Is project management the future approach to clinical nursing?

Elín Úlfarsdóttir

Thesis of 12 ECTS credits
Master of Project Management (MPM)

May 2015

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Thesis of 12 ECTS credits submitted to the School of Science and Engineering
at Reykjavík University in partial fulfillment
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Supervisor:

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Paper presented as part of requirements for the degree of Master of Project Management (MPM) Reykjavik University - May 2015

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the possible use of project management in clinical nursing and health care in general. The research question is: "Could project management be the future approach to clinical nursing?" And a secondary question is: "Could project management be the future approach to health care in general?" Qualitative research method where a focus group was used was chosen for this research. The focus group consisted of clinical nurses who all hold a Master of Project Management (MPM) degree. The main finding is that project management can well be used both in clinical nursing and in health care in general. Additional finding is that there is increasing need for project managers within the health care system and that clinical nurses are excellent candidates for being trained as professional project managers. The research also indicates that there is a need for education and informing people working within the health care system with regards to what project managers in fact do and are capable of doing.

Keywords: project management, clinical nursing, nurses, master of project management, health care.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Studying for a Master of Project Management (MPM) degree at Reykjavik University as a registered nurse made me curious to answer the question if, and then how, professionals within the health care system—or health care business—could use project management in clinical nursing and within the health care system in general. Are there opportunities that people who are, just like me, both professionally trained as project managers and registered nurses, are missing? What would happen if I would contact all the women in Iceland who are both registered nurses and hold a MPM degree in Iceland and pick their brains in this regard? They all have the knowledge and experience to be able to give valuable feedback and discuss in detail what we could be missing.

With qualitative research method all of the Icelandic registered nurses who also hold a Master of Project Management (MPM) degree were invited to a focus group meeting where the possible intersection of professional project management and clinical nursing was discussed. At the meeting all participants were encouraged to give their opinion and discuss the matter. Through vaguely structured interviews the meaning of what lies behind the views of the participants in the focus group were brought forward.

The research question that the study aims at answering is "**Could project management be the future approach to clinical nursing?** A secondary question is "**Could project management be the future approach to health care in general?**

The paper is meant to add knowledge to the use of project management in clinical nursing and health care in general. First a short overview of the definition of both project management and clinical nursing is given, then the research method is laid out. The main research results are then put forward and discussed and the main conclusions are mentioned.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When exploring what has been written and studied on the subject at hand the focus was on the following themes; "nursing", "clinical nursing", "nursing management", "project management", "hospitals" and "health care".

This chapter is divided into the following sub-chapters: "project management defined", "clinical nursing defined", "nursing and project management", "health management - health care projects" and the last chapter "qualitative research - focus group".

2.1 Project management defined
According to Kerzner (2009) one must begin by identifying a project to understand project management. He states that a project can be considered to be series of activities and tasks that have specific objective to be completed within certain specification. A project has both a predefined start and ending, it has funding limits, it uses both human and nonhuman resources, money, people and equipment. As well as being multifunctional. He says:

> *"Project management is designed to make better use of existing resources by getting work to flow horizontally as well as vertically within the company. This approach does not really destroy the vertical, bureaucratic flow of work but simply requires that line*

organizations talk to one another horizontally so work will be accomplished more smoothly throughout the organization" (Kerzner, 2009, p. 4).

He also gives overview of the definition of project management:

 "Project management is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of company resources for a relatively short-term objective that has been established to complete specific goals and objectives". (Kerzner, 2009, p. 4)

The iron triangle, time, cost and performance are the main qualities of a project and often used to measure the outcome of the project. The aim is to be within time, cost and performance. According to Kerzner (2009) these three are the constraints of a project but he also adds the fourth if the project is for an outside customer and that is good customer relations.

Jónasson and Ingason (2009) state that while project management today is mainly focused on traditional objective or hard perspective, there is an increased focus on the subjective and soft factors such as leadership, group dynamics, motivation, interpersonal communication, ethics and culture.

