

The integration and learning trajectories of overseas-trained nurses in social and health care work communities

This article examines the integration and work-based learning of foreign nurses who have migrated from the Philippines, Estonia, and Spain to Finland. A total of 86 interviews were conducted with overseas-trained nurses (n = 27), their co-workers (n = 39), their managers (n = 13), and their supervisors (n = 7). The research sought to answer the following questions: How are informal learning and workforce integration realised in multicultural social and health care work communities? What factors affect informal learning and integration in the workplace? The article reveals that a one-way integration approach prevailed in the workplaces studied: the overseas-trained professionals alone were expected to integrate and adapt to the existing practices. Constant haste complicated the learning process, impaired the readiness of the co-workers to support learning, and diminished the willingness of the native staff for the two-way integration of the newcomers and the work communities. The support offered by the work community was conditional and the orientation did not reinforce mutual learning. In addition, Finnishness was portrayed as the norm to which the newcomers should aim. By exploring the foreign nurses' informal learning experiences and integration in their work communities, various learning trajectories were identified, and these offered the nurses different prospects of becoming full participants in the work community. Moreover, formal and informal workplace hierarchies restricted the overseastrained nurses' opportunities to fully utilise their professional competence.