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Support Services for International Degree
Students

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences
Degree

Bachelor of Health Care

Degree Programme in Nursing

Thesis

02.11.2012

Author(s) Title	Sarianne Nieminen Support Services for International Degree Students
Number of Pages Date	26 pages + 2 appendices 2 November 2012
Degree	Bachelor of Health Care
Degree Programme	Degree Programme in Nursing
Specialisation option	Nursing
Instructor(s)	Liisa Montin, Senior Lecturer Marianne Pitkälä, Senior Lecturer
<p>The purpose of this final project was to explore through literature the support systems offered for students in different universities, concentrating on international nursing students and to make a proposal of the best practice for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences on how to support their international nursing students.</p> <p>Research articles (n=7) were identified for this literature review through 3 different databases: CINAHL, ERIC and MEDLINE (OVID). Two research articles were found manually. In total 9 articles were analyzed in this literature review.</p> <p>The findings described 5 support programs applied in different universities including tutoring sessions to support language development, a women's support group, a university course, an orientation program and an academic study group. Also general recommendations on how to provide language, academic and social support were identified.</p> <p>Proposal for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences was made according to the findings and it included for example extended orientation program, orientations for faculties, open group meetings, the use of vocabulary journals and a Finnish language development tutoring sessions towards the end of the studies.</p>	
Keywords	international degree student, support service

Tekijä(t) Otsikko	Sarianne Nieminen Kansainvälisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden tukiohjelmat
Sivumäärä Aika	26 sivua + 2 liitettä 2 Marraskuu 2012
Tutkinto	Sairaanhoitaja AMK
Koulutusohjelma	Degree Programme in Nursing
Suuntautumisvaihtoehto	Sairaanhoitaja
Ohjaaja(t)	Liisa Montin, Lehtori Marianne Pitkälä, Lehtori
<p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoitus oli kirjallisuuden kautta tutkia opiskelijoille tarjottuja tukimenetelmiä eri korkeakouluissa, keskittyen kansainvälisiin sairaanhoidon opiskelijoihin, ja tehdä ehdotus Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoululle kuinka he voisivat tukea kansainvälisiä sairaanhoidonopiskelijoitaan.</p> <p>Tutkimukset (n=7) tätä kirjallisuuskatsausta varten kerättiin käyttäen kolmea tietokantaa: CINAHL, ERIC ja MEDLINE (OVID). Lisäksi kaksi tutkimusta löydettiin käsihaulla. Yhteensä yhdeksän tutkimusta analysoitiin tässä kirjallisuuskatsauksessa.</p> <p>Tuloksissa kuvailtiin viittä tukiohjelmia, jotka olivat käytössä eri korkeakouluissa. Nämä sisälsivät pienryhmiä kielen kehityksen tukemiseen, naisten tukiryhmän, yliopistokurssin, perehdytysohjelman sekä akateemisen opiskeluryhmän. Myös yleisiä suosituksia kielellisen, akateemisen ja sosiaalisen tuen järjestämiseen esitettiin.</p> <p>Ehdotus Metropolia Ammattikorkeakoululle tehtiin tulosten perusteella. Ehdotus sisälsi muun muassa laajennetun perehdytysohjelman, perehdytyksiä opetushenkilökunnalle, avoimet ryhmätapaamiset, sanastopäiväkirjan käytön ja opetustilaisuuksia Suomen kielen kehittämiseksi opintojen lähestyessä loppua.</p>	
Avainsanat	kansainvälinen tutkinto-opiskelija, tukiohjelma

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1 Introduction

Internationalisation of the working life demands increasing knowledge on foreign countries and societies as well as language skills. Multicultural competence is seen as a requirement for effective work in globalizing environment. (Niemelä 2008:10.) In the future of healthcare there will also be an increasing demand of cultural knowledge and language skills. There is a growing need of care and the population is aging, thus by the year 2020 one third of the public sector nurses are retiring. (Lahti 2006; Suomen Sairaanhoidajaliitto ry [The Finnish Nurses Association] & Sairaanhoidajien koulutussäätiö [The Foundation of Nursing Education] 2008.) International degree nurses could serve as a solution for this demand.