2.2 Clinical nursing defined

One might think that any link to clinical nursing with the patient in mind could fall under the subjective and softer factors of project management where we need to increase the focus on. In order to link project management and clinical nursing together it's necessary to briefly define clinical nursing:

Selanders and Crane (2012) state that modern nursing is complex, changing and multi-focused. From the time of Florence Nightingale, the goal of nursing has however been unchanged, namely to provide a safe, caring environment that promotes patients health and well-being. By reviewing the literature both what Nightingale wrote as well as others about nursing, they came up with this foundational philosophical base (Selanders & Crane, 2012, p. 6):

"The general nature of nursing:
Nursing is defined as a unique profession that is both art and science.
The basic nursing activity is the alteration of the internal and external nursing environment.
Nursing is autonomous within the defined scope of practice.
Nursing is collaborative with all other healthcare professions.
The goal of nursing is to foster health within the patient.
Individuals are complex, holistic beings.
The power of nursing comes from decision-making activities based on empirical observation of the patient.
The practise of nursing should not be limited by gender, spiritual beliefs or values.
The nurse should be allowed to develop to the maximum of his or her potential.

The nature and value of nursing education:
Nursing has specialized educational requirements with theoretical and clinical components.
Nurses should be educated by nurses who specialize in education.
Nurses should have a grounding in basic sciences.
Nursing education should be controlled by the school, not the hospital.
Students are to be regularly evaluated and apprised of this evaluation during the course of the education.

The nature of nursing research:
The most basic element of research is empiricism.

*The nurse should be the primary investigator of nursing phenomena.
Statistics provide the basis for logical and factual argument."*

According to the *International Council of Nurses* the definition of nursing is:

> "*Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles."* ("Definition of Nursing," n.d.)

Nurses use nursing diagnosis classification system to categorize patients' health problems with proved solutions through nursing interventions. NANDA (North American Nursing Diagnosis Association) is the most used diagnoses nursing system internationally according to research from 2007 (Müller-Staub, Lavin, Needham, & van Achterberg, 2007). According to NANDA international homepage:

> "*NANDA International (NANDA-I), the Nursing Interventions Classification (NIC) and the Nursing Outcomes Classification (NOC) are comprehensive, research-based, standardized classifications of nursing diagnoses, nursing interventions and nursing-sensitive patient outcomes. These classifications provide a set of terms to describe nursing judgments, treatments and nursing-sensitive patient outcomes*" ("NANDA-I NIC NOC for Safe Patient Care," n.d.)

Nurses have been using individualized care for patients from the 1970s. Individualized care is when a nurse is responsible for nursing care for her patient. The nurse usually uses the nursing diagnoses classification, which also gives instructions for others to follow when the primary nurse is not at work (Waters & Easton, 1999).

In a study from New Zealand where the role of a clinical nurse specialist was studied the finding was that nurses need to have varied experience for the role. The most common ones were speciality in clinical experience, teaching, monitoring, coaching and leadership experience. There were other key areas of the job also listed as important such as research experience, quality improvement and project management (Roberts, Floyd, & Thompson, 2011).

Now having covered the definition of nursing, NANDA international classification and individual nursing the next step is to link them to project management.

2.3 Nursing and project management

In the literature there hasn't been a lot published about clinical nursing, nursing and project management together. But many studies can be found separately on nursing management and project management.

Suhonen and Paasivaara (2011) studied the challenges in project management faced by nurse managers in health-care units. The focus in their study was on human perspectives in project management instead of factors as timescale and supervision. They collected data from nurse managers, nurses, one planner and one project worker. All participants were from different work units and organizations and the projects were small, everyday projects in work units. Most of the projects were initiated by nurses and nurse managers. They found that three main challenges nurse managers deal with in project management in health care work units are:

- apathetic organization and management
- paralysed work community
- discouragement of cooperation between individuals

In their study some of the nurse managers thought they didn't have enough knowledge to lead and manage project work. They also said they had problems organizing project work at the same time they gave patient care. The paradoxes the nurse managers had to challenge were:

- keeping up projects vs. ensuring patient care
- enthusiastic management vs. effective management of daily work
- supporting the work of multi-professional-team vs. leadership of individual employees

Other issues were keeping the work unit healthy where people are interested in improving their work. Need for project management education for nurse managers and nurses. And the need for promotion of good work in the working units to ensure experts in the future. The researchers said: "It is necessary to have project management education for nurse managers from the viewpoint of success of the work unit" (Suhonen & Paasivaara, 2011, p. 1035).

