

ABSTRACT

Title: In the traces of a change in staffing A study of nurses' work in a surgical ward
Language: Swedish with a summary in English
Keywords: Change, all-RN staffing, allocation of nursing time, job satisfaction, conception of work, holistic view, awareness of circumstances, work approach, versatility.
ISBN: 91-7346-426-0

The Swedish health care system has been subject to substantial changes in the last decade due to economic pressures, population changes and change in society as a whole. The overall aim is to investigate from nurses' perspective the change process when moving from mixed to all-RN (registered nurse) staffing.

This thesis is an explorative case study and based on a three-year investigation in a hospital ward. A pluralistic methodology with a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has been used. The investigation includes five empirical studies: two open interviews with all the nurses in the ward, conducted with two years in-between, a secondary analysis of the interviews in combination with a third interview with narratives, non-participant observation with two years in-between and a questionnaire distributed on three occasions. Content analysis has been used to analyse the first interview and the secondary analysis of the two interviews and the narratives. The first and second interviews were analysed with a modified version of grounded theory. The observations were categorised and tested statistically and the questionnaire was analysed statistically.

The nurses experienced conflicting emotions on account of how the change was carried out and the way in which the LPNs (licensed practical nurse) were discharged. The subsequent process of change could be described by the substantive theory that emerged from the interview data. Versatility was identified as the core category and the change process had phases of chaos, creativity and weariness as experienced by the nurses.

Nurses developed over time a more coherent way of allocation and organisation of nursing work, from task allocation to a more coherent way of allocating and organising work. The nursing delivery model, which was developed, gave greater freedom to choose ways of working, expanded their skills and development of a reflective and creative attitude, and resulted in a renewal of their competence. However, structural changes, such as further financial restrictions, downsizing and increased workload elucidated the differences between their perception of good nursing care and what could be realised in every day work.

The nurses developed an organisation, in spite of the chaotic conditions, i.e. the result of a second-order change, which meant that the nurses' conceptions changed towards a holistic view of the patients and their developed a new approach to work and they used the altered circumstances in their work.