



TAMPEREEN
AMMATTIKORKEAKOULU

DEVELOPMENT OF NURSING STUDENTS DURING INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

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Bachelor's thesis
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Degree Programme in Nursing
Option of Medical-Surgical Nursing



ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
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Development of nursing students during international exchange

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The purpose of the study was to gather information about the experiences which nursing exchange students have had when they have been abroad. This aim of this literature review was to evaluate and presents the most current and relevant information of the topic as possible.

The findings were divided into two themes – how nursing exchange students had evolved on a personal and on a professional level. Most of the findings were about how the nursing exchange students had evolved on a personal level, since all of the studies highlighted mainly that area. The findings showed that the nursing exchange students felt that studying abroad helped them improve mostly their social skills.

In conclusion it was found that there is more information about the growth of the nursing exchange students on a personal level than on professional level. On that account it is suggested that further studies would focus on how the nursing students evolved as nurses.

Key words: nursing, student, international exchange, experiences

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
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Sairaanhoitajaopiskelijoiden kehittyminen kansainvälisen vaihdon aikana

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Opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli kerätä tietoa vaihdossa olleiden sairaanhoitajaopiskelijoiden kokemuksista. Työn tehtävinä oli selvittää, miten sairaanhoitajavaihto-opiskelijat olivat kehittyneet vaihdon aikana henkilökohtaisella tasolla ja miten ammatillisesti. Kirjallisuuskatsauksena tehdyn työn tavoitteena oli kerätä mahdollisimman nykyistä ja olennaista tietoa tästä aiheesta.

Tulokset jaettiin kahteen teemaan, joita olivat sairaanhoitaja vaihto-opiskelijoiden kehittyminen henkilökohtaisella tasolla ja ammatillisella tasolla. Tulosten mukaan eniten sairaanhoitaja vaihto-opiskelijat olivat kehittyneet henkilökohtaisella tasolla, mikä korostui kaikissa käytetyissä tutkimuksissa. Tulosten perusteella sairaanhoitaja vaihto-opiskelijat kokivat että kansainvälinen vaihto auttoi heillä kehittämään enemmän sosiaalisia taitoja.

Kuvailleva kirjallisuuskatsaus osoitti, että enemmän on tietoa siitä, miten sairaanhoitaja vaihto-opiskelijat ovat kehittyneet henkilökohtaisella tasolla kuin ammatillisella tasolla. Se, miten sairaanhoitaja vaihto-opiskelijat kehittyivät ammatillisella tasolla, vaati vielä lisätutkimusta.

Asiasanat: sairaanhoitaja, opiskelija, kansainvälinen vaihto, kokemukset

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1 INTRODUCTION

International educational exchange challenges the students to think beyond their comfort zone and takes them out from the environment which they are used to. The students who take part in an international exchange programme develop personal maturity, and they become more aware of the cultural differences, which helps them to get a better understanding on intercultural competence. In addition to the personal growth and better perception on cultural differences, the students also develop their professional identification. (Wright 2010, 280–282.)

Nursing exchange students will do clinical trainings during their exchange programme. The opportunities vary, depending on the surrounding nursing culture - some of the host countries provide a clinical setting in which it is possible for the nursing exchange students to practice their skills as much as possible, while some other places only provide a chance to practice basic care. (Kokko 2011, 673;678–679.)

International education has become popular in the last decade. The nursing students who have been studying abroad bring a useful mix of experiences to their nursing education from the countries which are different from their home country's culture, economic and political situation. (Kulbok, Mitchell, Glick & Greiner 2012, 2.)

This Bachelor's thesis' working life connection was the international exchange students' tutoring teacher from Tampere University of Applied Sciences.

2 PURPOSE, TASKS AND OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this Bachelor's thesis is to find out how nursing students evolve personally and professionally while going on a study abroad. Going for a study abroad is a big step and usually the students who return back home feel that they have improved on a personal as well as professional level.

The task of this Bachelor's thesis is to answer these research questions:

1. How have the nursing students evolved on a personal level during their international exchange period?
2. How has the exchange abroad affected the nursing students evolving as nursing professionals?

The objective of this thesis is to present information gathered on the importance of exchange abroad for nursing students and how they have developed during that time.