In 2012 the role of succession planning in nursing was studied. The main result of the study was that succession planning is essential for nursing, with an ongoing shortage of nurses and the need for nursing leaders to play key roles in the health care. The pending retirement of many existing nursing leaders, nurse executives need to implement international succession plans for the future (Sverdlik, 2012).

Kirk (2008) reviewed studies both from the USA and Europe that had been done to identify recurring themes that might inform current practice and future research on nurse executive director effectiveness. The factors in nurse executive director effectiveness were identified as ten:

- Powerful influential operator
- Communication
- Knowledge of nursing
- Human management skills
- Total organization view visionary
- Quality management
- Business astuteness
- Collaborative effectively in multi-disciplinary teams
- Providing nurses with the right tools and resources to do their jobs
- Project management

2.4 Health management - health care projects

Are projects in health care different from other projects? Santos, Santos, Tavares, & Varajão, (2014) state that health projects are different from projects in technology, engineering and software development projects. They have different focus, are concerned on providing conditions where people can be healthy and are essential for people or population welfare.

According to the EU health programme the nature of public health projects is different from engineering or information technologies projects. Types of health projects have been distinguished according to EU as:

- Research projects, aimed to increase knowledge
- Development projects, development and testing of intervention to address a particular problem
- Implementation projects, dissemination and implementation of an intervention

The EU health programme describes and analyses health projects like this:

> *"Projects funded within the Public Health Programme should contribute to solving of a relevant public health problem. The term "problem" can be defined broadly: It can refer to a specific health condition, or to social problems which affect the quality of life of a patient, consumer, student or community"* (European Commission & Directorate-General for Health and Consumer Protection, 2011, p. 9).

In 1998 Perce gave an overview of project management skills saying that project management will be accepted in the future and more use will be evident in all types of industries, increasingly used in projects in health care and human services. Behavioural skills both verbal and non-verbal communication, reflective listening and conflict resolution are necessary to become an effective project manager. "Thus, behavioural skills required of nurses in the workplace are good preparation for project management assignments" (Perce, 1998, p. 391).

2.5 Qualitative research method - focus group

The qualitative research method used in focus group is next to be discussed. According to Davíðsdóttir (2013) qualitative researchers believe the best way to research social phenomenon is to be in their environment so they won't disconnect with its source. Meaning they want to be a part of the environment so the researcher sinks into the culture or the organisation at hand in order to feel on "their own skin" how it is to be a part of it. They try not to have predetermined ideas of the research results.

A focus group is a group of 4-12 people that aim to explore a specific issue. Although participants individually answer the given questions they are also encouraged to talk and interact with each other. What distinguishes a focus group from depth interviews is the conversation between group members in the focus group (Bender, 2013). Using focus group is particularly useful for exploring participants' knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people in the group think but also why they think the way they think. Group discussion in a focus group is particularly useful when the interviewer has series of open-ended questions and wishes to encourage the participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities (Kitzinger, 1995).

Rowley (2014) who stated that the main reason for using questionnaires is to contact a large number of people in many locations, typically used for surveys, also states that: "Open questions are useful for collecting more in-depth insights, and allow respondents to use their own language and express their own views" (Rowley, 2014, p. 314).

There are three fundamental types of research interviews techniques that can be used in focus groups, structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are essentially verbally administered questionnaires, where questions are asked with little or no variations and no scope for follow-up questions or responses that could give further elaboration. If depth is needed, these kind of questions are not the way to go. Unstructured interviews on the other hand can last for several

hours and can be difficult to manage as well as to participate in, as it provides little guidance on what to talk about. They are best used when nothing or at least little is known about the subject at hand. Semi-structured interviews consist of few open key questions that help to define the subject to be explored (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

To participate in a focus group study individuals that have common basic knowledge according to the purpose of the study are chosen. Participants who have nothing in common could have difficulties communicating easily. Description of purposeful sampling is when participants are chosen because of their speciality and knowledge (Bender, 2013).