Development of international education has received more and more attention over the last 3 decades. At first, the focus was on outgoing international exchange students. Finland did not attract international exchange students because the education was being offered in Finnish. Soon the development of education provided in English started, particularly in universities of applied sciences. By the year 2000, the focus shifted more on the recruitment of international degree students. In the recent years, the amount of degree programmes offered in English has grown outstandingly. (Garam 2009:4-5.)

Lack of internationality is still considered a weakness in the Finnish higher education, research and innovation system. Our education enjoys good reputation and the low number of foreign students, researchers and students do not give credit for that. For this purpose Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015 by Ministry of Education (2009) was created. The internationalization strategy tries to achieve a strong, high-quality and internationally attractive higher education system in Finland. The strategy's goal is that higher education institutions in Finland would become truly international study and work communities and functional services would support arrival and staying in Finland. (Ministry of Education 2009:10-11.)

The purpose of this final project was to explore through literature the support systems offered for students in different universities, concentrating on international nursing students and to make a proposal of the best practice for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Nursing on how to support their international nursing students.

2 Background

There are 385 degree programmes offered in English by the Finnish higher education institutions and some 12 000 international degree students studying in Finland annually. About 30 % of the study programmes are offered by universities of applied sciences. (Centre for International Mobility 2012.) Metropolia University of Applied Sciences offers 14 Degree Programmes in English and there are 800 international degree students, from more than 90 different nationalities, studying in Metropolia every year (Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences 2011). The Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland aims that by the year 2015 there will be 20 000 international degree students studying in Finland (Ministry of Education 2009).

The first pieces of research on international mobility were conducted in the 1990s and those were mainly concentrating on exchange programs. In the 21st century, the international degree students have gathered more and more attention and various pieces of research concerning their wellbeing have been conducted. (Niemelä 2009:15.) For example Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) and Student organizations' foundation of research (Opiskelijajärjestöjen tutkimussäätiö OTUS) have carried out together a series of three studies concentrating on international degree students. These studies discovered politics of international degree programmes, integration to Finland and Finnish degree students in other countries. (Aalto 2003:6.) Studies about how to improve the wellbeing of international degree students and move towards the goals that the Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015 by the Ministry of Education has set are still lacking.

2.1 Challenges international degree students experience in Finland

International degree students experience multiple problems and challenges from the day they arrive to Finland, until the day they graduate. The most common and difficult challenges are related to integration, language, social relations, work and livelihood. International students find it hard to get to know Finnish people, because of Finnish culture and language. (Koivisto & Juusola 2008:86; Niemelä 2009:91-92.) They feel that there is a lack of integration between the Finnish and English degree programmes (Kinnunen 2003:46-47; Koivisto & Juusola 2008:87). The students may feel lonely, particularly if their closest relations are left in their home country. Social integration is important for the desired progress of the studies (Niemelä 2008:63). In addition foreigners may experience discrimination and even racism because of their ethnic background inside the studying environment and outside of it (Koivisto & Juusola 2008:88-90).

The international degree students feel that they do not have enough opportunities and courses to study Finnish. This is a key element in integrating the students into the Finnish society and finding employment. They would also like more information about Finnish culture to simplify the integration. Information inside the school is not always available in English which makes studying even more difficult. (Kinnunen 2003:42-43; Koivisto & Juusola 2008:54-57; Niemelä 2009:67-70.)

The grants that Finnish students are entitled to, don't apply to foreigners unless they have lived in Finland for two years prior to the beginning of the studies (Kinnunen 2003:56; Niemelä 2008:78). As a result many international students have barely enough money to support themselves. They have a possibility to work during their studies, which may have an impact on the progress of the studies. In addition it is often difficult to find a job in Finland as a foreigner. Unemployment rates are multiple compared to native Finns and it is common that the foreigners work in less respected jobs that do not meet their education. (Kinnunen 2003:57-58,59-60; Niemelä 2009:85,88-89.)