3 THEORETICAL STARTING POINTS

The theoretical starting points of this Bachelor's thesis are presented in Figure 1. In the following chapter these key concepts were defined to describe the theoretical background of nursing exchange student and learning experiences during exchange.

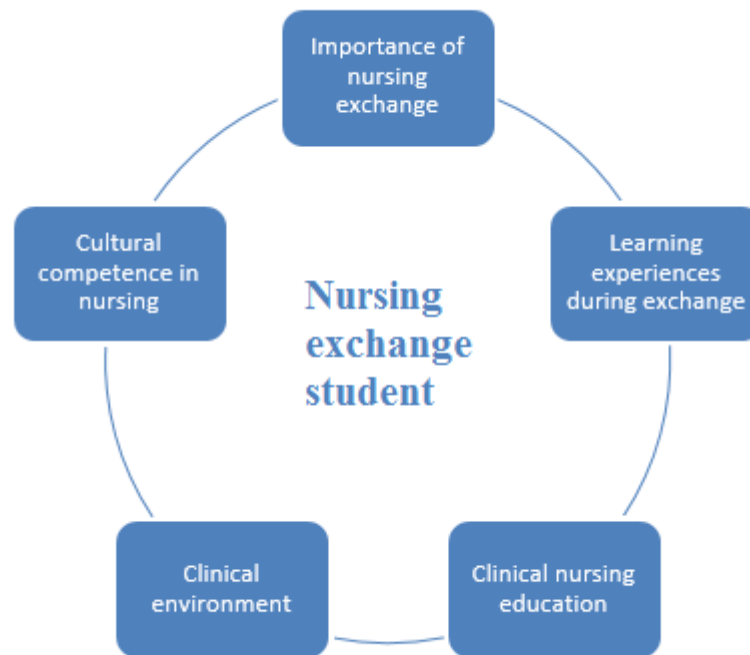


Figure 1. Theoretical starting points

3.1 Importance of nursing exchange

Nursing exchange is important because it is a good way to share and gain knowledge of different nursing cultures. It supports nursing students' professional, personal, cultural and cognitive development. (Koskinen & Tossavainen 2004, 112.) Cultural awareness and cultural competence are becoming even more important skills for nurses, due to the free movement within the European Union and with the remote parts of the globe starting to become more accessible (Bohman & Borglin 2013, 259). Nursing students who have studied abroad bring cultural, economic and political diversity to their nursing education (Kulbok et al 2012). According to Bohman's and Borglin's (2014, 259–260) study, the experience of studying abroad increases the students' cultural competence and understanding of different underlying attitudes, behaviour and beliefs, which helps the students' to fit into multicultural environment.

Erasmus Programme is a European Union student exchange programme which started in the late 1980's. The purpose of the Erasmus Programme was to provide a study abroad opportunity for students within the European Union. (Erasmus Programme 2010.) In 2014 the Erasmus+ programme was started which brought the previously used Lifelong Learning Programme and International Higher Education programmes into a one cohort framework. Erasmus+ programme contains of three main types of Key actions – learning mobility of individuals, cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices and support for policy reform. The aim of the first Key action, learning mobility of individuals, is to make study abroad well prepared and give as many the possibility of exchange abroad as possible. According to the Erasmus+ programme's first year's results the mobilities are of higher quality and impact than in previous programmes. (European Union 2014.)

3.1.1 Nursing exchange student

According to Ruddock & Turner (2007), the education nursing students get, does not prepare them enough to meet the needs of clients or patients from diverse cultural backgrounds, and due to that they might often not be able to provide the best possible care. With the immigration and traveling becoming even more common, it is important that a nursing professional knows how to recognize and respond to different populations' needs with respect towards their cultural background (Ruddock & Turner 2007, 361–362.) According to Kokko (2011, 679-680) participating in an exchange programme prepares the students for culturally competent practice but additional education is still needed.

3.1.2 Learning experiences during exchange

Studying abroad gives the students a possibility to broaden their perspective of different cultures, raise awareness of a global society and foreign traditions. It also encourages for international work and research, supports personal development, gives opportunity to improve language skills, and more importantly helps to connect the theory with practice. (Read 2011, 221.) According to Martins de Oliveira & Tuohy (2015, 1080–1081), the experience of participating in study abroad, will increase the comprehension and

knowledge of the habits, beliefs and practices regarding health and illness of other cultures.