Holding the focus group meeting in a place unfamiliar to the participants prevents that participants, for example, fall in the role of pupils as if the meeting was at their former school or as employees if the meeting was at the work location (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008).

An audio recording is necessary for processing and analysing the conclusion of the focus group. It's recommended to take written notes although audio recording is also used. This is a protection against machine failure, but also provides opportunity to write down observations of non-verbal interaction taking place in the group (Sim, 1998).

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The purpose of this research is to learn from the people who have the knowledge to answer the question regarding the connection and relationship between nursing and project management. With the research question in mind it's essential to have the right people on board. Can project management be used in clinical nursing as the future approach? Can we adjust methods of project management on patients and their families? Aren't there any fields that are missing in clinical nursing were project management could be used?

Additional goal of the study is for the researcher to learn from the experience and knowledge of the participants. Both as registered nurses as well as having Master in Project Management.

A qualitative research method was chosen for this study. It would have been limiting to use quantitative methods with fixed questions and preformed answers. Then open answers and thoughts about the topic would have been missing from the participants. Qualitative research allows for open discussion and open flow from the participants in the research. All of the participants met in one place at the same time in a focus group. A focus group is a group of people with specific knowledge that come together and discuss effectively one defined topic. By using a focus group one does not only capture the conclusion that's given in words by individuals, it also provides discussions between participants in the group. It captures non-verbal communications and activities by individuals and between the participants.

Semi-structured interview method with a focus group was thought to be the best interviewing style for this study. Other forms of interviews as mentioned in the literature chapter were not considered suitable for this research. Due to the fact that structured interviews could be too rigid as unstructured interviews could be too loose. With semi structured interview open questions were made beforehand and submitted to the group in the meeting. The questions were:

1. How do you see the use of project management and unused option for project management in clinical nursing?

2. How do you see project management being used in health care in general?
3. What has been most helpful from the project management program for you as a registered nurse?
4. How do you think the link between the project management program in Iceland is to the health care system in general? Is it possible to do better there?
5. In what way do you think project management could not be used in clinical nursing?

The study was conducted in Iceland, March 2015. Everyone who fulfilled the criteria of having both a degree as a registered nurse as well as having a Master in Project Management from Reykjavik University were contacted and asked to participate. Thirteen participants were contacted and all but two could be reached.

The list of participants who fulfilled the criteria was found on the Internet, both on the webpage of the members who have a degree of Master in Project Management as well as a Facebook site of the same group. The office of the program also gave information regarding prospective participants. All of these sources mentioned above where compared and names and contact information of the participants found out. The participants were contacted both via e-mail and on Facebook. Each and every one who answered was sent a request for participation, before they gave a final answer of attending the meeting. This type of method for collecting a group for research is purposeful sampling.

The request gave a short introduction about the research, the researcher and the advisor of the research. The research method with a focus group was described, the research topic and the meeting place was introduced. The introduction also presented the subjects with the option of going out at any time.

When working with a group there are always participants who can't attend the meeting and it's difficult to find appointment which is suitable for everyone. After discussing the meeting time with few of the participants the date for the meeting was set and the participants who had agreed to participate contacted again with meeting appointment for the focus group. The day before the meeting the participants got an reminder.

Five participants were able to come, but due to bad weather and closure of the roads the sixth couldn't make it. The researcher is a registered nurse and will finish a Master's degree in project management in a few weeks. With an assistant director who facilitated the focus group the researcher participated in the focus group. Due to the low number of participants only one focus group meeting took place.

The participants work in several fields, in a hospital as a project manager, in a hospital as a clinical nurse and a ward manager, in the pharmaceutical industry as a project manager, as a quality manager in a university, as a nurse director of large nursing homes in Iceland and as a manager of claims- and underwriting at an Icelandic life insurance company. The participants have a large range of experience, both as clinical nurses and as project managers. Although they are not all working in hospitals at the moment they all have the experience of doing so, both as registered nurses and as students while they were studying to become registered nurses.

The meeting was held in the home of the researcher and was audio recorded with permission from the participants with the promise that the audio recording would not be published.