International degree students experience more difficulties with their studies compared to Finnish students studying in an English-language degree programmes. These difficulties are found for example in following the lectures. In addition studying in a new

cultural environment itself causes a stressor for the students and may cause additional challenges in the studies. (Niemelä 2009:62.) The students were of the opinion that most of the difficulties with the studies could be resolved by developing the quality of teaching and by adding guidance and coordination (Niemelä 2009:64).

All these challenges can have an effect on the progress of the studies and also on the outcome of the studies. By reducing these stressors and supporting the wellbeing of international degree students, their willingness to stay in Finland and their expertise could be affected positively. According to various studies about 20 % of international degree students will stay in Finland after graduation, whereas about 40 % of the students would stay with certain conditions, for example if they would get a job or if there was a possibility to continue studying (Kinnunen 2003:101-102; Niemelä 2008:99-100). The support systems could also have a positive impact on the recruitment of international degree students to Finland.

2.2 Support provided by the higher educational institutions in Helsinki Metropolitan area

Universities are responsible for integrating students to the community within the school and to the society. It has been described that the universities should appropriate enough resources to support international degree students and exchange students in advancement of their studies and together with student organizations supply the students with guidance and educate tutors to support their studies and free time. (Ministry of Education 2009.)

The educational institutions, the public sector and some foundations offer a variety of support services for international long-term students studying to obtain a degree or working as researchers under a contract (Helsinki Education and Research Area HERA 2009:4). Student unions work for the best interest of all the students studying in universities or universities of applied sciences. The membership of a student union can provide financial support by offering inexpensive services and discounts for example on public transportation. (HERA 2009:10-12.) There are also many international student organizations that work either on the local level or even worldwide (HERA 2009:16). Those can offer possibilities of peer support for the international degree students when

facing difficulties with the education and other matters. Higher education institutions in Finland also offer guidance and information on general matters regarding the studies in English, particularly on the internet. (HERA 2009:27.)

International degree students studying in Finnish universities are through student union membership entitled to Finnish Student Health Services that are offered at very low cost or for free. However, students in universities of applied sciences do not have this benefit, but they need to use communal services. (HERA 2009:14-15.) Career services are offered by most universities and universities of applied sciences in order to help the students to find a job related to their field of study and assist in the transition to the working life. International students are a growing focus in these career services. A nation-wide VALOA project is a part of career services in the University of Helsinki which aims at improving international degree students' work possibilities and the integration to the Finnish labor market. (HERA 2009:32-33.)

Universities of applied sciences provide guidance and counseling for the international degree students through tutoring. A teacher tutor, a student tutor and a study advisor work towards supporting the students throughout the studies. Some universities of applied sciences even have a tutor who is specialized in the guidance of international students. (Aalto 2003:50.)

3 Key concepts

3.1 Support

In Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary support is defined to be the action of holding up or adding strength to, either literally or figuratively. It can be maintaining a person by supplying with things necessary to existence or to uphold a person by aid or countenance. (Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language 1996:1430.)

Formal support can complement informal support, but formal support may also include intrusive aspects. These aspects can be reduced by giving greater control to the ser-

vice users. Close association with the person the support is received from, reduces the intrusive aspects of support. To keep support complementary, it needs to be flexible and response to the individual needs of the service users'. (Laragy et al. 2011:746,750.)

In this final project support is defined as the provision of literal help or aid, in order to add strength and supply the person with tools to manage.

