

The Kindergarten as a Multicultural Workplace

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Abstract : Well-functioning workplaces are often characterized by good co-operation, adequate flow of information, open interaction between workers and a supportive work environment. The workplace is a mosaic of human personalities and the influx of people, who speak different languages and who are from different cultural backgrounds, may bring about new challenges and enrich this environment. However, this influx of people could also pose a problem as the adaptation of immigrant people to new terms of work may depend heavily on the level of language skills, the stage of culture shock, professional identity, and personality. Migration is not a rare phenomenon in Finland anymore; nobody is surprised to see people from different countries and different backgrounds in the schools, on the streets or in shops. However, this does not mean that immigration is an easy process for people coming from other countries. The experience of workers, with diverse language and backgrounds, has rarely been researched, particularly from the superior's point of view. In addition, the vast majority of researchers have paid more attention to multicultural kindergartens in terms of immigrant children and their families. Hence, there is a need to show the problem which exists in the recruitment of the increasing number of workers who come from different countries. Opinions about kindergartens, as multicultural workplaces, have been gathered through interviews with immigrant workers responsible for education. In addition, a questionnaire for native Finnish workers and superiors in kindergartens was carried out. The collected material has been analyzed qualitatively, focusing on topics such as: the kindergarten as a multicultural workplace, factors influencing career success of workers with diverse language and cultural backgrounds, the social relations in the multicultural workplaces and teachers' changing professional identity. The results of the research provided a novel aspect of the multicultural workplace and emphasized a dependency of immigrant workers' on language skills in Finnish; affecting professional success. In addition, they showed the good relations between other native Finnish co-workers and superiors. The results also illustrate why writing skills in Finnish are so important in kindergartens. Part of the investigation also questions some results of the research i.e. which is more important in the kindergarten as a multicultural workplace: personality, good professional skills or good language skills.

Keywords : kindergarten, multicultural workplace, social relations at work, work satisfaction

Conference Title : ICMDHS 2016 : International Conference on Migration, Development and Human Security

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 18-19, 2016