
Original Article

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Structure of the Driving Force That Supports Finnish Nursing Teachers' Motivation

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Abstract

Objective: Education in Finland has attracted international attention in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Finland also focuses on teacher training as one of its national policies. The objective of this study was to develop useful perspectives for nursing teacher training by identifying the characteristics of Finnish nursing teachers.

Methods: We interviewed 4 Finnish nursing teachers, and organized the interview data as narrative records for qualitative and inductive analysis.

Results: There were 7 categories characterizing Finnish nursing teachers: [joy and responsibility of being a teacher], [challenging oneself to become a nursing teacher as an occupation where experience can be utilized], [presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher], [communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields], [advanced abilities and skills to integrate practical experience and up-to-date expertise], [student guidance skills], and [respect for student initiative].

Conclusion: The presence of co-workers and supervisors and communication-focused, collaborative, and continuous learning comprised the driving force of Finnish nursing teachers. The development of programs from these perspectives is also necessary in Japan.

Key words : Finnish nursing teachers, motivation, driving force

Introduction

In Japan, where nursing roles are becoming more complex and diverse, studies to improve the quality of nursing education have begun. The Japan Academy of Nursing Education has launched a research project, and

suggested the necessity of providing preparatory education for nursing teachers, building systems for their consistent and continuing education, creating environments to provide programs and training courses that meet their various needs, and helping them establish expertise, in order to improve their qualities¹⁾²⁾.

Nursing teachers face various difficulties in their daily education activities, such as changes in student dispositions and insufficient manpower. According to Kumagai, nursing teachers acquire new teaching methods by questioning their

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premises and repeating efforts and practices when they encounter students with various backgrounds, and find conventional teaching methods insufficient to teach these students. Through this experience, they realize the competencies needed for nursing teachers³⁾.

Some of the Japanese studies involving nursing teachers examined their abilities/skills and factors that influence their growth⁴⁻⁶⁾. Our surveys revealed that many nursing teachers engage in education with high motivation, but they also have a feeling of being stuck and desire to quit their jobs⁷⁻⁸⁾. Nursing teachers' reasons for desiring to quit their jobs and countermeasures have been discussed on some occasions⁹⁻¹¹⁾. On the other hand, it is also true that many nursing teachers continue their jobs for many years.

In the present study, we focused on Finnish nursing teachers. Education in Finland has attracted international attention in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Visitors from all over the world come to Finland to learn the secrets of its success in education, and Japan is no exception. There have also been some reports on Finnish-style teaching and teacher education¹²⁻¹⁴⁾.

In Finland, teachers are defined to be among specialized professionals such as doctors and lawyers. As professionals of great erudition, they are respected and socially recognized. Teacher is a popular occupation, and many people aspire to become one, making the job market highly competitive. Teachers are thought to be the "key to education", and their training is focused on as a national policy.

Unlike Japan, Finland has no such national certification examinations. Those who have learned nursing practice and completed relevant courses at polytechnics are registered as nurses. Some of them further advance to university, mainly to learn at graduate school. Moreover, they continue to

work as clinical nurses even after degree acquisition, and, therefore, clinical nurses are required to obtain a degree to develop their careers¹⁵⁾.

Nursing education in Finland is characterized by measures to improve nursing competencies, such as determining clinical training facilities based on students' own choices, providing clinical training for a long period, and allocating all shifts to students while allowing them to practice nursing techniques as many times as needed¹⁶⁾. Additionally, training hospitals adopt mentorship programs, and educate nursing students with responsibility, as nursing teachers monitor the progress of students' learning during training and provide advice and mental support for them¹⁷⁾.

We were interested in the roles of nursing teachers in Finland with a background of nursing education different from Japan. We wanted to hear the real opinions of Finnish nursing teachers, and clarify their motivation to educate nurses, with the aim of developing useful perspectives for nursing teacher training in Japan.

Objective

We interviewed nursing teachers in Finland that is world-renowned for the high quality of teachers to analyze their motivation, the driving force that promotes it, and the abilities/skills (competencies) needed for them.

