their thoughts concerning lifelong learning. Examination of these researches' results in education programs would provide a big profit in determining nurses points of view towards lifelong learning.

In direction of these results;

- more involvement of importance of lifelong learning in nursing education programs,
- utilization of metaphors as a strong research mean in order to reveal, understand and explain nurses' personal perceptions and mental images concerning different different notions can be proposed.

References


Kastamonu Eğitim Dergisi, 17 (2), 503-512.


