

DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF THE NURSING STAFF – IMPLICATIONS FOR THE POLISH HEALTHCARE SECTOR

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Abstract: *The management of the human resources of the nursing staff is subject to the big changes of the external and internal environment in the current economic situation. The efficiency of management in this area in the healthcare entities consists in providing competent employees equipped with knowledge, abilities, experience and attitudes performing the work process in accordance with the expected quality and safety standards. The purpose of this article is to present the significance of the properly performed development process of human potential regarding to the nursing staff.*

Keywords: *nursing staff, staff development and education*

JEL Classification: *M12*

1. INTRODUCTION

Current and future organisation success in the market depends on the efficient human resources management in a big extent. This situation also refers to the healthcare system employing the nursing staff. The results of the analysis entitled “The introductory analysis of the staff resources of nurses and midwives in Poland to year 2020” show many important aspects which should be considered while managing human potential regarding many levels. The results of this analysis present in particular that [9]:

- Consecutive changes of the educational systems for nurses and midwives caused the significant fall in the number of nurses and midwives by 36,125 people in years 1998 - 2009;
- The index of employed nurses and midwives for one thousand citizens in Poland amounts to 6.42; average age of nurses is 44.24 years. The most number of nurses – 18.01% is in the age range between 41 – 45 years. In Total the nurses at the age between 36 – 55 years amount to 69.32% of all nurses covered by the analysis. The generation gap is observed in the age group between 21 – 35 years covering the years when the change of educational systems for nurses and midwives took place. The nurses in this age group comprise 15.52% of all nurses included in this analysis whereas the nurses in the age group between 26 – 30 years comprise only 3.37%;
- The number of nurses and midwives entering into the system in the last 10 years (2000 – 2009) and in the forecasted years 2010 – 2020 does not enable the generation change in these jobs as it is not equal to the number of nurses and midwives who retire or obtain rights to retire;
- According to the forecasts of National Council of Nurses and Midwives – 80,714 nurses born in years 1950 – 1960 will obtain the age of retirement in years 2010 – 2020. It amounts to 29.96% of the total number of 269,738 nurses registered in the Central Register of Nurses and Midwives. Whereas 8,799 midwives born in years 1950 – 1960 will obtain the age of retirement in years 2010 – 2020 which amounts to 27.05% of the total number of

32,534 midwives registered in the Central Register of Nurses and Midwives;

- The forecasted number of graduates at the nursing faculty (on the basis of limits of admission) is by 60.13% higher than the number of nurses obtaining the right to retire. Also the number of graduates at the obstetrics faculty is by 165.79% higher than the number of midwives obtaining the right to retire;
- Only a part of nurses from the forecasted number of graduates will enter to the healthcare system. The average from the last 10 years showed that 1,814 nurses reports to the regional chamber of nurses and midwives to receive a certificate about the right to perform the job and take work in this profession a year. It is estimated that 80,814 nurse will probably retire and only 19,954 nurses will start work in this profession in years 2010 – 2020 which shows the lack of 60,860 nurses in the system in year 2020. It amounts to 32.25% of nurses currently employed in the healthcare units.

The aforementioned forecasts in connection with the system reforms referring to the healthcare sector and frequent financial problems occurring in this sector cause that the issues connected with the human resources management becomes significantly important and at the same time, uneasy to introduce it properly and in long-term.

Moreover, about 10% of all employees of the European Union (27 countries) are employed in this sector and three quarters of them comprise women. As it arises from the data published by the International Council of Nurses, many persons working in this medical profession are endangered on the risk of injuries, get diseases, have accidents at the work place, which causes that they are not able to continue their work. Respectively, as much as 75.8% of surveyed nurses in the USA expressed the opinion that dangerous working conditions affect their ability to perform qualified care and as much as 88% respondents claimed that the decisions about the type of performed work as well as decisions about the fact whether they would continue depends on the conditions in which the work is performed [5]. Medical staff (doctors and nurses) belongs to the professional group that experiences the negative effects of

the occupational burnout the most often, every fifth professionally active medical employee suffers due to occupational burnout the source of which is also the conflict in the line occupational work - family life [4]. The symptoms of the occupational burnout also called the epidemics of the 21st century comprise the general exhaustion and chronic fatigue. It is often accompanied with chronic stress which may result in depression and anxiety disorders, digestive disorders, frequent colds, the motivation reduces significantly, it comes to the loss of power and energy, the feeling of inanition, depression, irritability. The research conducted among the women – healthcare staff by the Australian organisation Beyond Blue which takes care of the problems of depression showed that they are twice more endangered on suicide than the women working in other professions [3].