Methods

Prior to the interviews, we sent an interview guide to the Finnish nursing teachers, asking them to reflect on their lives as nursing teachers.

The interview guide examined the following items:

- 1) Individual nursing teachers' personal backgrounds
- 2) What inspired them to become a nursing teacher
- 3) Influencing/supporting factors
- 4) Factors promoting their growth as a nursing teacher

Table 1: Interviewees' Attributes

Subjects	Age	Basic nursing education	Academic Degree*	Years of nursing experience	Years of work experience as a nursing teacher**
A	40's	Polytechnic	Master	6 years (Nurse) + 3 years (work experience)	About 13 years
B	40's	Polytechnic	Master	About 20 years (Nurse)	About 15 years
C	50's	Polytechnic	Master	10 years or more (Nurse)	About 17 years
D	50's	Polytechnic	Master	1 year (Nurse) Several years (Midwife)	About 28 years

*Obtained at university

**Approximate number of years of experience based on the interview data

To select the interviewees, we asked a Finnish nursing school that is a cooperating school of the study university to recommend nursing teachers with extensive experience in nursing education.

We divided the narrative records into segments regarding “nursing teachers’ motivation, the driving force that supports it, and the competencies needed for them”. Then, we qualitatively and inductively analyzed and structured these narratives.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the approval of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Health Science and Nursing, Juntendo University (Approval No.30-15). After the interviews, we explained the following points to the interviewees and obtained their consent: anonymity would be maintained, and the results would be organized as a research paper, reported to the interviewees, and published in the bulletin of the study university.

Definition of Terms

Motivation: Driving force acquired by nursing teachers by valuing teaching practice.

Nursing teachers’ competencies: Abilities/skills needed for and deemed important by these teachers.

Results

We conducted 2 interview sessions in a private room at 2 Finnish universities of applied sciences on different days, March 19 and 21, 2019. There were 3 interviewers and 1 interviewee for the first session, and 3 interviewers and 3 interviewees for the second session. Thus, we interviewed a total of 4 Finnish nursing teachers. Their attributes are shown in Table 1. All of them worked at universities of applied sciences. The durations of the first and second sessions were 41 and 36 minutes, respectively. Both sessions were held in English, recorded using an IC recorder with the interviewees’ permission, the tapes were transcribed in English, organized as narrative records, and translated into Japanese for analysis.

Analysis was performed by 3 co-investigators with experience of qualitative research until they reached agreement. They translated the analyzed categories into English to collate with the narrative data and check for any discrepancies.

From 125 narrative data items, 15 sub-categories were identified, which were classified into 7 categories (Table 2). In the following sections, categories, sub-categories, and narratives are shown in [], < >, and “ ”, respectively.

Table2: Structure of the driving force that supports Finnish nursing teachers' motivation

Category	Sub-category	Number of narratives
Joy and responsibility of being a teacher	Being fond of the students and teaching and enjoying interacting with the students and teaching them	5
	Assuming responsibility as a personal supervisor for on-time graduation	2
Challenging oneself to become a nursing teacher as an occupation where experience can be utilized	Challenging oneself to become a teacher as an occupation where student guidance experience can be utilized and as a meaningful job	11
	Career development as a teacher that depends on oneself	10
Presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher	Having been helped by co-workers on how to teach in the early years of one's teaching career	8
	Having been helped by the department head and mentor when newly assigned	9
	Having many co-workers with whom one can openly discuss various issues	11
Communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields	Strong cooperative relationships among universities in Finland and abroad	14
	Continuous cooperation with community hospitals for student education	2
	Importance of communication skills to cooperate with others	5
Advanced abilities and skills to integrate practical experience and up-to-date expertise	Necessity of 2 specialties for teachers: nursing practice and research	4
	Importance of practical experience to provide education that integrates theory and practice	8
	Continuously collecting information and acquiring knowledge from the literature, journals, and training courses	13
Student guidance skills	Necessity of student guidance skills for teaches	4
Respect for student initiative	Providing student-centered education based on the idea that students should independently learn	9

