



POLICY BRIEF 7

TOWARD TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION: INCLUSION OF MIGRATION AND DECENT WORK IN THE NURSING CURRICULUM

Executive Summary

This policy brief highlights the proposed inclusion of an elective course on migration and decent work in the Philippines nursing curriculum. Seven modules provide the overall content of the course and serve as instructional materials. The same approach is envisioned for other health professions whose graduates continue to be internationally recruited. As prospective migrant health professionals, students gain additional competencies in understanding and handling safe and ethical labor migration and in protecting and exercising their labour rights in workplaces. Students are better prepared to avoid the pitfalls of international migration given their orientation to decent work principles and ethical recruitment during their academic program. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is as crucial government agency in the institution of the course. Migrants, educational institutions, professional organizations and other stakeholders are called upon to pursue advocacy for this curriculum change.

Introduction

Migrant Filipino health professionals, primarily nurses, have migrated for work in destination countries in the Middle East, the United States of America and Europe (POEA 2013). Opportunities for foreign employment continue to be offered by countries with increasing demand for health services.

However, Filipino health professionals are generally misinformed about safe and ethical labour migration, since this is not taken up in their respective curricula. Those with migration experiences learned the risks and pitfalls of international recruitment and employment as they went through the processes themselves. The graduates of health professional programmes, though skilled, lack educational preparation for safe and ethical migration and may face risks and vulnerabilities in global migration as potential migrants.

The literature provides indications of gaps in knowledge, attitudes and skills among migrant

health professionals in dealing with labour migration. Pitman et.al. (2012) reports recruitment irregularities similarly echoed in other sources, such as payment of recruiters' fees, modification of contracts without consent, withholding of immigration documents and changes in work designation and workplace.

To address this gap, the International Labour Organization with its European Union-funded *Decent Work Across Borders* project commissioned the development of instructional materials for an elective course on migration and decent work. This is proposed for inclusion in the Philippines nursing curriculum and in that of the other health professions' curricula.

In this policy brief, advocacy is directed at the adoption by government authorities and academic institutions of the migration and decent work course. This is timely as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) currently undertakes revisions in curriculum approaches.

Approach and Results

A team of health professionals and ILO project staff developed seven modules on migration and decent work based on ILO's safe and ethical migration framework. They were guided by CHED's outcome-based curriculum approach and revisions in the nursing curriculum. Relevant stakeholders participated in the series of consultative meetings.

Framework

In designing the modules, the ILO's Decent Work framework is contextualized to the specific situation in the Philippines including the governance structure for the health system, the health professions, labour and migration. The four pillars of the ILO's Decent Work framework are emphasized: productive employment, labour standards and rights at the workplace, social protection and social dialogue.

In the globalized context, the modules take that migration is a choice, not a necessity. Health professionals need to have skills concerning ethical recruitment, circular migration and protection of their rights to health, mobility and decent work.

Module Content

The 48-hour course is organized around seven modules. Each module is built around specific objectives, content outline, teaching-learning process and materials, material and resources for discussion and the student assessment form. (Box 1).

Box 1. Migration and Decent work - Modules content

Module 1 - *Decent Work and Filipino Health Professionals. A situationer*

Module 2 - *International Agreements, Professional Regulatory Roles, Codes of Ethics*

Module 3 - *Health Care Delivery Systems*

Module 4 - *Migration of Health Professionals*

Module 5 - *Appreciation of Decent Work Components and Related Components*

Module 6 - *Ethical Recruitment: A Framework for International Labor*

Module 7 - *Collaboration and Working with Multi-Cultural Teams*

Module 1 is a situationer and presents the elements of ILO's framework and definition of terms. It describes the national contexts and labour migration management. A section is devoted to specifically relevant international labour standards, including the WHO Global Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of health Personnel, the UN Human Rights Standards and various ILO conventions. The discussion on social dialogue emphasizes the role of various actors in promoting decent work – government, employers, trade unions, recruitment agencies and that of other social partners such as the professional organizations and non-government organizations.

Module 2 elaborates on the Philippine Labour laws affecting health professionals, the relevant professional codes of ethics and international agreements on labour.

Module 3 focuses on the health-care delivery systems, particularly in the Philippines, the challenges and opportunities of the devolved set up. Health system goals are linked to universal health care and mobility of health professionals.

Module 4 presents a brief history of migration of Filipino health professions, showing historical patterns and local migration trends. Discussion on the drivers of migration highlights the “push and pull” factors.

Module 5 fosters appreciation for decent work components, the four pillars and indicators of decent work: productive employment, labour standards, social protection and social dialogue. The module applies this framework to context of the Philippines' health sector.

Module 6 details the aspects of ethical recruitment in the context of health professionals' migration. This tackles the prohibition of discrimination, immigration practices and irregular employment.

Module 7 clarifies the concept of cultural competence and emphasizes knowledge and skills for multicultural collaboration in different health care work settings.

Conclusions

Developing the course is a way to facilitate the inclusion of a migration and decent work course in the health professions' curriculum. Policy makers are provided with the overall course content. Each module contains the learning materials and methods necessary for the faculty members to conduct the class.

Through its content, the course aims to formally prepare the students for the prospects of employment locally and globally. Knowledge is acquired about the health professionals' rights and responsibilities, decent work conditions, laws and principles relevant to local and foreign employment. The course is geared at appreciating the costs and benefits of migration and ethical practices. Additional skills are gained on how to deal with recruitment processes and multi-cultural interactions at the workplace in destination countries.

Implications and Recommendations

Policy entry points

The policy entry points are with the CHED Technical Panel, the Technical Committees on the respective health professions and the Task Force for Management of Transition to Outcomes Based and Typology based Quality Assurance. Advocates of the migration and decent work course inclusion need to sustain their efforts in engaging CHED to formulate, adopt and implement this curriculum.

Envisioned initially for the nursing curriculum, the same approach is relevant for the curricula of medicine, pharmacy, physical therapy and occupational therapy. Graduates in these professions have been and continue to be internationally recruited.

The initiative finds strategic opportunity in the recent change in basic education to K-12. As some first and second year college courses will feed into the new Grades 11 and 12, there will be space for new college courses.

Stakeholders

While the CHED is a strategic stakeholder, public and private educational institutions offering health professional degree programs are equally important stakeholders. Their compliance and support in offering the course is important.

Health professionals' associations and migrants are important voices in emphasizing the need for academic orientation of students to migration and decent work through the proposed course.

Taking Action

This policy brief calls upon CHED authorities to adopt and develop appropriate policies to sustain the implementation of the course on migration and decent work to ensure that nursing students and those of the other professions can gain awareness and academic knowledge concerning international labour migration, ethical recruitment, circular migration, migrants' rights and decent work.

References

Pittman, P. et.al. 2012. Immigration and Contract Problems Experienced by Foreign Education Nurses.
<http://mcr.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/01/18/1077558711432890>

About the Decent Work Across Borders project

In 2011, the European Union awarded the International Labour Organization (ILO) funds to implement a three-year project on the issue of circular migration. The ILO Decent Work Across Borders project: A Pilot project for Migrant Health Professionals and Skilled Workers sought to better understand schemes in line with circular migration of health professionals. Through this project, the ILO sought to facilitate an approach to migration that benefits the migrant workers, the source and destination countries within a rights-based framework for labour migration governance. The project focused its activities on three Asian countries concerned with the outflows of health professionals and skilled workers for foreign employment, namely the Philippines, India and to a lesser degree, Viet Nam.

http://www.ilo.org/manila/info/public/pr/WCMS_173607/lang--en/index.htm

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