Moreover, the significant increase in the number of residents at the age over 65 is assumed within the next three decades as a result of demographic changes occurring in Europe, which will constitute a challenge both for the management of the healthcare system as well as the for the organisation of the working environment of the medical staff. For instance, it is estimated that in Germany to year 2020 the number of people requiring care in hospitals and clinics shall increase by 40% [1].

2. DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION OF NURSING STAFF

The development of competences through educational programmes and planning the path of professional career comprise significant elements of the human potential management of the nursing staff.

The educational programmes referring to the nursing staff can be divided into two types: trainings in the company and institutional trainings.

The first element means the proper diagnosis of nursing staff's educational needs. These needs are possible to be specified on the basis of different documents or indicators such as: descriptions of work positions, results of periodical assessment, indicators of fluctuation or absence, requests of managerial staff referring to the trainings, organizational structure, complaints from patients, organisational personnel strategy, quality of performed work and given praises or punishments.

After separating educational needs, determining a training method comprises the next important element. The training methods which may be used while training nursing staff may include:

- Lectures, presentations and conferences;
- Games and simulations;
- Modelling behaviours;
- Case studies (the participant of a training performs a part of the task or solves a specific problem individually);
- E-learning (trainings with the use of computer programmes which is in favour of better gathering and working out the information, faster communication and correction of made mistakes);
- Rotation of work places (the employee performs the work in different work places which contributes to: acquiring new experiences and abilities, learning about the specific character of the work in different levels of

the organisation or using own abilities in new conditions);

- Learning in the profession, instruction;
- Ordered tasks;
- Replacement;
- Mentoring (the superior of the senior position supports and watches the future direction of the employee's professional development);
- Coaching (direct superior teaches and supervises the employee in the performance off tasks at a given work position).

Planning the path of professional career comprises a significant element of the development of the nursing staff. The subject literature [6] distinguishes the levels of the staff's development such as for example effort to maintain high competences and efficiency at work in their positions, participation in educational programmes, positive development of interpersonal relationships with superiors and subordinates, e.g. in order to have their professional career supported by other persons and to create their image as the person with high professional potential. In order to support the professional career of their employees, the organisation may affect them with the use of various methods such as: proper information policy about the possibilities of promotion, designing the path of professional career (by determining the sequence of taking consecutive work positions in the company organisational structure), drawing up the plan of consequences (list of employees for a given work place, should there be a vacancy for it), organisation of trainings which increase the employee's qualifications, rotation of work places or the organisation of meetings connected with the issues of professional careers.

The performed studies [8] show the necessity to create the strategy of the nursing staff development the basis of which would be based among others on the integration of this environment, promotion of the knowledge about the provisions of law referring to the development of this staff among the students of nursing or the help from managing staff in creating the path of professional career. In particular, the persons carrying out the study indicated the necessity to perform the following studies:

- Gathering data and carrying out the studies in the scope of: current number, age and gender of nurses, their professional activity, reasons for and amounts of lacks of the medical staff, unemployment among nurses, emigration and immigration of nurses, persons taken to the studies and graduates of medical universities;
- Monitoring the efficiency of training in medical academies and others;
- Comparing the current data to the data from previous periods;
- Promoting the purpose and forecasting the nursing staff by different kinds of activities.

In the case of nursing staff's institutional education, it refers to the postgraduate education, the purpose of which is to supplement the general and medical knowledge and improve the organisational, intellectual, educational abilities and abilities to solve professional problems or formulate appropriate ethical positions and the culture of performed work.