Through the experience of studying abroad the students will become more culturally aware, which makes them more capable to provide culturally competent care. The students who have this kind of an experience will develop in many different ways, both personally and professionally. (Martins de Oliveira & Tuohy 2015, 1080–1081.)

3.2 Cultural competence in nursing

Cultural competence is a necessary ability for nursing professionals to provide safe and effective care to patients or clients with different cultural backgrounds. The key aspect of cultural competence process is that there is no definitive end point to achieve. The process could be described as a journey which shows a nurse's progress from being unconsciously incompetent to being unconsciously competent. The process starts from the nurse being unaware of lacking the need cultural knowledge to the level where the nurse becomes aware of the deficit. The nurse then learns about the cultural difference and through that is able to provide suitable care. From then on the nurse achieves the level of being able to automatically provide culturally competent care. (Dudas 2012, 317–318.)

Lack of culturally competent care and the health care provider feeling inadequate and uncomfortable in providing culturally appropriate and sensitive care, can result in poor patient outcomes. Food preferences, language barriers, and cultural beliefs which impact health care practices and physical variations among ethnic groups which may alter pharmacological effects - all these factors can have an impact the quality of care provided. According to research the students who graduate from baccalaureate programs do not feel prepared to work in a multicultural society. (Long 2012, 102–104.)

Cultural competence's importance in nursing and health care is growing rapidly and that is why it is important to begin to teach it already at the student nurse level. Despite it being challenging, cultural competence can be taught and learned. There are many different training methods to teach cultural competence - lectures, group discussions, student written reports, clinical experiences, simulations, guest lectures, studying abroad, lived

immersion, mentoring and consultations. All of these training methods have advantages and disadvantages and the outcomes vary. (Long 2012, 102–104).

Cultural competence is an ongoing process which, according to Campinha-Bacote's model, consists of five constructs – cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural skills, cultural encounters and cultural desire (Ingram 2012, 696–670). These five constructs are explained in the following figure, which is based on Ingram's (2012, 696–670) discussion paper.

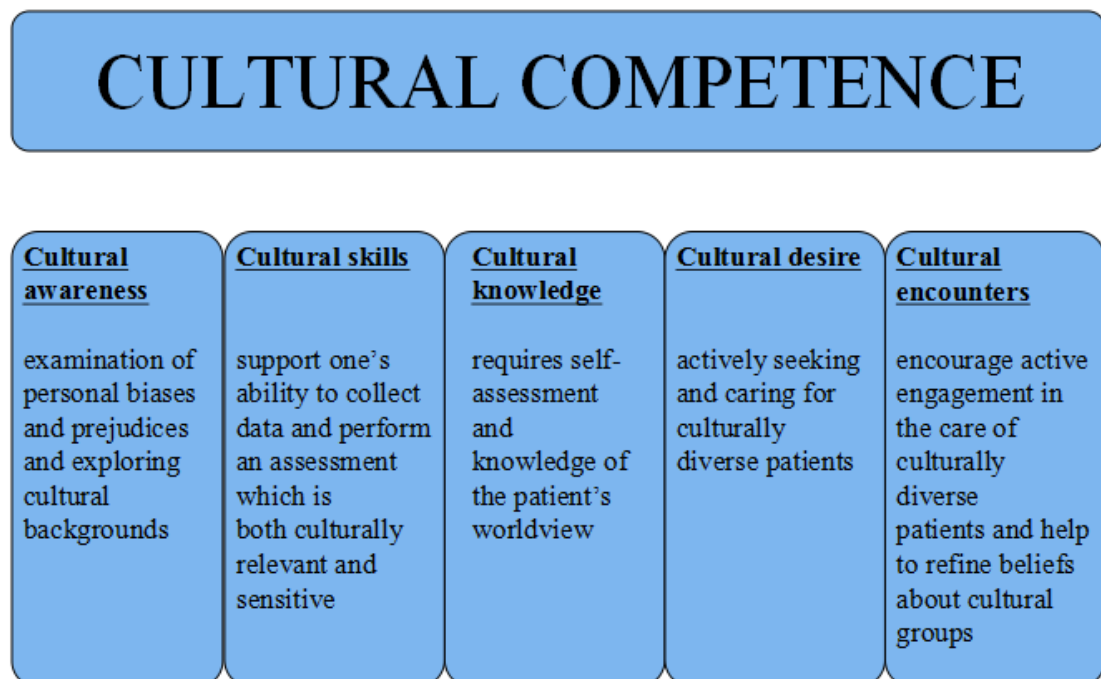


Figure 2. Created by the thesis author based on Ingrams (2012) discussion paper.

