

Nursing in Finland

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Introduction

Nursing in Finland is now carried out in the polytechnics (AMK). The last entry into colleges was in 1988 with only a few places available. The degree programmes of the polytechnics are approved by the Ministry of Education.

Types of nurse

There are three options in the nursing programme of the AMK:

- The nurse (*Sairaanhoitaja/Sjuksöterska*);
- the public health nurse (*Terveydenhoitaja/ Hälsovårdare*) has a secondary level education. Since 1.8.1998 the education and training takes three years. According to his/her option the practical nurse can work in the field of social services. Those who have studied nursing (as their option) work in different Health Care settings with nurses. The practical nurse does not belong to the category of Branch Nurses;
- the midwife (*Kätilö/Barnmorska*).

The three streams all include studies in the basic education for nursing. The education of the nurse and public health nurse comprise the three-year education of nursing responsible for general care (452/77/EC, 453/77/EC). Nurses are registered as nurse and public health nurse as public health nurse respectively. The midwife holds both the nurse title/registration and the midwife title/registration. They have to study the (general care) nurse degree first.¹

Registered nurses tend to work mostly in hospitals, whereas the registered public health nurses tend to work in community health centres and schools. Though their training is very similar they are considered to be separate professions.

Practical nurse (*Lähihoitaja/Närvårdare*)

The practical nurse (*Lähihoitaja/Närvårdare*) is a lower level nurse and is capable of working autonomously at certain basic tasks, but often works with

¹ The education of the midwives complies with the directives on midwives (80/154/EC, 80/155/EC).

the general care nurse at hospitals. They also often work directly in the community. The practical nurse education began 1987 and has been revised twice since then.

Training

The AMK institutions were launched in 1991. The intention was to test hands-on training and education and improve vocational studies in Finland.² The experiment was successful and parliamentary legislation in March 1995 established a permanent system with nine AMK institutions having that status. By the year 2001 the whole innovation will be accomplished. This year (1999) there are 25 AMK-institutions, where is possible to take the degree in health care education. Studies are organised as degree programmes approved by the Ministry of Education. **Error! Unknown switch argument.**

Take up and pursuit of training in the polytechnics

Students apply for entry to polytechnics after general or vocational upper secondary education. The requirement is a Finnish matriculation certificate, i.e. an upper secondary school leaving certificate, a basic vocational qualification, or an equivalent international or foreign qualification.³

The programme for nurses and public health nurses at AMK (polytechnic level) is 140 credits (1 credit = 40 hours) and lasts 3½ years.⁴ In the polytechnic nursing education the students have 50 credits guided practical training in the field: hospitals, health care centres and so on. The guided practical training consists of 50 % of the three years education according to the nurse-directives.

² National Board of Education web site.

³ Ministry of Health web site. There is a joint national system for application to polytechnics and post-secondary education which is administered by the National Board of Education. The permanent polytechnics determine their own entry requirements and select their students. The Ministry of Education determines the selection criteria for temporary polytechnics. The selection is based on the student's school achievement, work experience and often also an entrance test.

⁴ The total length of studies for midwives is 180 credits and guided practical training 90 credits.

In order to graduate they have to take a further half a year of optional line-specific studies. This means that during the last half a year of their study period they can deepen their studies by taking up a specific area in the field of nursing. Different polytechnics have different lines the students can choose from. In the Rovaniemi polytechnic, for example, the lines are mental health care, acute nursing, youth and adolescent care, geriatric and terminal nursing. With this system the total study time of the nurses is as long as with the specialised nursing training before.⁵

The specialised training can also include paediatric and multi-cultural nursing.

The practical nurse (*perushoitaja/primärskötare*)

The practical nurse (*perushoitaja/primärskötare*) was educated during the years 1987 – 1994. It was a lower level education. In Finland this means training at secondary level. The practical nurse is capable of working autonomously at certain basic tasks, but often works with the general care nurse. They often work directly in the Community. They were able to specialise in five areas. They are no longer trained in Finland.