1. Nursing teachers' motivation

1) [Joy and responsibility of being a teacher]

This category consisted of the following sub-categories: <being fond of students and teaching and enjoying interacting with students and teaching them> and <assuming responsibility as a personal supervisor for on-time graduation>. The Finnish nursing teachers stated that they were fond of the students and enjoyed their company: "I thought I might be fond of teaching, and now I really enjoy it"; "I like being with the students. I would say it's one of the most pleasant things in my life"; "They tend to be highly motivated, and study hard. We are lucky to have (such) great students"; "I really enjoy their company"; and "I love the students (I call them 'my babies')". They also described their responsibility for educating students as follows: "In Finland, we call ourselves 'personal supervisors'. There are generally 20 to 25 students in a group, and all students have their personal supervisors like us, who are responsible for

following up the students in the groups they are in charge of"; and "Personal supervisors supervise students in the groups they are in charge of, hoping all the students will graduate on time".

2) [Challenging oneself to become a nursing teacher as an occupation where experience can be utilized]

This category consisted of the following sub-categories: <challenging oneself to become a teacher as an occupation where student guidance experience can be utilized and as a meaningful job> and <career development as a teacher that depends on oneself>. The Finnish nursing teachers considered their career change from a nurse in practice to teacher as a challenge: "(Becoming a teacher) was a great challenge"; "At first, I thought about seeking a different job or degree, but I really like this occupation anyway"; "When I was working as a nurse, I supervised many students. So,

I decided to study nursing and related subjects”; “Having engaged in supervision, I thought this job would suit me, and decided to go to university”; and “I started to think that it would be more meaningful to help them become good nurses”.

Furthermore, the following narratives explained their desire to become a teacher, focusing on self-learning as a basis for personal growth: “I think it is up to each person to decide how to develop his/her own career”; “No one forces you to develop yourself, but you have the possibility to grow”; “A positive attitude is needed”; “After working as a nurse for many years, I wanted to learn more”; and “I had a lot to learn, but I was never afraid to learn”.

3) [Presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher]

This category consisted of the following sub-categories: <having been helped by co-workers on how to teach in the early years of one’s teaching career>, <having been helped by the department head and mentor when newly assigned>, and <having many co-workers with whom one can openly discuss various issues>. The Finnish nursing teachers stated that many co-workers supported them when they were novice teachers: “When I started to work as a teacher, my co-workers helped me a lot”; “They helped me when I started my teaching job by offering a lot of teaching materials, for example”; “I had many fellow teachers”; “I also often talk with my co-workers”; “Some teachers are wondering how to teach some points, and seeking advice on this”; “When you start to teach as a novice teacher, it tends to be very hard because you don’t have any material ready, but I had very good fellows”; and “I remember that that co-worker not only helped me a lot, but also gave me tips and ideas on how to teach and very useful teaching materials”. There were the following influence factors: “There were

many great teachers around me”; “When I started as a nurse, I shared a room with a wonderful teacher, and she helped me a lot”; “The head lady of the department was also very supportive”; “As everyone was very supportive, it was not difficult for me to fit in the work environment, and devote myself to this job”, and “She is an expert in both areas (nursing and teaching). They were different from mine, but it was helpful”.

As a support system, mentor programs were available in the following cases: “Some hospitals have mentor programs, and mentors may be asked to take care of newly assigned young nurses”; “My supervisor was a senior teacher who was a few years older than me... She had already worked there for a long time, so she had a lot of experience”; and “In the beginning I had a mentor (teacher). I don’t remember how long this mentorship lasted, but it was very helpful”.

Regarding support from co-workers, they stated as follows: “We discuss skill development”; “We talk about simulation, specifically important areas to target and teach”; “We talk about practical details... for example, the problems we face, such as difficulty in obtaining the materials we want and solutions to this”; “The most important thing for me is that I have always had great co-workers with whom I can get along and talk openly. Each of us can seek others’ opinions about his/her practices”; “This has helped me to develop my own skills as a communicator”; “Especially when some of us are teaching students with problems, we talk about these students. We note that many students have mental health issues these days. They are tired because they are working and studying at the same time. So, we talk about students who are facing problems or distressed, and ask for advice if you have such students”; “I think discussions are very important for my growth as a nursing teacher”; and “I think I have been

influenced by many people". Thus, the Finnish nursing teachers often discussed teaching methods and student guidance with their co-workers.