3.3 Clinical nursing education

Clinical nursing education is a vital part of every nursing student's education and its aim is to develop professional competencies which are based on theoretical knowledge and also to help evolve one's personal characteristics - for example the capacity for reflection (Dobrowolska et al 2015, 37). It has been acknowledged by the students that the clinical part of the education is essential to the acquisition of nursing competence. In the nursing

education programmes, clinical placements are provided to the students to provide opportunities for using the knowledge learned in the classroom in a clinical practice setting. (Blomberg et al 2014, 2265).

Clinical placements provide a chance for the students to try out different clinical settings, to reflect on career choices and to experience the negative and positive sides of nursing (McKenna, McCall & Wray 2009, 176,179). According to the study conducted by McKenna et al (2009) clinical nursing practice and variety of placements have a significant impact on the students' future career planning. Clinical placements also help the students to develop and improve their skills and to reflect on their experiences (McKenna, ed al 2009, 181). The experience of working in clinical placements can also influence students' confidence, their sense of belonging, their motivation for professional self-development, organizational skills, and preparedness to qualify to enter the profession (Dobrowolska et al 2015, 37).

3.3.1 Clinical environment

Clinical education and experience is very important in the nursing education programmes. For a nursing student a good clinical setting is one which has co-operation among staff and good atmosphere, where the student feels appreciated and is given opportunities to learn and reach their goals. The environment and possibilities between different clinical training placements vary and due to that also the outcome of the learning experience is different for nursing students. The nature of a clinical training placement needs to be supportive of learning and also present a diversity of experiences of working in a clinical setting. (Bisholt ed al 2013, 304–305.)

There are many factors which can impact on nursing students' experiences in the real world of practice. For example - anxiety in practice, student socialization and fitting in to the practical placement and staff support. According to research nursing students' first experiences in reality of clinical practice may cause them stress and anxiety. The stress can be caused by many factors such as reality shock, fear of making mistakes or harming the patient, feeling incompetent. It is very important for the student to feel welcomed and accepted to the clinical practice environment in order to have a positive outcome and in order for them to success (Houghton, Casey, Shaw & Murphy 2013, 1961–1962.)

Clinical environment is where the students develop their attitudes, competence, interpersonal communication skills, critical thinking and clinical problem-solving abilities. Nursing students perceive the practice setting as the most influential context when it comes to acquiring nursing skills and knowledge. It also provides the students with optimal opportunities to observe role models, to practice by own self and to reflect upon what is seen, heard, sensed and done. (Preethy, Erna & Mariamma 2014, 208.)

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Literature review

According to Polit and Beck (2012) the aim of a literature review is to gather current data from a certain topic and then after critical analysis of it to present it. It is important to use as objective data as available and primary sources, to get as much information as possible. It is also emphasized that the outcome of the literature review should be written in an understandable manner, thoroughly and the data presented needs to be up-to-date. (Polit & Beck 2012, 170–172.)

According to Polit and Beck's (2010) there are nine steps while writing a literature review. The steps go accordingly – firstly the research questions are formulated, after which the strategy for searching the data is created, by selecting the search words and databases. Then the process continues by searching, identifying and retrieving the primary sources. Then the found sources are limited by using the inclusion and exclusion criteria. After that, the selected source materials are read and evaluated, after which the main data from the studies is gathered. As the last step the gathered data is critically analysed and presented. (Polit & Beck 2012, 172.)

4.2 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria was used for finding suitable articles: publishing years from 2005 to 2016, only sources which have full text available and only peer reviewed academic articles. The languages for the sources were set to English and Finnish. The information search was done by using CINAHL. In addition to CINAHL, also Ovid and PubMed were firstly used for searching for the needed data, but there were no suitable articles found from these databases.

