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Dottorando: Dott. Michele Virgolesi

Tutor: Prof.ssa Maria Grazia De Marinis

Titolo tesi: Stakeholder engagement in nursing education

ABSTRACT

Background

Starting from the Bologna process, nursing is engaged in a complex reform process that aims to transform it from a vocational occupation to an intellectual profession. Thus, in many European countries, nursing education switches from traditional schools to university. This evolution has determined the education of a more effective and autonomous nurse, ready for new challenges such as increasingly prevalence of chronic diseases, aging population, longer life expectancy, growing diversity and technology innovations (Abate et al., 2015; Palese et al., 2014). Thus, the response to healthcare needs from university graduates in the health sciences should be ensured by the relevancy of the curricula offered by the universities (Muller et al., 2008). However, curriculum development is a difficult and dynamic process and it requires the experience and knowledge of the faculty that must imagine and take into account the future of the work context and the needs of patients, families and communities (D'Antonio et al., 2013; Sidebotham, 2017; Weeks, 2017). For these reasons, the development of a curriculum is not a matter that concerns only the university and the teachers, but also involves numerous 'stakeholders'. Stakeholder engagement in nursing is also strongly encouraged by the project 'Tuning Educational Structures in Europe' which is a competence based methodology to redesign, implement, evaluate the first, second and third cycle degree programs in strong connection with bologna process.

Aims

The aim of the thesis is to explore the stakeholders engagement in nursing education.

Methods

Firstly, to describe the main experiences of involving stakeholders in nursing education and identify the main stakeholders for nursing education and the topics in which they are involved, we have conducted a scoping literature review. Secondly, to explore the opinions and perspectives of Italian nurses, educators, managers, students and academics to achieve a deeper understanding of the ways in which stakeholder engagement could be implemented in nursing education we have conducted a qualitative, descriptive study. The interview guide, which was designed by two researchers, included the following broad question: 'What are your opinions and perspectives about stakeholder engagement in nursing education?' Data were analysed using a content analytic method (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Thirdly, Delphi technique was employed to achieve a mapping of the stakeholders in nursing education (Bowles, 1999; Duffield, 1988; Keeney, Hasson & McKenna, 2001). This method entails an iterative process using a systematic progression of repeated rounds of voting. It is an effective process for establishing expert-group consensus where there is little or no definitive evidence and where opinion plays an important role (Annels, Averis, Brown, Gardner, Hockley & Surguy, 1997). Fourthly, considering the stakeholders' role in evaluation, a cross-sectional study was conducted to describe the practical tests used for the licensure exams in the four universities of the Lazio Region in terms of types of tests used and in terms of field of competence assessed.

Results



The stakeholders described in the literature are: students, clinicians, lecturers, matrons, representatives of patients, the wider community and the governing authorities. These groups are mainly involved when curricula are reformulated or when clinical specialist training courses are launched (Virgolesi et al., 2014). However, involvement is also foreseen in the evaluation phase of curricular evolution (Olinzock, Kruger, Wilburn, Wilburn & Roush, 2009). Most of the studies identified were from the United Kingdom, Australia and the USA. In Italy, no relevant studies were found. Yet in Italy several legislative measures stipulate that the involvement of stakeholders must be incorporated into the structure of degree courses (Ministerial Decree 509/199 art. 11; Ministerial Decree n.270/2004). The main results of the qualitative analysis suggest that when stakeholders are involved in nursing education, universities conduct a more structured reflection and maintenance of the effectiveness of courses offered. This improves the correspondence between the competencies formed and those needed in the real world. It also improves the transferability of nurses' competencies and nurses' job mobility. It is interesting to note how legislators' hope for greater mobility of the nurses, particularly in the European context (Commission of the European Communities, 2005), is considered to be directly correlated to stakeholder engagement. The need to define a method or framework for conducting stakeholder engagement emerged from the results of the qualitative study. This inspired a Delphi study that has contributed to categorize the stakeholders based on importance of stakeholders in nursing education, their level of involvement and the themes of the consultation. In the last chapter of the thesis our attention is focused on stakeholder engagement in the evaluation phase, in particular in the licensure examination. The licensure examination, though a high-stakes evaluation procedure since it enables the student to legally begin clinical practice, is characterized by a series of problems. One of the problems concerns the lack of standardization of the test (Marchetti, Virgolesi et al., 2014). It has been brought to light that at the Universities of Lazio, there is a large discrepancy in the types of tests used for the licensure examination. They range from a written test to multiple-choice to BOE (bed observation exam). Obviously, the use of different types of test means certification of competencies at non-standard levels of appraisal. This is a critical issue as evaluation is conducted at a national level but structured according to divergent local policies. That is, each university organizes the test in an autonomous way according to divergent interpretations of which skills are necessary to practice nursing effectively and securely. This dilemma sheds light on how the presence of stakeholders in organizing the examination can guarantee the quality and transparency of the evaluation tests, if focuses mainly on the evaluation of the system and processes rather than on the evaluation of the individual candidate (Mertens & Wilson, 2012).

Conclusion

At the end of the doctoral path that led us from the analysis of literature to the definition of a model of engagement with a Delphi study, we can say that stakeholder engagement provides important support for nursing education. It allows them to read and interpret the dynamic and complex needs of society. This is important in order to develop curricula in which the learning outcomes are in line with the skills required in real-world conditions. Further positive effects arising therefrom are better employability and job mobility of nurses, better quality education and greater satisfaction among all parties involved. However, these results can only be obtained if the stakeholder engagement conducts in a structured manner and in reference to a given methodology. Furthermore, the relationships between the university and the stakeholders must be governed not only by particular interests but by ethical principles such as solidarity in the name of shared goals.