3.2 International degree student

In Finland international degree student is defined as a student who is studying full-time in order to complete either Bachelor's or Master's degree and whose nationality is other than Finnish. Some higher education institutions register students who have completed their basic education in some country other than Finland as international degree students as well. (Aalto 2003.) From the international mobility's point of view nationality is not an adequate indicator to describe degree students as mobile. A student who has completed his/her basic education and is permanently living in Finland but is a foreign national is counted as international degree student even though it is mainly used to describe students who have moved to a country because of the studies. (Aalto 2003.)

In the English literature, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students are often used as a similar concept than international degree students. It is used to define a student who attended basic education in some other country than the current country they are studying in and use some other language than English in their daily functions or are bilingual in other ways. (Scheele et al. 2011:244.) Culturally diverse students can be used to describe students who are from different cultural backgrounds (Williams & Calvillo 2002). This concept concentrates on the diversity, whereas international degree students can be from same background if it is other than Finnish.

In this final project I describe international degree student as a full-time student studying to achieve a Bachelor's or Master's degree who is of different nationality than Finnish or has completed their basic education in some other country than Finland.

4 Purpose and study question

The purpose of this final project was to explore through literature the support systems offered for students in different universities, concentrating on international nursing students and to make a proposal of the best practice for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Nursing on how to support their international nursing students.

My study question was "How to support international nursing students' well-being during their studies?"

5 Methods

5.1 A systematic literature review

Systematic literature reviews are considered a useful, appropriate and reliable method of providing evidence-based knowledge if conducted to a high quality (Hewitt-Taylor 2002:52). Evidence-based knowledge is research-based knowledge where clinical decisions are supported by the best clinical evidence available in order to provide quality care (Sackett et al. 1996; Scott & McSherry 2008). In health care, evidence is used to demonstrate the value of different interventions. In each case, the type of evidence needed will depend upon the activity and its purpose. Different types of evidence include evidence of 'feasibility', evidence of 'appropriateness', evidence of 'meaningfulness' and evidence of 'effectiveness'. (Pearson et al. 2005:210; Pearson, Field & Jordan 2007:28.)

A systematic literature review is a critical collection and appraisal of the most current and valid published and unpublished research evidence on a particular topic. This summation of evaluated information is used to inform evidence-based decision making about the applicability of the findings to clinical practice. Conducting a systematic literature review involves various important steps. The first is the question formulation. Then, based on the question, an appropriate data search is done and the relevant data

is chosen. Next, the chosen data is critically evaluated in order to select the material that is of appropriate quality. The findings are then synthesized and summarized for relevance to the purpose of the systematic literature review and presented in a summary table. The last step is to determine the applicability of the results into practice. (Glasziou et al. 2001:1-4; LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2010:9,57-79,210.) Critique is an important part of systematic literature reviews in all of the steps. It is "the process of critical appraisal that objectively and critically evaluates a research report's content for scientific validity or merit and application to practice." (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2010:13.)

There are two major advantages in the systematic literature reviews. The ability to study the consistency of the results is improved by the combined data and, thus, gives increased statistical power. Another major advantage is that similar effects and results of the studies in a variety of settings and designs provide evidence of the steadiness and the transferability of the results to other settings. If the results are inconsistent in different settings, the reasons for that should be examined. (Glasziou et al. 2001:1.)

5.2 Database search

The search for relevant articles was done as a database search. The databases used for the systematic search were CINAHL, ERIC and MEDLINE (OVID). ERIC was chosen as one of the databases because of the educational nature of this final project. The chosen keywords were international students, support and services. The search was targeted for studies about support programs for international students. Limitations used were years 2000-2012, full text and peer reviewed if applicable.

Two searches on CINAHL were conducted. The first search used the keywords international students AND support. After limitations 27 articles were found. After reading the titles and abstracts, 4 articles were left, 1 of which was chosen for final analysis. The second search used the keywords international students AND services. After limitations 4 articles were found, 2 of which were chosen to be read through. However, none were chosen for final analysis.