There are many legal aspects referring to these issues [10-14]. According to the Law on Self Governance of Nurses and Midwives of 1st July 2011 (Journal of Laws No 174, item 1038) the tasks of self governance of nurses and midwives is to cooperate in determining the directions of nursing and obstetrics development which are in particular realised by: giving opinions and requests in the matters of professional education, running postgraduate education for nurses and giving opinions about the professional education programmes.

Moreover, the Nurses and Midwives Act states in article 61 that a nurse is obliged to update their knowledge and professional abilities and has the right to professional development in different forms of postgraduate education. The act specifies the following type of postgraduate education: special trainings called speciality, qualification courses, special courses and continuation courses.

In the case of specialization, the purpose is that a nurse receives special knowledge and abilities in the particular area of nursing or the area being used in the healthcare and the title of specialist in this area. Having performed the specialisation and passing the national exam, a nurse obtains the title of a specialist in nursing or in the area being used in the healthcare. This exam is performed separately for each area of nursing or in the area being used in the healthcare by the exam committee that is appointed by the minister competent for the health matters at the request of the director of the Centre of Postgraduate Education for Nurses and Midwives.

The purpose of the second of the courses, qualification course, is that a nurse obtains knowledge and abilities to perform particular health benefits being in the composition of a given area of nursing or the area being used in healthcare. This course is finished with the theoretical carried out in the written or oral form or with the practical exam. The course organiser specifies the form of the exam. Whereas the purpose of the specialist course is that a nurse obtains knowledge and abilities to perform specific professional activities while performing nursing, preventive, diagnostics, treatment or rehabilitation services. The specialist course is finished with the exam determined according to the same principles as in the case of a qualification course. The purpose of the course, the continuation course, is that a nurse improves and updates their knowledge and professional abilities.

Should the employee achieve the top of their professional career, the organisation should also overcome the professional stagnation of such an employee e.g. by giving new tasks, transfer to different positions (requiring a bit different competences or work in a new working environment), allocation to task groups or supervising the introduction of a new employee to the organisation.

Thus, nursing is strictly connected with the patient's safety. Work in difficult conditions and insufficient number of staff as well as inappropriate competences increase the risk of making mistakes [7]. According to the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the proper working conditions in the healthcare sector affect the patient's safety significantly.

It may be achieved by applying legal international and national means and regulations in the scope of satisfying the employees' needs i.e. continuous professional development of nurses, proper ways of professional promotion and appropriate remuneration systems as well as the systems of monitoring and minimizing the factors of professional risk.

3. CONCLUSION

In practice, managing the staff referring to the nursing staff is more similar to administering this staff than to human potential management, therefore, it is necessary to change the approach regarding the performance of this function. It is particularly important in the context of Polish functioning in the EU structures which causes the migration of highly qualified nursing staff abroad. In connection with it, it is necessary to take action in order to create proper procedures in the scope of obtaining or development of nursing staff. The next important element is to make the senior staff that the human factor is the one which decides whether the organisation achieves competitive predominance in the medical services market. It is necessary to couple the human resources management with complex concept of the organisation management using such modern tools as personal marketing or strategic management.

It is important to notice that the results of studies referring to the individual healthcare units [2] which were performed in 2006 showed that although some hospitals take actions in the scope of increasing the efficiency of processes of personnel planning, recruitment, selection, de-recruitment, periodical assessment or its development. In connection with it, the changes in the scope of human potential management should go in the following directions:

- Coupling the development strategies of hospitals with the strategies in the scope of human resources management;
- Creating efficient and complex human resources systems beginning from planning and recruitment, through periodical assessment, education programmes, promotion and finishing at de-recruitment;
- Introduction of modern methods and tools in the scope of personnel actions (in particular in respect to selection and periodical assessment);
- Improvement of actions in the scope of training and professional development.

Organizations today, operating under conditions of globalization, variable internal and external conditionings and the necessity for continuous activities towards maintaining competitive position in the market face the necessity of diametrically transformed philosophy of human resource management towards treating this potential as a fundamental factor which will ensure a long-term success in the market. Human resource issues are gaining on strategic and primary importance, while the tasks of managers include use of knowledge and skills of employees and suitable stimulation of employees to work effectively.

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