As mentioned before the researcher had an assistant and a facilitator in the group meeting, a student in Master of Project Management who also has experience in controlling groups like this. In that way the researcher could focus on what was

said both verbally and non-verbally and ask questions when needed as well as participate in the focus group. The researcher also took written notes, both regarding what was being said as well as non-verbal communication between participants.

The meeting began with a short introduction by the researcher, information about herself as well as the aim of the research. After asking the participants for permission for audio-taping the meeting began. All participants introduced themselves with information on when they graduated as registered nurses, finished their MPM and a brief overview of their careers.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this chapter the researcher will present the conclusion from the qualitative research from the focus group. The data processing will be according to Krueger and presented in three stages (Krueger, 1994). The first one is done at the meeting, the second one right after the meeting and the last one is based on the script of the meeting.

The first stage of the meeting was characterized by the fact that all of the participants were eager to participate and willing to join and be active in the conversation. All participants seemed to be happy and willing to attend the meeting. They were curious about the research and very interested. As the participants all had the same background the conversation ran easily and everybody knew the topic and had some valuable input. There didn't seem to be anything unclear in the conversation and nothing they weren´t willing to discuss.

When analysing the second stage, right after the meeting, one of the participants didn't seem to be as active as the others but rather monitored what was being said and then gave a comment when appropriate. Although everyone was very polite, they were sometimes overly eager to contribute so interruptions occurred. The participants who interrupted without exception apologized and gave the word right back to the speaker.

The third stage is analysing the script from the meeting. The conclusions from the script will be presented in the same order as the questions were asked. The questions can all be found in the previous chapter of the research method. In the end there will be reflections from the participants that were not linked to the questions but were discussed in the focus group. Quotations to participants are not linked to individuals.

As the researcher used semi-structured interview with open-ended questions the group answered them and followed according to the facilitator. The answers of the group are based on the conversation of the group and from the use of words, internal consistency, frequency and extensiveness, intensity of comments, specificity and the big idea (Krueger, 1994). Results of a focus group is a text but not statistics as this is a group qualitative research. It is seldom that all data from the conversations can be used for analysing (Bender, 2013).

The first question was: How do you see the use of project management and unused option for project management in clinical nursing?

One answer was:

"Nursing is project management, from the beginning to the end".

"We stand on the floor of the ward and organize everything for the patient, we are the project managers".

According to this participant clinical nurses are the project managers on the ward they work. They are the glue that keeps the wards up and running. As well as giving the patient their best care they need to make sure that everybody else involved shows up for their part of the patients care. By that they mean medical assistants, radiographers, doctors, blood pathologists, physiotherapists and so on. Not saying that these major important professions don't do their job, but a clinical nurse needs at every time to know where the patient is at, what treatment he is having and will have, and giving a nursing treatment and documentation of all of the above.

The usability of project management is also very good in clinical nursing according to the focus group. Answers were like:

"Project management fits well with clinical nursing".

"I feel that we have always been in project management as nurses without knowing it."

Traditional analysis tools of project management can easily be used in clinical nursing. By looking at the patient as a project, tools like SVOT analysis, diagnosis of the interested parties, diagnosis of complexity, diagnosis of uncertainty, process analysis are all tools that can be used. The conclusion of the focus group was that project management could easily be used in clinical nursing. Not only by looking at the patient and his family as a project but other things such as the ward itself, the nursing watch and the business of the ward.

Participants said that there is a need for clinical nurses with an MPM degree in project management due to the fact the population is getting older and more are hospitalised or in a nursing home. Also as there will be changes in the near future in the health care system in Iceland with a new hospital building in the planning and changes in the organization of the main hospital.

The second question asked was: How do you see project management being used in health care in general?"

Answers were like this:

"Project management is in reality common sense, but common sense is not that common as we know".

"In the hospital there are no projects started without having a project manager, they are the cardiovascular system…not everyone is educated as a project manager but most of them are clinical nurses".

"Project management suits nurses well in the health care business, they speak the language and realize the structure and power balance."

"Project management fits well with nursing, it brings in the thinking of business which the business industry knows so well. We need to move it into the health care system".