Two searches were also conducted on ERIC. Keywords used were international students AND support and international students AND services. After limitations the first search led to 278 articles from which 5 were left after reading the titles and abstracts. 2 articles were then chosen for final analysis. The second search found 203 articles from which 3 were left after reading the titles and abstracts. However, none were chosen for final analysis.

The search on MEDLINE (OVID) was conducted with keywords international students AND support AND services. The searches were decided to be limited into one search because of great amount of articles found. After limitations 77 articles were found, 6 of which were read through completely. Two of those articles were chosen for final analysis. Moreover, 2 relevant articles were found from the reference lists of two of the unused articles. The database searches are represented in Table 1 (APPENDIX 1). Manual search resulted in 2 relevant articles. In total 9 articles were chosen for the final analysis.

5.3 Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria used for choosing the articles were:

- The article was relevant to the subject and topic of the final project and answered to the study question.
- The article was available as full text.
- The article was published between years 2000 and 2012.
- The article was published in English or in Finnish.

5.4 Data analysis

“Content analysis is a method of analysing written, verbal or visual communication messages” (Cole 1988:53). It promotes the understanding of the literature by providing categories describing the phenomenon. In this study inductive content analysis was utilized. It consists of three phases: preparation, organizing and reporting. First, a unit of analysis is decided upon and then the researcher makes sense of the data. The data is then organized through open coding, categorization and abstraction. This provides

the researcher with a range of categories describing different aspects of the analyzed material. Finally the results can be reported. (Elo & Kyngäs 2008:108-111.)

In this study, the research articles were first assessed and read through and organized into an article analysis table (APPENDIX 2). Different support services described in the data were then identified through the content analysis. The articles were divided into two categories according to whether the article described a support program offered for students or a recommendation about different ways of supporting international students. The latter was then divided into three categories according to the type of support described: language support, academic support and social support. The programs were decided to be described separately. This resulted in two main categories: support programs and general recommendations.

6 Findings

The articles chosen for this literature review described detailed support programs including tutoring sessions to support language development, a women's support group, a university course, an orientation course and an academic study group offered for international students. Also general recommendations about language, academic and social support were described.

6.1 Support programs

Tutoring sessions consisting of study groups led by nurse tutors and one-to-one tutoring were initiated in the University of Akron in Ohio, United States. The sessions were targeted for students who were having difficulties in their studies in order to help these students to succeed and develop their language skills. (Guhde 2003:114.) These sessions were composed of exercises in reading, listening, speaking and writing the language. All of the sessions used the same template including altogether four exercises. The sessions were one hour long, arranged weekly and they focused on a particular system of the body, like respiratory system. The template should be arranged around on-going courses or rotations of the students. (Guhde 2003:114-116.)

Before every session, the student listens to a taped nursing report similar to a verbal report given in hospital settings. The report deals with a patient who represents a problem in the area to be discussed during the sessions. The student is then expected to create a written nursing note. The student is also given a tape including medical terminology in which medical terms related to the specific area are pronounced. A written list of the words is also provided for the student. (Guhde 2003:114.)

The session starts with a verbal skills exercise where the student is asked to read aloud the nursing note they have written at home. This allows the student to ask questions about the pronunciation and the tutor to listen and correct. The second exercise covers written skills where the student and the tutor correct the written nursing note. This helps the student to learn the correct grammar, vocabulary and spelling. The third exercise focuses on the students reading and verbal skills. The student is asked to read from the list of medical words that they received during the previous session. The last exercise practices the student's listening skills. A taped report of two patients is played for the student, the first patient with a diagnosis already discussed during the session and the second one introducing the body system that will be discovered in the next session. Different people should tape these reports in order to accustom the student to different voices and speech patterns. The student is then asked to take the report on a standardized form that could be used in an actual clinical setting. The first report is then talked through with the tutor and the tape is listened as many times as necessary for the student to comprehend everything. The tutor and the student also discuss what is considered important information and what is not. The second report and the tape are left for the student to complete at home and the medical terminology tape and list of words are given as home work. (Guhde 2003:114-115.)

