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NEW TRENDS AND EXPERIENCES OF SUPPLEMENTARY EDUCATION

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Abstract

Finnish higher education system and healthcare are increasingly multiculturalising and globalising. Nurses from different cultures need support and training to be treated equally as individuals and employees. In Laurea University of Applied Sciences, the continuing education project for those with an immigrant background who have completed a nursing degree abroad was implemented in spring 2022. The training was carried out as a multi-format training, so that part of the studies were online studies and part of face-to-face teaching in the classroom. Students from different cultures need individual and versatile guidance, tutoring and targeted mentoring during their studies.

Keywords: immigrant nurse, supplementary education, learning mentoring

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization, technological change and the change in the age structure of the population are the most important factors affecting the future skill needs of the working-age population in Finland. The new work tasks opening up in healthcare require higher or different skills. Both the way how work is done, and the work environments are changing, which requires new skillsets and the ability to adapt to changes. General working life skills such as interaction skills, managing one's own work, digital skills and sustainable development skills are emphasized.

Population development in Finland requires increasing immigration, for Finland's population grew just as slowly last in the 17th century [1]. The level of diversity with regard to ethnic background has increased in the Finnish population and, therefore, multicultural work communities in the field of health care give the better conditions to respond to the changing needs of clients. Making full use of the skills of foreign nurses requires that information about qualification requirements, educational opportunities and practical training are available through one service and that the authorities' responsibilities are streamlined with regard to information dissemination and provision of training. [2]

The proportion of foreigners in Finland's population is increasing. In 2016, there were 16,600 more people coming to Finland than leaving. In 2021, the number of people with a foreign background in Finland was just under 470,000 according to Statistics Finland's origin classification. [3] While the proportion of health professionals of foreign origin is still relatively small in Finland compared to many European countries, the proportion of foreign nationals in the workforce has been on a constant rise during the 2000s [2]. According to Statistics Finland, 20% of women with a foreign background are occupational nurses or nurses [3]. The profession of working foreign women is often in the field of social care and healthcare. There are many reasons why the career path of foreign nurses should be supported. But the process of recognizing the previous skills of foreign nurses is often a challenging and long process. Efforts should be made to further increase the recognition of nurses with a foreign background in nursing work. And at the same time, their experience of discrimination should be reduced. In this way, nurses would enjoy their work and not plan to change jobs. [4]

Finnish higher education system and healthcare are increasingly multiculturalising and globalising. Nurses from different cultures need support and training to be treated equally as individuals and employees. Attention should be paid to the increasingly multicultural workplace communities also at the organizational level as well as in management, personnel development, and work community development [2]. And that's why training nurses with an immigrant background is even more important. More opportunities are needed for tailored training and flexible, working-life-oriented contents, as well as making studying possible for everyone, including during the working career at different stages of life. Language courses focused on health care -related Finnish vocabulary should be offered for health professionals of foreign origin according to their initial language skill level [2].

Health professionals of foreign origin can reduce staff deficits especially in sectors where the staff deficit is extensive, such as primary health care and elderly care [2]. Currently, the employment rate of healthcare professionals with a foreign background in Finland is lower than that of native-born healthcare professionals. Nurses with a foreign background would benefit from support and guidance not only during training but also at the beginning of their service relationship. And at the same time, they would feel more valued in their work community and would get tools to meet Finnish patients and their relatives. According to studies, in nursing management and training, more could be invested in the development of collegiality in a multicultural work environment in order to create an equal atmosphere so that discrimination does not occur between different nationalities.

In nursing, feelings of respect among foreign nurses should be increased and their experiences of discrimination should be reduced so that they can enjoy their work and be less likely to change their place of work. Foreign nurses may benefit from support and guidance at the beginning of their career so that they would feel more appreciated in their work communities and be suitably prepared to encounter Finnish patients and their relatives. Nurse education could also be more focused on developing collegiality in a multicultural work environment, in order to create an equal working atmosphere where discrimination does not occur between different nationalities. [5]

2 METHODOLOGY

In Laurea University of Applied Sciences, the continuing education project for those with an immigrant background who have completed a nursing degree abroad was implemented from March 17 to June 17, 2022. The supplementary education was 20 credits in scope. The training was carried out as a multi-format training, so that part of the studies were online studies and part of face-to-face teaching in the classroom. The education was preparatory education, which did not lead directly to nursing degree studies. 20 students attended the education. The admission requirements for the education were a nursing degree completed abroad and a minimum A2.2 – B.1 Finnish language proficiency level. The aim of the training was to support and train a student with an immigrant background who has completed a nursing degree abroad in the application process for Valvira's [6] right to practice, as well as to strengthen and deepen the knowledge of the Finnish language, digital skills, and readiness for studying at a university of applied sciences.