The new practical Nurse (*Lähihoitaja/Närvårdare*)

In 1995 Finland started the new basic examination **Vocational qualification in social and health care (*Lähihoitaja/Närvårdare*) Practical Nurse**, 100 credit points (= 2,5 years incl. 25 credit points practical training). This training will be increased this year (from Autumn 1999) to three years duration (education level 3, 85/368/EC, i.e. secondary level), The 120 credit points will include 29 credit points practical training. There is also the new national curriculum coming into force for the practical nurse. The study programme of a practical nurse is set out in appendix 1

⁵ Vuokko Lohiniva PhD,RN, Director of the School of Health Care and Social Services, Rovaniemi Polytechnic

Practical nurses take care, support and promote the growth and rehabilitation of people from various age groups and in various life situations. The goal is to help, guide, and support the clients to cope with their normal daily activities. The graduates from this programme will be able to interact with people and to have equal respect for them.

During the study programme the students are offered numerous opportunities to get familiar with their future work. Similarly, they can practise their co-operation skills by taking part in working life projects.

The practical training of the study programme takes place in hospitals, in health centres, kindergartens, and the homes for the elderly, home help services and service units for the mentally disabled. The study programme of a practical nurse consists of the following study modules with the total of 120 credits:"

Post Basic Training

Before 1987 there was nurse specialist training. The length of the basic education for nurses was 2.5 years. The specialist training was then one year. From 1987 to 1992 these specialisations were integrated to basic education. From 1995 according to the legislation on AMK-institutions (1995) the specialisation education was increased from 20 credit points to 40 credit points. The professional postgraduate degrees are being considered and may start in the near future.

Regulation of the Profession

Take up and pursuit of nursing

The Act concerning health care professionals⁶ stipulates that applicants must have a valid qualification (AMK) and must be registered by the National Board

⁶ Act 559, 1994.

of Medico-legal Affairs which keeps the register of health care personnel.⁷

The register holds three categories of Nurse

- The general nurse
- The public health nurse, and
- The midwife

Take up and pursuit of practical nursing

The Practical Nurses are also regulated by Act 559/94 and Decree 564/94. They too must also apply to the Board for authorisation to practise.

Title

Nurses

The title of the general nurse qualification is *Sairaanhoitaja/Sjuksöterska*. The public health nurse title is *Terveystenhoitaja/ Hälsovårdare*. The midwife has also the general nurse qualification.⁸

The Act concerning Health Care Professionals⁹ in §2 defines health care professionals as registered professional persons or licensed professional persons under the Act¹⁰ or persons entitled to use an occupational title as defined by decree.¹¹ Thus the law protects the use of the titles. However the protection afforded by the law for registered or licensed practitioners arises from their authorisation to practice the profession that is granted by the Medico-legal Board.

Practical Nurses

The Practical Nurse has a protected occupational title.¹²

⁷ Senior Officials of Public Health, Profession of Nursing, Finland.

⁸ The ACT 554/62 is abolished by the ACT 559/94).

⁹ The Act concerning Health Care Professionals 559/94 of 28 June 1994.

¹⁰ *Op.cit.* §2(1).

¹¹ Decree concerning Health care professionals 564/94 of 28 June 1994.

¹² *Op.cit.* §1

Field of activity

Practice as a health care professional is reserved to those authorised by the Medico-Legal Board,¹³ which has the power to remove people from its Register. Those practising illegally can be subject to a fine.¹⁴ Passing oneself off as a health care professional is also an offence.¹⁵

However the field of activity of some health care professionals is not exclusive. The law is most concerned to protect people from poor practitioners. The law thus allows, in §2, for anyone “with adequate training, experience and professional skills” to practice the activities of the practical nurse. It also allows that

However, this provision notwithstanding, registered and licensed professional persons and those with a protected occupational title may engage in each other's activities, in accordance with their training, experience and professional skills when this is reasonable as regards organization of work and supply of health services, unless prescribed otherwise in this Act or the relevant decree.

Notwithstanding § 2.2 above, the tasks of a registered professional person may also be carried out by a person studying for the profession in question as prescribed in the relevant decree. The provisions concerning health care professionals given later in this Act shall apply, as appropriate to such students.¹⁶

Thus the activities of the nurse and public health nurse (and midwife) are protected, though they may “reasonably” engage in each other’s activities. The public health nurse (*Terveystenhoitaja/ Hälsovårdare*) has covered all the training of the general care nurse under the EC sectoral nursing directives but has not completed the training required of the Finnish nurse and thus cannot undertake the activities of the nurse under the title of “nurse”. This, in effect is a case of reverse discrimination, as similarly qualified nurses from other

¹³ §34 of Act 559/94. There are exceptions for those in training – see Decree 564/94 §3.