In addition to the previously mentioned points also the research questions gave limitations to the articles which were chosen for this Bachelor's thesis. The questions created inclusion and exclusion criteria which guided the selection of the articles. Both of the research questions needed the point of view of nursing students who had been on an international

exchange period. This excluded all the articles which described the experiences of mentoring nursing exchange students. The research questions concentrated on overall personal and professional growth of the nursing exchange students which excluded the articles which concentrated only on a certain area of nursing. Also all of descriptive articles of different nursing exchange programmes were excluded because they did not present any experiences of nursing exchange students. The articles which were included were selected because they presented the results of qualitative studies which were conducted to gather the experiences of nursing exchange students.

The author of this Bachelor's thesis decided to only use primary sources while writing the literature review. According to Polit and Beck (2010, 171) while writing a literature review the only sources which should be relied on are primary sources. Primary sources are the original reports prepared by the researchers who conducted the study. Secondary sources, on the other hand, are descriptions of studies prepared by someone other than the original researchers (Polit & Beck 2010, 171). Due to that all the literature reviews were excluded from the findings.

4.3 Literature search

The literature search was done by using CINAHL (Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature), a bibliographic database. Polit and Beck (2010, 176) highlight the importance of CINAHL for nursing related searches since it has a wide database of English-language nursing and allied health journals available. Advanced search was conducted and the previously mentioned inclusion and exclusion criteria was used.

The terms which were used in the search were – nursing AND student AND exchange AND experience. Total of 65 articles were found in CINAHL with these terms and inclusion and exclusion criteria. Out of the 65 articles which were found there was four (Table 1) which were left after going through all the found articles. The articles were read through to see if they contain the needed data to give answer to the research questions which were set for this thesis.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Country
Afriyie Asenso, B., Reimer- Kirkham, S. & Astle, B.	2013	In Real Time: Exploring Nursing Students' Learning during an International Experience.	Canada
Bohman, D.M. & Borglin, G.	2013	Student exchange for nursing students: Does it raise cultural awareness'? A descriptive, qualitative study	Sweden
Myhre, K.	2011	Exchange students crossing language boundaries in clinical nursing practice.	Norway
Ruddock H.C. & Turner D.S.	2007	Developing cultural sensitivity: nursing students' experiences of a study abroad programme.	Denmark

TABLE 1. Studies selected for the literature review

4.4 Data analysis

Data analysis can begin after the data has been collected and read thoroughly. The steps of data analysis are finding the main themes and then the differences and similarities between the data. (Polit & Beck 2012, 119.)

All of the four articles, from which the data was gathered for this thesis, qualitative research study was conducted to gather the experiences from the nursing students who had taken part in an international exchange. A qualitative research seeks to describe how people view things and why, so it focuses on the experiences, interpretations or impressions of a person or group of people (Kankkunen & Vehviläinen-Julkunen 2013, 65).

In this Bachelor's thesis the author firstly marked from each article the information which gave input for either of the research questions. After that the gathered data was divided

based on the similarity, which divided the data into two main themes – how did the international exchange evolve the nursing students on a personal level and how did they grow as nursing professionals. Under both of the main themes, the collected data was divided again in separate themes according to similarity of the information. Data of each of the themes was then presented in separate paragraphs in the Findings section of this Bachelor's thesis, under the two main themes.

5 FINDINGS

All of the studies which were selected highlighted the importance of how an international exchange period had improved and developed communication skills of the nursing students. In addition to that the nursing students who had been abroad, felt that they grew more on a personal level rather than on professional level.

5.1 Evolving on a personal level

On personal level the most important outcome of exchange is in the change of self-confidence (Myhre 2011, 430; Bohman & Borglin 2013, 262). According to Myhre (2011) self-confidence is linked to learning. While the exchange students had just started in a new and different language environment, they did not feel confident or part of the team, which made them feel that they are missing out on learning possibilities. With learning the basics of the language and through that being more part of the team, they felt more confident and they were able to learn better. They also found that through this kind of a development they grew as professionals and would have not been able to gain this if they had not gone abroad. (Myhre 2011, 431.)

The nursing exchange students felt that through the exchange experience they became more aware of their own values while seeing and being able to learn from the differences of the host country people's values. In addition to that they also felt that they learned to appreciate their own culture through seeing and learning the host country's cultural values. (Ruddock & Turner 2007, 365–366.)