One goal of the education was also to strengthen nursing knowledge of Finnish healthcare so that students could work as nurses in Finland in the future. The preparatory education included the following courses: nurses' working life skills 3 ECTS credits, social and health services in Finland 7 ECTS credits, Finnish as a second language and health vocabulary 8 ECTS credits, digital skills for studying and working life 1 ECTS credits and training for the Valvira vocational training process 1 ECTS credits. Both healthcare professionals who have graduated in Finland or abroad need to apply for licensing, the right to practice their profession in Finland or right to use protected occupational title from Valvira. Nurse is a licensed profession in Finland. Only licensed professionals may practice the profession in question. Upon application, Valvira grants licenses to practice the profession in question to both those healthcare professionals who obtained their degree in Finland as well as those who obtained it abroad and registers the granted professional practice rights to the central register of healthcare professionals Terhikki. [6]

In the supplementary education, the Finnish language is studied for about half of the education. Learning a language may be partly fragmented, consisting of different courses, and for this reason learning a new language may not proceed completely systematically. The students' learning difficulties may also be partly due to language challenges. The language skills needed in working life require goal-oriented and committed study and versatile opportunities to use the language already at the UAS during the Vocational training. Teachers are aware of the need for language-aware practices, but the resources for developing good practices are currently limited. Projected and implemented training with money outside of UAS, however, provides much more resources for this important work. Studies have found that a weak language proficiency level is one of the most important obstacles to progressing in studies and working life. [7]

3 RESULTS

The importance of the supplementary education in supporting students with an immigrant background who obtained a nursing degree abroad was significant. They described the training with the words

meaningful, educational, inspiring, new information and useful help for future further education. The students were highly motivated and committed to their studies. There were very few interruptions and absences during training. After their studies, 10 students got into postgraduate studies, five students continued their preparation. The language skills of four students were not yet sufficient for postgraduate studies and they decided to continue their Finnish language studies. In addition, the medical student who participated in the training past a Finnish language test after the training.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The goal of Laurea University of Applied Sciences is to design the UAS preparatory training for nurses with an immigrant background in such a way that they get a smooth study path to the training leading to the nursing degree. This has been piloted a once at Laurea UAS. As a result of the piloting, it was found that students from different cultures need individual and versatile guidance, tutoring and targeted mentoring during their studies.

A new trend in the education of students with an immigrant background is the Learning Mentoring Method. Learning mentoring is learning together and sharing knowledge at its best. Learning mentors help colleagues develop their own skills, and at the same time learn themselves. Learning mentoring is one part of the learning organization, and it can be implemented in many ways, depending on the goals. It can mean, for example, organizing joint workshops for colleagues on the subject to be learned, or regular learning moments - for example, planned in advance by a mentor. Learning mentoring can also be about building an atmosphere conducive to learning through different means, for example by organizing learning moments created around a psychologically safe atmosphere. Learning mentors are driven by the desire to learn, guide, help and spar - nothing else is needed. [8], [9], [8]

For students, language skills are a key tool in patient and nursing work based on interaction. The lack of a common language between the patient and the caregiver can prevent problems from emerging, cause misunderstandings about treatment, and lead to a lower quality of care. Working in the professional and informal situations of the work community also requires the student to have sufficient fluency of interaction. [7]

Florence Nightingale was the first significant developer of medical care, who brought out the ideology and definition of mentoring in the field's literature already at the end of the 19th century. [10] Nowadays, we are aware of the strengths and benefits of mentoring, and mentoring is applied in the healthcare learning environment as a professional guidance tool. [11] Learning mentoring is one model of mentoring. Learning mentoring is about building and nurturing good relationships between people in the work community. It can be used to influence psychological safety, when it prevails it is easier to turn to others for help and support. ([8], [9], [8])

4.1 Learning mentoring for immigrant background nurses

In 2020–2022, the Sosped foundation's Feeniks project trained volunteer learning mentors for various organizations in co-operation with the State employment services. [12] The results of the Feeniks project can also be applied in the Laurea UAS studies of nurses with a foreign background. Nurses with a foreign background who have studied at Laurea could act as learning mentors. At that time, they are familiar with Laurea's operating methods, and they know how to provide peer support. Graduate nursing students with an immigrant background as well as already working nurses with an immigrant background who have studied at Laurea are trained as learning mentors. The following paragraphs describe learning mentoring and the applicability of the Feeniks project's results to nursing work.

Learning mentoring can be used in the vocational training of nurses with an immigrant background as well as in working life. Carefully planned and implemented mentoring not only promotes the student's professional development, but also the mentor's professional development. Unless mentoring is not well planned and implemented, only some of the participants benefit from its unique offering. The learning environment then does not develop but remains unchanged. With help of the learning mentoring (in the early stages of the studies, when the student's finish language skills are still weak), a safe learning environment is created and the student dares to practice finish language in a way that does not cause him "face loss". In learning mentoring, transcultural nursing work should be taken into account, the goal of which is to develop the personnel's cultural sensitivity, cultural equality, respect for human dignity and nursing practices. [8]

Learning mentoring is carried out with the support of the personnel management and in accordance with the goals set by the management, a separate learning mentoring process is drawn up for the preparatory training, to which the entire teaching staff commits. It supports the on-the-job learning of the student group and individual students through voluntary peer mentoring. The goal of learning mentoring is to strengthen the learning culture and community spirit of the student group. [8] [9], [8]

Learning mentoring strengthens the competence, identity, and effectiveness of the mentee in his work, and can help deal with work-related concerns and provide social support. The essential characteristic of learning mentoring is that it is mentoring between persons at the same level of hierarchy. At its best, learning mentoring has the effect of reducing the interruption or slowing down of studies and the effect of reducing employee turnover, as it increases job satisfaction through learning together. The task of a learning mentor is to identify different learners and support them in the workplace, for example by encouraging them to learn and look for answers. Mentor has a desire to develop his own and the entire work community's learning. Acting as a learning mentor increases the employee's perceived work relevance and commitment to the organization. [9], [8]

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