This tutoring session template was tested with one ESL nursing student from China for ten weeks. The student found particularly the tapes to listen at home and the correction of the written nursing note to be beneficial. A pre-test and post-test were done to measure the student's progress in this area. The student listened to 5 taped reports and transferred the important information on the standardized form. In the beginning of the sessions, the student was able to transfer 25 % of the important data, whereas after 10 weeks, the student was able to transfer 40 % of the data. All in all, the stu-

dent found the template extremely helpful and it also increased her general participation in study groups with English-speaking peers. (Guhde 2003:115.)

A women's support group for Asian international women students was created in a large American university in order to provide the students with academic, language and social support. Asian students are found to underuse counseling services offered by the universities which could be explained by cultural differences. The program was created to provide Asian women students with culturally sensitive counseling and provide them with possibilities for socializing, practicing the language, addressing stressors and promoting their wellbeing. (Carr, Koyama & Thiagarajan 2003:131-132.)

The group was an open group that met weekly for 90 minutes and it was led by a group facilitator. It consisted of free talk between the students and the facilitator. Facilitators and students suggested possible topics that included for example cross-cultural communication, friendship, family pressure, discrimination, emotions, stress management and language. The students were encouraged to express their positive and negative experiences to the group as well as different emotions. (Carr, Koyama & Thiagarajan 2003:132-133.)

The support group was evaluated through anonymous feedback forms where the students indicated that they enjoyed speaking English in a non-judgmental setting and that they appreciated the opportunity to share their feelings and experiences. They found the atmosphere fun and free in the group. In case of applying this support group model to other settings, it is recommended to have separate groups for men and women because many of the students from different cultures feel more comfortable in expressing their worries in a group with only same sex participants. (Carr, Koyama & Thiagarajan 2003:133.)

A for-credit course, The Principles of University Learning (PoUL), was created and introduced in Central Queensland University (CQU) in Australia to improve diverse learners' learning experiences and support the transition into the Australian model of education. The course was offered for new international and domestic students as well as for continuing students who were considered to be in 'academic risk'. (Owens 2011:42-44.)

The learning outcomes of the course included different conceptions of learning, changing nature of universities, principles of effective learning and a range of written, communication, presentation and teamwork skills. The course was held over 12 weeks and the students were asked to submit 6 reflections of different lessons. The course also highlighted the importance of correct citation technique due to high rates of plagiarism among international students. As part of the course, the students also worked in groups to deliver an oral presentation on topics posed by the group. (Owens 2011:44-45.)

The impacts of the course on students' approaches to learning and on their success after the course were researched through quantitative and qualitative data. 144 students who passed the course were used as a sample. Their Grade Point Averages (GPA) were reviewed over three consecutive terms and the results showed a significant improvement in the GPAs. A randomly selected control group of undergraduate students who did not participate in the course was used and their GPAs did not show any improvement during the three terms. Their average grades were, nevertheless, in a lot higher level to start with. (Owens 2011:45-47.)

The effect of the course was also measured by the students' reflective diaries and through a focus group discussion with nine PoUL graduate students. The students thought that they learned a lot of useful information which would assist them in completing the university studies. They also suggested that the course should be compulsory for all new students. The students showed confidence in succeeding in the continuing studies and they also appreciated the opportunity to build friendships and social relations through the course. (Owens 2011:47-49.)

An orientation course called the Bridge Program was designed for Indian nurses who had recently arrived to the United States to study in a Master's Program. The global nursing shortage and the need of nurse educators were resolved creatively in the United States where three U.S. organizations, Global Scholarship Alliance, Midwestern State University Wilson School of Nursing and United Regional Health Care System built a partnership with Indian nurses. The idea was to bring Indian nurses to study in a master's program in the United States and work simultaneously part-time in

the United Regional Health Care System to help with their nursing shortage. By the end of the education, the Indian nurses would return to their home country to work as nurse leaders. (Robinson et al. 2006:21-22.)