¹⁴ §34.

¹⁵ §35 *id.*

¹⁶ Extract from §2.

member States could gain the title via the sectoral directives. It is likely that this anomaly will be corrected.

EC LAW

As there are no specialised nurses recognised within the Finnish system there are no especial difficulties. The public health nurse is not covered by the general care nurse directives.

The practical nurses do not fall within the EC sectoral nurse directive. Their current training is at secondary school level and so they should be covered by directive 92/51/EEC in principle, subject to Article 2 thereof.¹⁷

¹⁷ They are not listed in annex C.

Appendix 1 Nurse training

COUNTRY -	Finland
NURSE QUALIFICATION/SPECIALITY	Practical Nurse / <i>Lähihoitaja</i> / <i>Närvårdare</i>
LEVEL	Basic
DURATION	3 Years
ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	General comprehensive school completed
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS & ENTRY EXPERIENCE	Good Health
AGE	MINIMUM - MAXIMUM – Generally comprehensive school is finished at age 16
MANDATORY COMPONENTS (HOURS) FOR QUALIFICATION	CLINICAL – See below
TITLE OF THE AWARD e.g. Certificate/Diploma etc.	
TITLE AWARDED BY	Vocational Institutions
STATUS OF THE TRAINEE	Student

The study programme of a practical nurse consists of 120 credits in the following study modules:

common studies	20 credits
basic vocational studies	50 credits
specialisation studies	40 credits from one of the following 40 credit alternatives:

- Emergency (paramedics)
- Nursing and Caring
- Care of Old People (or Elderly Care)
- Mental Health Care and Care of Intoxicated
- Education and Care of Children and adolescent
- Disabled Care
- Dental nursing and oral hygiene
- (Customer) Service and Knowledge of Data Processing Systems

Options 10 credits

"The vocational qualification of practical nurses (*lähihoitaja*) is a training system, which is planned according to the demands and the needs of working life. The core curriculum made by The National Board of Education is planned in co-operation with working life representatives and educators. According to that the study programmes are planned in vocational institutions in co-operation with working life representatives and with the students themselves.

Each polytechnic (AMK) can devise its own nursing courses

COUNTRY - Finland	
NURSE QUALIFICATION/SPECIALITY	Nurse / Sairaanhoitaja/Sjuksöterska
LEVEL	Basic
DURATION	3.5 Years
ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	Completed upper secondary school or equivalent
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS & ENTRY EXPERIENCE	Good health
AGE	MINIMUM - MAXIMUM – Generally full secondary schooling is completed at age 19
MANDATORY COMPONENTS (HOURS) FOR QUALIFICATION	140 credits total I. 40 credits basic studies II. 90 credits professional studies (including 50 credits practical training) III. 10 credits (thesis) Complies with Nurses' sectoral Directive
TITLE OF THE AWARD e.g. Certificate/Diploma etc.	Diploma
TITLE AWARDED BY	AMK
STATUS OF THE TRAINEE	Student

COUNTRY - Finland	
NURSE QUALIFICATION/SPECIALITY	Public health Nurse / Terveystenhoitaja/Hälsövärdare
LEVEL	Basic
DURATION	3.5 Years
ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS	Completed upper secondary school or equivalent
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS & ENTRY EXPERIENCE	<u>Lähihoitaja/Närvårdare</u>
AGE	MINIMUM - MAXIMUM – Generally full secondary schooling is completed at age 19
MANDATORY COMPONENTS (HOURS) FOR QUALIFICATION	140 credits total I. 40 credits basic studies II. 90 credits professional studies (including 50 credits practical training) 10 credits (thesis) Complies with Nurses' sectoral Directive
TITLE OF THE AWARD e.g. Certificate/Diploma etc.	Diploma
TITLE AWARDED BY	AMK
STATUS OF THE TRAINEE	Student