The students who had been abroad also felt that they are more capable to overcome communication challenges and have developed skills to assess a patient with whom they do not speak a common language. Through not speaking the same language they felt that they had improved their skills of how to read patient's body language and how to react to it. (Myhre 2011, 431–433; Bohman & Borglin 2013, 262.) According to Ruddock and Turner (2007) the nursing students felt that due to being abroad and experiencing how it feels to be a foreigner they are able to understand other foreigners better than people who have not experienced it themselves.

According to Myhre (2011) the nursing students at first were shocked by the hours they were given to reflect on their experiences but when they started their clinical practicals they saw the use in reflection. They got a chance to reflect on their own, with their mentors and in groups. Reflecting on their experiences made them grow on a personal and professional level. Nursing students felt that they got to know themselves in a different way and could see better what are their strengths and weaknesses. Reflecting also helped to connect the theory they had learned and then the experiences which they had in the clinical placements. (Myhre 2011, 432; Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, Astle 2013, 233–234)

5.2 Evolving as nursing professionals

According to Bohman and Borglin (2013, 259), nursing students lack the knowledge which is needed to fully be able to take care of multicultural societies. In order to provide care in a safely manner regardless of the patient's cultural background it is important for nursing students to gain experience of different cultures (Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham & Astle 2013, 227). The study conducted by Bohlin and Borglin (2013, 261-262) highlights the importance of 'the real experience' in order to be more culturally aware.

International exchange period also taught the nursing students to be more flexible with their time while working and not following a strict schedule. In comparison with their own country and host country they learned how to pay more attention to the patient's current needs rather than checking the clock and rushing for example with the meals or medication just to stay in given schedule. (Myhre 2011, 431–432.)

According to Myhre (2011, 431) the nursing exchange students felt that they grew as nursing professionals much more abroad than what they would have if they had stayed at their home country. The difference between the home and host country's rules and opportunities in clinical placements, and getting more responsibility while in a clinical placement in host country, made the nursing students more aware of their skills and gave them more self-belief. The nursing students also felt more useful and valued, not just as a 'set of hands' while they were at their clinical placements abroad. (Myhre 2011, 431; Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham & Astle 2013, 233–234.)

The nursing exchange students highlighted coming in contact with patients who are suffering from diseases, which they have only read or heard about before going to the exchange. They felt that it was really important to see the reality of how people actually cope living with for example HIV/AIDS or tuberculosis. (Bohman & Borglin 2014, 262; Afriye Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham & Astle 2013, 230–231.)

6 DISCUSSION

According to (Martins de Oliveira & Tuohy 2015, 1080–1081), the students who experience an international exchange evolve on a personal and professional level in a different way than the students who have not gone abroad. The study conducted by Myhre (2011) also supports this statement. The nursing exchange students who participated in the study, highlighted that they would not have had the same opportunities at their home country and they would have not been able to grow as professionals in the way they had at host country. (Myhre 2011, 431; Martin de Oliveira & Tuohy 2015, 1080–1081.)

According to Long (2012) the nursing students do not feel that they are prepared to work in a multicultural society. Despite of cultural competence being taught already at the student level, nursing students feel that they are not prepared to work in a multicultural society. Although there are many ways to learn cultural competence, the importance of ‘the real experience’ is highlighted. (Bohman & Borglin, 2013, 261–262; Long 2012, 102–104.)

According to McKenna et al (2009, 181) the opportunity of having many different clinical placements during their studies, helps nursing students to improve their skills and reflect on their experiences. In the study conducted by Dubrowolska et al (2015, 37) it is highlighted that clinical placements make it possible for nursing students to develop their reflection skills. Nursing exchange students were given separately extra hours in the clinical placements for reflecting. Since it was new for them they felt shocked at first but afterwards the students felt good about having the opportunity to reflect on the experiences they had, because it made them get to know themselves on a different level. They also felt that they learned about their strengths and weaknesses through it. Reflecting on the experiences in the clinical placements also makes it easier to understand the theory which is learned in the classroom and how to use it in the clinical placement environment. (Blomberg et al 2014, 2265; Myhre 201, 431; Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, Astle 2013, 233–234.)

Study conducted by Bisholt et al (2013) emphasizes that for nursing students it is important to have a good clinical setting to support their learning. For the nursing students

to be able to evolve as professionals and develop their attitudes, skills and clinical problem-solving abilities, they need to feel welcomed and accepted to the practical placement. It can be a challenge to fit in to clinical placement environment and its team of nurses already at the home country, so the factor of being abroad and in a totally different culture, creates new challenges for the nursing exchange students. (Bishop et al 2013, 304-304; Houghton et al 2013, 1961–1962; Preethy et al 2014, 208.)

