

Nursing Education in the Pandemic Time: Case Study

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Abstract : COVID-19 was officially recognized as a pandemic in late 2019 by the WHO, and it has led to changes in the education sector. Educational institutions were closed, and most schools adopted distance learning. Estonia is known as a digitally well-developed country. Based on that, in the pandemic time, nursing education continued, and new technological solutions were implemented. To provide nursing education, special focus was paid on quality and flexibility. The aim of this paper is to present administrative, digital, and technological solutions which support Estonian nursing educators to continue the study process in the pandemic time and to develop a sustainable solution for nursing education for the future. This paper includes the authors' analysis of the documents and decisions implemented in the institutions through the pandemic time. It is a case study of Estonian nursing educators. Results of the analysis show that the implementation of distance learning principles challenges the development of innovative strategies and technics for the assessment of student performance and educational outcomes and implement new strategies to encourage student engagement in the virtual classroom. Additionally, hospital internships were canceled, and the simulation approach was deeply implemented as a new opportunity to develop and assess students' practical skills. There are many other technical and administrative changes that have also been carried out, such as students' support and assessment systems, the designing and conducting of hybrid and blended studies, etc. All services were redesigned and made more available, individual, and flexible. Hence, the feedback system was changed, the information was collected in parallel with educational activities. Experiences of nursing education during the pandemic time are widely presented in scientific literature. However, to conclude our study, authors have found evidence that solutions implemented in Estonian nursing education allowed the students to graduate within the nominal study period without any decline in education quality. Operative information system and flexibility provided the minimum distance between the students, support, and academic staff, and likewise, the changes were implemented quickly and efficiently. Institution memberships were updated with the appropriate information, and it positively affected their satisfaction, motivation, and commitment. We recommend that the feedback process and the system should be permanently changed in the future to place all members in the same information area, redefine the hospital internship process, implement hybrid learning, as well as to improve the communication system between stakeholders inside and outside the organization. The main limitation of this study relates to the size of Estonia. Nursing education is provided by two institutions only, and similarly, the number of students is low. The result could be generated to the institutions with a similar size and administrative system. In the future, the relationship between nurses' performance and organizational outcomes should be deeply investigated and influences of the pandemic time education analyzed at workplaces.

Keywords : hybrid learning, nursing education, nursing, COVID-19

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