After the nurses were chosen for the program and they arrived to the United States, they participated on the orientation course. The course aimed to support their adjustment and familiarize them with the hospital, the university and the community. (Robinson et al. 2006:22-23,25.) The program included practical help with for example accommodation and transportation throughout but the main focus was on the nurses to learn how to give culturally congruent care and to expand their worldview into a multicultural one. The objectives of the program included exploring things like the differences and similarities of the health care values and systems in the United States and in India, the differences in the profession of nursing and the cultural implication of the sick role as well as getting familiar with the use of library databases and computer technology. The program also pursued to improve the students' English language as well as their success in educational programs. (Robinson et al. 2006:25-27.)

The students spent 2 days a week with the nursing faculty discussing for example health care finances in the United States, burnout, social integration, nurse practice act and culturally congruent care. One day a week the students participated in activities with the Midwestern State University Intensive English Language Institute to improve their spoken English and 2 days a week the students spent in the hospital. The differences of the education systems in those two countries were explored with the students' in order to prepare them for the beginning of the studies. The Bridge Program ended with a day-long picnic to celebrate the completion of the course as well as enhance social relations. (Robinson et al. 2006:27-29.)

A study group was developed in the RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, to support international students' adaptation to the Australian teaching and learning community. This one-year long culturally inclusive initiative aimed to offer academic, social and cultural support and value the students' cultural diversity. The actual goals of the program, World Education, were to learn more about Australian schools, understand different learning styles and form social relationships. Both international and domestic students were able to participate in the program. If the students successfully passed

the program, they received a LEAD certificate to gain recognition of leadership. (Wang 2012:68-70.)

The program consisted of five hours of training in multicultural education and 15 voluntary hours. In the beginning of the program, the students watched a video about Australian schools and a multicultural school. Different learning and reasoning styles were also discovered hoping to expand the students' cultural awareness. After those five hours, the students picked themselves a pair from a different cultural background. The students were then given three weeks to explore each other's cultures concentrating on the differences in family structures, friendships, schooling and university. After three weeks, the pairs presented their findings to the rest of the group. The group also took part in different social events that were discussed in the beginning of the program. For example, a barbeque was arranged for the group. (Wang 2012:70.)

About twenty students from the group completed a questionnaire about the effectiveness of this initiative. Based on the responses, ten students from 6 different countries were chosen for semi-structured in-depth interviews. The students and the coordinator who led the group participated in a 30-minute long individual face-to-face interview. (Wang 2012:71-72.) The exposure to other cultures improved the students' cultural awareness. The program was thought to provide emotional support as well as valuable opportunities to meet other students and develop friendships. The students experienced feelings of cultural inclusion and they thought that the initiative helped them to raise their confidence. The atmosphere in the group during the program was very relaxed; the students found that they were more willing to speak English in a group where most of the students had English as their second language. The coordinator encouraged the students to bring food to the meetings, which enhanced the feelings of relaxation. All in all, the culturally inclusive initiative worked well and supported the students successfully. (Wang 2012:72-74.)

6.2 General recommendations

International students face multiple challenges concerning the language: language barriers, self-consciousness about using the language, difficulties to communicate in clinical settings and troubles with medical terminology (Brown 2008:185; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30). Language proficiency is a vital aspect of predicting the student's academic achievements during their studies as well as their adjustment process. (Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30,38). Reading, interpreting multiple choice questions, writing papers and the fear of not succeeding are found to be most challenging for ESL students (Brown 2008:187-188). This can lead to difficulties in passing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN). The passing rates of the NCLEX-RN exam are 30-50% less for ESL students compared to non-ESL students. (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:280.)

