

International Students Working as Careworkers in New Zealand

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Abstract

Background: The increase in the number of those aged 65 and above has led to a dramatic rise in demand for aged care services. In the same vein, the factors that account for increased life expectancies have also caused a reduction in fertility rates resulting in reduced numbers of young people who, ideally, should look after the aging members of the population. Whilst the demand for aged care is rising, the labour supply, especially with regard to indigenous workers, has not responded proportionately. In response to the growing care gap, the Western countries, New Zealand included, have increasingly resorted to the employment of migrants as carers.

Aim: The purpose of this this qualitative research paper is to explore the implications of employing international students as careworkers especially in the context of quality care delivery.

Methods: In-depth personal interviews lasting around an hour were conducted with sixteen managers of Aged care facilities that employed international students were interviewed.

Results: The findings reflect that the majority of the managers' acknowledge that international students are increasingly becoming an important player in the delivery of care. The participation of these students has improved quality care delivery. Managers talked about reliability, willingness to work hard, an 'admirable' and 'good' attitude towards their work, good work ethics and they are highly motivated and self-directed people requiring minimal supervision. Managers experienced some challenges with recruitment, use of external recruitment agencies, visa issues, and language and communication barriers. Managers mentioned that the benefits outweighed the challenges.

Relevance: This trend does not show any sign of abating and therefore calls upon all stakeholders to share ideas on how to manage this new group of care workers in order to avoid compromising quality of elderly-care delivery.
