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Blog: Nursing in Finland: ready for clinical leadership?

In Finland, nurses have an independent role in the healthcare system, and the number of nurses is one of the highest in Europe per capita (approximately 19 nurses per 1,000 inhabitants). In Finland, nursing education is provided in 21 universities of applied sciences. The Finnish nursing degree consists of 210 ECTS credits, of which 180 ECTS are regulated by the European directive (2005/36/EC), and 30 ECTS consist of supplementary studies. The 180 ECTS focus on the qualification for a general nurse, while the supplementary studies allow the student to specialize in a specific area of nursing or expand their knowledge in other fields. General nursing qualifications are also granted to other nursing degrees such as paramedic, midwife, and public health nurse.

The core competencies for general nurses have been defined through national collaboration between the universities of applied sciences in Finland. These competencies meet the European and national requirements for nursing education, and universities of applied sciences can utilize the defined core competencies when developing and updating their nursing education curricula.

Clinical leadership is still a new concept in Finland, and it has not been defined or widely discussed in the Finnish context. Therefore, clinical leadership is not part of the core competence description for general nurses. Instead, the national core competence description includes leadership and professional cooperation skills, which encompass the ability to prioritize tasks, motivate members of the working community, give and receive feedback, lead a team, guide fellow co-workers and students, and adapt their ways of working in response to changes in healthcare and social welfare services.

The current approach to nursing leadership in the core competence description is narrow and focuses on the traditional leadership role. For example, it does not recognize advocacy within the nursing profession, which is often associated with clinical leadership. In addition, clinical leaders often serve as advocates for the nursing profession, ensuring that the value of nursing is recognized within healthcare teams, healthcare organizations, and society. Clinical leaders ensure that nursing professionals' perspectives are considered in daily decision-making processes. Including clinical leadership competence in the nursing curriculum could support nursing students in understanding the role of nurses as leaders and encourage them to practice leadership skills. Leadership in the nursing profession is often not recognized by the public, and therefore, nursing students and practicing nurses play an important role in making nursing expertise visible in their communities.

The clinical leadership project will provide a possibility define the clinical leadership in Finnish context and it offers a possibility introduce the clinical leadership competence to nurse educators and nursing professionals in Finland. Laurea UAS works as a member of the national nursing core competence working group and the results of the project will be introduced to the working group...

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