2. Nursing teachers' competencies

1) [Communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields]

This category consisted of the following sub-categories: <strong cooperative relationships among universities in Finland and abroad>, <continuous cooperation with community hospitals for student education>, and the <importance of communication skills to cooperate with others>. The Finnish nursing teachers actively collaborated with in- and external teachers, valuing such cooperative relationships: "There are various types of cooperative groups. For example, in a Finnish English nursing program, various universities form a (national-level) group, and meet to discuss challenges and various other issues"; "We can learn from teachers of other universities"; "These groups (of various university lecturers and universities) allow you to get to know people of these facilities and listen to them even if there are no meetings open"; "You can meet a circle of people from your community or other parts of the country, and it's not that official a way, ask them questions"; "It's a simple form of peer-to-peer Q&A, where you help someone and they help you"; "I am influenced not only by people in the inner circle on campus, but also by those outside the university"; "Because in Finland, cooperative relationships among universities are very strong. This enables us to cooperate with each other very often"; "Cooperation with other universities in Finland and abroad is also very important"; "Cooperation with fellow researchers inside and outside the university is also important"; and "I have many fellow researchers in Finland

and abroad, and we talk a lot about our occupation, and share various topics and information, which is very good support for me".

They also mentioned collaborative systems with training hospitals, in addition to universities: "With other hospitals, too. We cooperate with community hospitals in various ways"; and "When our students receive clinical training in medical institutions within the community, I take part in supervision and training. As we keep these community hospitals in mind when we formulate education programs for the future, it can be said that we are always in a cooperative relationship with them". They also noted the importance of communication skills: "The possibility of skills to cooperate with others is very important"; "communication is also important"; "Without the skills to cooperate with different people, co-workers, and students, your techniques become useless"; and "Looking back on my entire career, I think the most important thing is the ability to cooperate with others".

2) [Advanced abilities and skills to integrate practical experience and up-to-date expertise]

This category consisted of the following sub-categories: <necessity of 2 specialties for teachers: nursing practice and research>, <importance of practical experience to provide education that integrates theory and practice>, and <continuously collecting information and acquiring knowledge from the literature, journals, and training courses>. The Finnish nursing teachers emphasized the necessity of advanced clinical and teaching skills: "(The most important thing for the growth of a nursing teacher, and the area of expertise that fosters his/her abilities and skills) is, in my opinion, education. Nursing education should be very high-level, and, therefore, it is very important"; "Nurse supervisors need to have two

specialties”; “They should be well-versed in the field of research; and “So I think nursing teachers’ competencies refer to special abilities and skills to integrate these two areas at a high level”.

They also emphasized the importance of acquiring practical experience and making use of such experience for education: “I don’t really like giving lectures to many students”; “Students are also very fond of this. As they always want to listen to patients and families, I think it is a good way to combine theory and practice”; “If you have practical experience as a nurse, you can make use of that experience to manage patients, families, and various situations, as well as to provide student guidance”; “I have a long work experience of about 20 years, and almost every year, I have also worked as a nurse in a hospital for a short period of time during the summer”; “I think it’s very important for teachers to acquire extensive experience, because this helps students”; “They need a background in nursing, and especially... work experience is a prerequisite”; “If you work as a nursing teacher, I think you also need to have clinical skills, at least when teaching clinically related subjects”; and “Of course, techniques are also important”.