"Strategic thinking can be used for everything, for the patient...see him as a project with goals and vision for the future".

The conclusion was that project management is a method which the business industry knows and now what is needed is for people in health care to step into the thinking of business. According to the focus group the health clinics need a major overhaul and strategic management is needed. According to them the hospitals and health clinics in Iceland need to work better together and there is a major

opportunity for project management to lead that process by implementing strategic management. As one of the participants said:

"*We want to walk side by side, hospitals and the health care*"

When asked the third question what has been most helpful from the project management program the answers were both regarding the project management tools as well as leadership skills. There was a major focus by the participants on how important scoping of a project is as well as doing the project plan. The learning of a project was also very important and emphasis on both what went well as well as what didn't. This came up:

"*I always have in mind, what can I learn from this project?*".

Another major part was also to define and know:

"*What do I want out of this project?*"

"*What's in the project and what's out?*"

"*We learn the meaning of great preparation, scoping, that's so important*".

"*Every time I begin with a project I always see the project plan and without knowing I start making it in my mind*".

Regarding leadership skills the conclusion was that good leadership skills are one of the main issues that an effective project manager needs to have. Part of that was knowing and how to act in conflict management and leading in change management. The focus group said that the education also helped them to know themselves better and their reaction to different situations. The words, better person, independence, sincerity and humility were used in the group to describe their thoughts regarding leadership skills. Answers were:

"*I realized afterwards how the project management program is diverse*".

"*Many things that have helped me in my work, how to understand the work group better*".

"*Project management tools are very important but all the other things you need to know as well as interpersonal communication, emotional literacy, knowing yourself that is a magnificent part of the program. How do I feel and how do I react to the environment*".

"*Nurses are strong in that field they are used to talk about feelings*".

"*The competence in communication is important*".

The fourth question, how do you think the link between the program of project management in Iceland is to the health care system in general? Is it possible to do better in that area? The focus group discussed the need for the project management program in Iceland to be more visible to the people in the health care system. And the need for the health care system to know project management better although managers of the large hospital know it well the staff doesn't seem to know it as well. The conclusion was that without a doubt things can improve in that field.

The last question regarding their opinion was in what way they think that project management could not be used in clinical nursing. As clinical nurses they couldn't think of anything where project management couldn´t be applied for in clinical nursing. Saying that project management is practical and saves time in the end. As one of the participants said:

"*Project management is in its purest form a great platform that is very useful both in personal life as well as professionally*".

With open discussion in the focus group the conversation led to other reflections from the participants.

One of the participants had experienced a lack of knowledge of project management at work when she asked for a computer software to use. Her plan was to use the software for work, project management tool, which she knew would be helpful and save money in the end.

There was also a discussion about finance and money. One of the participants mentioned the need for further education about finance in the program of project management. She said that a big issue once out there in the field working and stated:

"*Finance is time"*.

They also speculated if it would be good for the master educational program to ask for at least 2-3 years of working experience before entering the program. In their opinion experience was not necessary but very useful before beginning to study for the MPM degree.

In the end they said that there is a great respect for people with the MPM degree out in the field and lot of job opportunities in the future, especially for clinical nurses with a degree in Master of Project Management. Answer from one of the nurses working in the hospital was:

"*More nurses with an MPM degree"*.

After the meeting the researcher invited the participants to a light dinner which everyone accepted.

5. DISCUSSION

The conclusion of the focus group was not a surprise to the researcher, having the same background as the participants. Although being a part of the focus group the researcher had a facilitator that kept the researcher from influencing the group with the researcher's thoughts or views more than other participants.

According to the literature as well as the focus group, clinical nurses are well prepared for studying project management and have all potentials to be efficient project managers. They are used to organize nursing for the patient with the international classification systems that include individualized nursing plan, goal setting and implementation, as well as plan the whole ward both with patients as well as other staff in mind. Clinical nurses are the ones who plan the day in the ward and need to allocate projects when it comes to taking care of the patients. The literature states that many clinical nurses feel that they need to study management or project management for further development at work. It can be speculated that

management could be a bigger part of clinical nursing education, but one needs to bear in mind that all of the participants in the focus group graduated as nurses years ago and the education program may have changed.

