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Vivid discussions about the competence of European nurse educators at FINE workshop in Turku

The workshop of the European Federation of Nurse Educators (FINE) 2015 was organised in association with the Department of Nursing Science at the University of Turku, Finland, on 9th of October 2015. The workshop also included a pre-conference, which was arranged on 8th of October. University of Turku was honoured to organize this workshop for the first time in Finland. The objectives of the FINE workshop 2015 were to compare and exchange current practices and competences of nurse educators in different European countries. The audience of the workshop consisted with nurse educators from ten different European countries and nurse educator candidates. Altogether, there were 52 participants.

The workshop was preceded a pre-conference concerning the competence of nurses and nursing students. PhD, researcher and FINE general secretary Christophe Debout introduced the topic to the audience by illuminating the multidimensionality and the complexity of “competence” concept in field of nursing and nursing education. He concluded that much more research from various perspectives is needed into the field of nurse competence. Moreover, the programme of pre-conference included various presentations about on-going and recently graduated PhD studies. The short presentations concerned with student selection methods and their relation to the competence of nursing students (Kirsi Talman), the clinical learning environment and supervision in the French speaking part of Belgium (Cécile Dury), mobile technology use during clinical practicum (Camilla Strandell-Laine), the involvement of older people when learning about older people nursing (Sanna Koskinen), gaming as method to promote intensive care competence (Riitta-Liisa Lakanmaa) and nurse competence of recently graduated nurses (Satu Kajader-Unkuri).

The programme of the workshop itself included keynote presentations and small group work on the given topics led by the members of the FINE executive and advisory group. The keynote presentation of MNSc Stéphanie Phulpin concerned with the results about the education and competences for nurse educators in France. As a conclusion, more work is required to identify the basic competences and the education for nurse educators in Europe. PhD, adjunct professor Leena Salminen gave a lecture education and competence of nurse educators in Finland. The presentation

was based a nationwide research project surveying different stakeholders. As a summary, despite some criticisms, all stakeholders regarded nurse educators quite competent. PhD, adjunct professor Mikko Saarikoski focused on his presentation the clinical learning environments in nursing education. His well-known Clinical Learning Environment and Supervision scale (CLES) currently includes also the dimension concerning the role of nurse teacher (CLES+T). Based on the results of the European-wide study the role of nurse teacher has changed more indirect from hands-on-care model to liaison model.

The objective of the workshop groups was to discuss about the competence requirements and the education of nurse educators in their own country and compare it with other European countries. Workshops were divided into four groups of which one was French speaking group and three were English speaking groups. The outcomes of the workshop discussions showed that there is varying competence requirements for nurse education and no consistent education for nurse educators in Europe exist. For example, in France, there is a one-year education for nurse educators and the approach is based on competences. Comparing to Finland, the education three years and in order act as a nurse educator, three years of working experience as a nurse is required. In some countries, there are no demands to work as a nurse before becoming a competent nurse educator but instead a PhD degree is required.

Groups were also analysed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats regarding the competences and the education of nurse educators. Some of the strengths that were mentioned in the groups concerned with the working experience as a nurse, motivation to teach and learn and nurse education as a multidimensional profession. Some of the weaknesses were the lack of pedagogical education, no common European requirements for the education of nurse educators and the gap between theory and practice in nursing and education. As opportunities were regarded nurse educators associations, nursing research and an international collaboration. The potential threats were the financial pressures, time and lean management and nursing education in the political agenda.

The main conclusion of the FINE workshop 2015 were that we are aware of competences that a nurse educator should have but the challenge is to create consistent competence requirements and a standardised education programme for nurse educators in Europe. Thus, efforts are still needed to define the concept “nurse educator”: who are we and how to get there. More work is also required to inform the public and the policy makers about the outcomes of the nursing research which would

support the political decision-making, otherwise regarding the competence requirements and the education of nurse educators. Moreover, it is necessary to develop the international and interdisciplinary cooperation to increase the visibility and impact of the nursing research outcomes.