Concerning the importance of knowledge, they stated as follows: “You have to study all the time to acquire evidence-based skills. Because your teaching, as well as your practice, needs to be based on evidence”; “In Finland, there are several nursing journals, and I try to read them when new numbers are available”; “(Reading journals) is necessary. You need to know the latest research results and what is happening in the nursing field”; “This is what I want to learn about. I acquire the latest knowledge, and get feedback on it directly from my students”; “It is also very important for teachers to read new resources”; “I, as a teacher, need to study as well. I always have to read a huge amount of material”; “We assume various tasks and

responsibilities at work, and when new responsibilities and tasks arise in relation to our work, we need to learn a lot about related issues”; “We need to be informed of foreign opinions about the decisions we are trying to make”; “In addition, there are courses almost every year. We also have to study for short courses. Some last for 1 year and some for 2 weeks”; “We study all the time. We read a lot of material to acquire evidence-based knowledge, and find out, for example, what the new guidelines say”; “It is very hard to be well-versed in the latest nursing knowledge”, and “Evidence-based knowledge is very important”. Thus, they considered that teachers themselves should seek new knowledge all the time.

3) [Student guidance skills]

This category summarized the following sub-category: <necessity of student guidance skills for teachers>. The Finnish nursing teachers stated that student guidance skills are also required: “Needless to say, teachers should be experts in student guidance”; “It is the skills to provide guidance for students”; “We guide and support students”; and “Guidance skills are also important”.

4) Respect for student initiative

This category summarized the following sub-category: <providing student-centered education based on the idea that students should independently learn>. It was explained by the following statements: “We follow the ideology of competence-oriented education, and everything we do should be student-centered”; “Sometimes my students say to me, ‘You are not doing anything’, because we teachers are in classrooms to help students learn. That’s basically what student-centered teaching is all about”; and “I talk about how to learn, not how to teach students”.

“We want to put learners at the center”; “To students

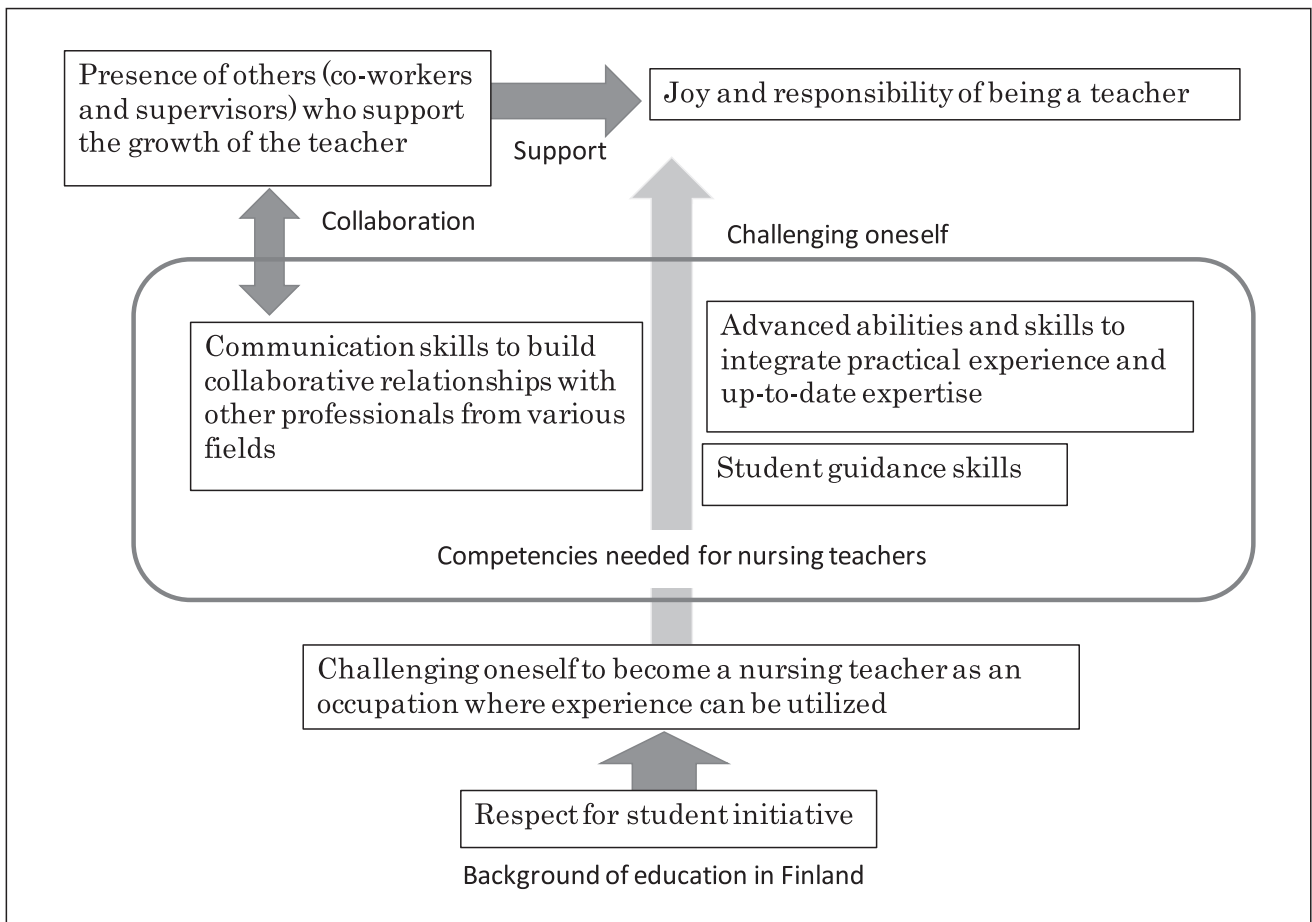
who complain ‘The teacher is not doing anything’, I always answer ‘I work hard to be prepared before coming to the classroom, because I have to think of assignments to give you and the significance of studying this for you’; ‘‘Why am I making you do this? What is the idea behind it?’’; ‘‘You also need to be prepared for student guidance’’; and ‘‘We proceed with classes while discussing and collaborating with other students and other teachers in small groups’’. Thus, the Finnish nursing teachers are sufficiently prepared to provide student-centered education and promote independent learning among students.