According to Myhre (2013), the nursing exchange students felt as outsiders in the beginning of their clinical placements at the host country, due to the fact that they did not know the language and the differences in the nursing culture. It also made them feel that they might not be able to learn as much as they want and need. After getting used to the new language and environment, the nursing exchange students started to feel as part of the team and were also more confident to learn and experience new things. This highlights the importance of assuring nursing students a good and safe clinical placement environment, so they would be able to only concentrate on practicing their skills and developing as nursing professionals. The challenging setting of being in a clinical environment in the host country made the nursing exchange students feel that they have developed more as professionals than what they would have at their home country. (Bishop et al 2013, 304-304; Houghton et al 2013, 1961–1962; Preethy et al 2014, 208; Myhre 2013, 431.)

6.1 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in research means the degree of confidence the researches have in their data. It can be evaluated by using the criteria of consistency, transferability, dependability and credibility. (Polit & Beck 2010, 106; Kankkunen & Vehviläinen-Julkunen 2013, 197–198)

Credibility is achieved when the reader of the study understands how the analysis of the data is done and sees the strengths and limitations of the study (Polit & Beck 2010, 106; Kankkunen & Vehviläinen-Julkunen 2013, 198). This literature review was written in a manner, which makes it easy for the reader to see the steps which have been taken in order to gather and present the findings of this study. The credibility was also enhanced by gathering the data from as current as possible and peer-reviewed articles which were found from a trusted database.

When a conducting the study alone, there is a risk that the author can become blind to their own work (Kankkunen & Vehviläinen-Julkunen 2013, 197). In the process of writing this Bachelor's thesis, it was taken into consideration and the author did share their work with opponents, tutoring teacher and other students who were going through the thesis writing phase at the same time. This was done to get feedback of the written work in order to improve it. The Bachelor's thesis was also presented at seminars at different phases of the work, in which the author got feedback about their work as well.

6.2 Ethical considerations

According to Polit and Beck (2010, 553) ethics is “a system of moral values that is concerned with the degree to which research procedures adhere to professional, legal, and social obligations to the study participants”. In case of the research involving human beings or animals researches must address ethical issues, to assure the credibility of the study. It is highlighted that the conducted studies need to be beneficial, respect human dignity and that the participants have the right to be treated fair and their privacy needs to be respected. It is important to respect the participants' privacy, rights and anonymity. One way to achieve that is to give the participants written consent forms in which is included the study purpose, specific expectations regarding participation, the voluntary nature of participations and the potential benefits. The participants are asked to sign the consent forms. (Polit & Beck 2010, 118–132; Kankkunen & Vehviläinen-Julkunen 2013, 217–221)

The main ethical consideration for this Bachelor's thesis was to assure that the studies selected were conducted ethically in a correct way. All of the selected studies followed their institutes guidelines when it came to applying for permissions for the conducting the study. The participants signed a written consent in three of the studies, only for one study the researchers asked for only an oral consent from the participants. The thesis author felt that ethical considerations were followed in the selected studies, based on the information which was presented.

6.3 Further study recommendations

It would be useful and interesting if the future studies on this topic would concentrate more on the growth of nursing exchange students on a professional level. At the same time, it would give an insight on how useful international exchanges are for the clinical skills and developing as nursing professionals.

7 CONCLUSION

The aim of this Bachelor's thesis was to find out how do nursing exchange students develop during their exchange period. Judging by the findings, all of the selected studies had mostly concentrated on the growth of the nursing exchange student on a personal rather than on a professional level. It also might be that the nursing exchange students who participated in these studies, which were presented in the articles which were selected, prioritised their growth on a personal level over the growth on professional level.

The nursing exchange student felt that they had come back from the exchange much more mature and more open minded towards people who are different from them. They also felt that they would not have been able to have these kind of experiences if they would have stayed at their home country. This also helps them to be better nurses since they can take others as individuals and accept their differences.

In the globalizing world, nursing student exchange has become more important than ever due to the need of having skilful nurses, who know how to take care of patients' with different cultural backgrounds. The experiences which nursing students get while studying abroad will help and prepare them to be able to provide safe and respectful care for such patients.

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