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Author

AGUAYO-GONZALEZ, Mariela (LEYVA-MORAL, Juan M.)

Title

The academic career : contradiction as a key player in nursing education / Mariela Aguayo-González and Juan M. Leyva-Moral

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Abstract

Background: Within Europe, substantial changes in academia in recent years have transformed the work of academic nurses. The most important change has been a result of the Bologna Process, launched in 1999, as it has led to the implementation of significant reforms to higher education across participating European countries. Purpose: The aim of this study was to develop a theoretical understanding of the effect of the Bologna Process on academic nurses' professional development and explore academic nurses' perceptions of the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the teaching and research arena. Method: A qualitative study was conducted. The participants were eight academic nurses and data were collected through 24 in-depth, semi-structured weekly interviews. The analysis was performed using the constant comparative method, leading to the construction of categories based on the constant comparison of similarities and differences between the participants. Findings: The coding process led to the identification and interpretation of the core category. This category, identified as "The academic career: Contradiction as a key player",

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emerged as a result of analysis of the interaction of four categories: (1) opportunity for change, (2) unnecessary difficulties, (3) growth of the discipline and (4) institutional requirements. Findings indicated that the academic nurses in the study viewed the Bologna Process positively but noted several obstacles to its implementation. According to the participants, the changes also led to conflict in terms of their work-life balance. Conclusions: This study is of relevance to nursing education and to clinical nursing practice. It suggests that the implementation of the Bologna Process in nursing studies has helped nurses to regard research as part of their autonomous professional role, and to be aware that research contributes to improve clinical practice, providing an evidence base on which to design and assess nursing interventions. However, the notion that academic nurses consider research within a contradiction paradigm is a potential barrier to the advancement of nursing science and evidence-based practice. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)