3. Structure of the driving force that supports Finnish nursing teachers' motivation (Figure 1)

Through the interviews, we structured the relationship between Finnish nursing teachers' motivation and competencies represented by these categories.

With [respect for student initiative] as a background of education, Finnish nursing teachers had been [challenging oneself to become a nursing teacher as an occupation where experience can be utilized] while acquiring practical experience in nursing, and developing [student guidance skills] and [advanced abilities and skills to integrate practical experience and up-to-date expertise] needed for nursing teachers. They used [communication skills to build

Figure1: Structure of the driving force that supports Finnish nursing teachers' motivation



collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields], and felt motivated as a nursing teacher when they realized the [presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher] and [joy and responsibility of being a teacher].

Discussion

1. Motivational characteristics of Finnish nursing teachers

All of the 4 Finnish nursing teachers we interviewed in the present study had acquired practical experience in nursing, and subsequently chosen to work as a nursing teacher. It was not forced upon them by anyone, but their self-challenge, as they stated “I think it is up to each person to decide how to develop his/her own career”, “No one forces you to develop yourself, but you have the possibility to grow”, and “After working as a nurse for many years, I wanted to learn more”.

The Finnish nursing teachers often discussed student guidance and teaching methods with other teachers, indicating that collaboration among teachers is active in Finland. Indeed, all of these 4 teachers emphasized the importance of the [presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher] and [communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields] during the interviews.

During the interviews, the Finnish nursing teachers stated that they needed communication skills, emphasizing the necessity of communicating with both nursing students and clinical supervisors who train students in clinical settings. In Finland, great importance is also placed on communication between students and teachers¹⁸⁾.

In Finnish-style teaching, students pursue learning and deepen their studies, with teachers doing nothing. During

the interviews, one of the Finnish nursing teachers stated: “To students who complain ‘The teacher is not doing anything’, I always answer ‘I work hard to be prepared before coming to the classroom, because I have to think of assignments to give you and the significance of studying this for you’”. Was the teacher really doing nothing?