Participants of the focus group all agreed that project management could easily be the future approach to clinical nursing as well as in health care in general. As mentioned in the chapter of research results there are many things in the ward where project management could be used. The word "patient" was frequently mentioned and the planning and organizing the patient's nursing treatment could well be done with project management tools and that would mean implementing project management as a new approach to clinical nursing.

The focus group couldn't find any reason why project management as a new approach to clinical nursing or health care in general would not work. But could there be anything that would affect that? As mentioned in the chapter of research results one of the participants in the focus group didn't get a computer system she required to use for project management in her ward. According to her there was a money issue at the workplace as well as a lack of knowledge and understanding of what project management is and stands for. She felt at that time, in 2007, ignorance and not enough knowledge of project management stopped her in getting the computer system she needed. Although she was willing and able to develop her job with project management she didn't get the tools and backup she needed. The computer system wasn't the only thing that stopped her. There wasn't understanding about the extra time she needed for organization and project management.

According to the literature chapter there will be a lack of nurse managers in the near future and a great need for clinical nurses with good leadership skills. But by educating many clinical nurses with a degree in Master of Project Management could that lead to a shortage of nurses working on the floor of the ward? One could speculate that many of them would maybe prefer a managerial job. Could that be a risk? Even though nurses with project management would choose to be in management positions in the ward or at the hospitals, that would likely help the new approach to clinical nursing with project management as they would be the ones to implement and manage it.

There is not only a lack of knowledge or ignorance of the workplace that could get in the way of project management to be the future approach to clinical nursing or in health care in general. There is always the matter of finances. If hospital staff doesn´t have the knowledge of what project management can and is able to do, it could be hard to sell it to the hospitals that project management is the future approach and could in the long run save money.

As said before in the research chapter there is great respect for project managers according to the focus group. The ones who work in the hospital feel that the clinical nurses who now work as project managers are doing a great job and are respected by their colleagues. With new hospital buildings in the making and a new organizational structure there is a great need for more of them.

The main issue of project management is to scope, organize and manage a project throughout the lifetime. According to the focus group project managers need to be well aware of the role they have. In the hospitals there are still conflicts of who is to perform the work itself. The project managers have experienced misunderstanding of their work. They recognize that after giving their professional knowledge about project management, others wait for them to act and do the job, although they have given their project plan about how and when a project is to be done and who is to do it.

With this information in hand one would conclude that there is a need for project management to be presented in health care in general. Also the need for project managers to be more visible and present their knowledge and ability. Then it

could be easier to make the change that's needed to use project management in clinical nursing as well as in health care in general.

The future impact of this research may lead to the conclusion that more clinical nurses apply and will be educated in project management. As well as the ones who already have the knowledge of project management in health care to step up and educate others of the need and the usability for project management in health care in general.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has covered an overview of project management definition, a definition of clinical nursing; it has analysed the results from the focus group consisting of five clinical nurses with a degree in Master of Project Management. We can now answer the question: Can project management be the future approach to clinical nursing and health care in general?

Going over the literature there wasn't much to be found about project management and clinical nursing linked together although there was much written in general both about health care and project management. Having linked the two together we can conclude that project management can easily be used in clinical nursing as well as health care in general and has the ability to be the future approach.

The participants in the focus group didn't only give their answer to the thesis questions but also gave many other interesting points that are found in this thesis. They said that there is a need for clinical nurses with skills in professional project management and a need for others in the health care system to recognise these skills. They saw a need for project management to be introduced in the health care system, as well as educating other health care workers in project management.

Participants in this study were few and limited to one country, Iceland. It would be interesting to see if there would be similar conclusions from a more international perspective. As the scope of the thesis is narrowly defined to clinical nurses with a degree in Master in Project Management large group of participants could be difficult to find. Further research would strengthen and improve what this thesis has given. It is the author's wish that this thesis can be a contributing factor to development of both nursing and project management in Iceland.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

dearest husband and children, who stood by me lovingly through the process of this research as well as the time pursuing the MPM education at Reykjavik University.

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