Another teacher’s statement “We study all the time. We read a lot of material to acquire evidence-based knowledge, and find out, for example, what the new guidelines say” was impressive. While leaving clinical training to clinical nurses, they continuously brushed up on their teaching materials to help students practice evidence-based nursing, and this may be a role of nursing teachers. She may have appeared to be doing nothing, but in fact she was practicing independent learning on her own, such as <continuously collecting information and acquiring knowledge from the literature, journals, and training courses>.

2. Differences between Finnish and Japanese nursing teachers

In Finland, the learners are students, and teachers support their learning. As the style of learning varies among students, teachers adopt individualized teaching approaches. There are no national curricula. In basic education, there are no tests to compare students. Teachers support humane learning, with differences among students taken into consideration¹²⁾.

In contrast, Japan’s educational administration determines the progress and content of learning in detail based on the Curriculum Guidelines created by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. The subjects and skills to learn are determined in further detail by the ministry-approved textbooks. As school entrance examinations measure the prescribed knowledge, school curricula are established without much consideration for

the specific situation of each student. This is what makes it different from independence-focused education in Finland.

The nursing licensing system also varies between Finland and Japan. In the former, there is no national nurse certification examination. Students obtain a nursing license when they graduate from a nursing school. In Japan's nursing education system, flexibility varies between 5-year vocational schools and colleges, but the subjects to learn are determined by designated rules based on the Act on Public Health Nurses, Midwives, and Nurses, and students who have completed these subjects are qualified to take the national nurse certification examination. Therefore, their learning is defined by the goal of passing the national nurse certification examination.

In Japan, nursing teacher training started when the law stipulated that full-time teachers with a nursing license or similar qualification should be assigned to nursing schools. Subsequently, "a clinical experience of 3 years or longer" and "completion of necessary training courses" were added as requirements for full-teachers. However, these requirements apply only to nursing schools, and not to nursing colleges that have rapidly increased in number. Some studies involving nursing teachers report that they are stressed due to difficulty in integrating their personal traits as a nurse and as a teacher in their minds¹⁹⁾.

Our interviews demonstrated that Finnish nursing teachers enjoy their teaching lives. Finland's education system itself focuses on independence, and allows a broad range of learning, possibly making Finnish nursing teachers also independent.

3. What we should learn from Finland and incorporate into Japan's current nursing teacher training system

The importance of the [presence of others (co-workers

and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher] and [communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields] highlighted by the narratives of the Finnish nursing teachers is one of the points we should learn and adopt from Finland, rather than making immediate changes in Japan's education system and laws.

In the case of Japanese nursing teachers, who also acquired practical experience and chose this occupation, teaching is often up to their supervisors. Organization-led training courses and programs are becoming useless, and even if they take training courses for faculty development in high demand, it is not easy for them to grow as a nursing teacher in the current situation due to difficulty in holding class sessions, supervising training, or conducting research. Consequently, many of them are forced to retire soon after becoming a nursing teacher⁸⁾.

As a solution, it is expected that programs focusing on communication with others will be developed in Japan. We believe that the idea of "a community of practice" a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly²⁰⁾ is helpful in this respect.

As for nursing teacher training in Japan, workshops and various training courses for these teachers provided by the Japanese Nursing Association are available. Thus, there are frameworks for learning, but reflection on daily practice and case studies on student guidance and classes are needed to make use of these frameworks. Thus, it may be useful to build a system for reflection on a practice that is often buried in daily teaching duties.

Conclusion

Through interviews with 4 Finnish nursing teachers, 7 categories, [joy and responsibility of being a teacher],

[challenging oneself to become a nursing teacher as an occupation where experience can be utilized], [presence of others (co-workers and supervisors) who support the growth of the teacher], [communication skills to build collaborative relationships with other professionals from various fields], [advanced abilities and skills to integrate practical experience and up-to-date expertise], [student guidance skills], and [respect for student initiative], were identified.

Limitations of this study

There are limits to applying the results of the present study to Japan's nursing education system, as the study focused on nursing teachers in Finland, which differs from Japan in the culture and background of education. However, the findings of this study may be useful for program development and future studies to increase Japanese nursing teachers' motivation.

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