Teachers should ensure that the students' workload does not include too much reading and note taking, the international students should be allowed a dictionary and more time to complete in exams, particularly during the first semesters of their studies (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:280; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30). Retakes should also be possible without any penalties (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:280). Teachers should promote active participation during lectures by for example asking commentary about cultural perspectives. International students could use a vocabulary journal particularly on the courses that introduce new terminology. Also integration of ESL and non-ESL students into same study groups could be beneficial for language development. (Brown 2008:188-189.) Beginning ESL students should also be offered an additional English course that would focus on listening and speaking (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:280).

A program called the Integrated Skills Reinforcement (ISR) has been used with nurses who come from different countries. In the program the nurses complete an assessment of the nurses' abilities and provide support in reading, speaking, listening and writing skills according to their individual needs. This program is thought to work with university students as well. Also the tutoring sessions' program to support language development, as already described before, is thought to be a beneficial and good practice to support international students' language development in nursing. (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:280-281.)

Language is also an important factor of academic support, but the international students also have many other needs concerning the new educational system and different learning and teaching techniques (Major 2005:91; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30). The differences in the passing rates of the NCLEX-RN exams between ESL and non-ESL students don't only indicate a need for language support, but also for academic support (Brown 2008:184). International students are often used to different styles of learning and they need support in adjusting to the universities' academic life (Brown 2008:186; Poyrazli & Grahame 30,36).

Co-national support and mentoring has been found to be important and beneficial for international students. Co-national support can help the students with their adjustment process as well with their initial culture shock. It has been found that co-national support can also improve international students' possibilities to succeed in the academic studies. Counseling services offered by the universities are often underused by the international students. The reason could be a lack of information regarding the services, not seeing the services as helpful or cultural stigma. Different way of advertising the counseling services has been recommended in order to enhance the use among the students. (Major 2005:88-89,92; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:34.)

Faculties should have orientations concerning the academic needs of different cultural groups to enable diversification of teaching techniques and to enhance better understanding (Brown 2008:189; Major 2005:93; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:42). The teachers should be able to offer different teaching strategies to meet the needs of culturally diverse learners and provide feedback frequently (Brown 2008:189). One-on-one faculty support or assigned particular faculty member as an advisor could also be beneficial for international students (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:283; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30).

A 3-phase program called the Learning Achievement Program has been developed to meet the needs of international and disadvantaged students. The first phase of the program is held before the beginning of the studies and it includes a testing of the needs and knowledge of the students. Interventions are then planned accordingly. The second phase takes place during the sophomore year and it consists of weekly meetings with a learning coach and a counselor. Phase three includes study support sessions and counseling if needed, as well as preparation for the NCLEX-RN exam. The

students found this program helpful in time management, study skills and test-taking strategies. (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:279.)

When the international students arrive to a new country to study, orientation programs and sessions should be arranged. These are often packed with new information about all the practicalities or not arranged at all, leaving the students feeling overwhelmed and confused. (Major 2005:88,92; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:33,38.) It is recommended that these orientation programs should be extended and they should include information for example about improving critical thinking skills and academic reading as well as tools to survive in the new educational system. Group sessions with peer tutors could also be offered to focus on the challenges of the adjustment process. (Major 2005:92-93.) Those sessions could then be extended and the students could meet weekly or monthly and discuss possible difficulties and concerns relating to their academic life (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:282; Major 2005:93). Co-national mentors could participate as peer tutors during these orientation programs and group sessions (Major 2005:92-93; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:40). Careful and well-arranged orientation program and monthly or weekly study and group sessions are considered a vital part of academic support of international students (Brown 2008:188; Gilchrist & Rector 2007:282; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:40).

International students also experience various social issues like social isolation, discrimination, financial difficulties, loss of social support and homesickness (Brown 2008:185,186; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:30-31). Students who feel socially accepted and part of the group are more often academically successful (Gilchrist & Rector 2007:282). Most international students experience a culture shock when arriving to a new country. This might cause them to feel inadequate or estranged or result in loss of self-confidence. (Major 2005:88-89.) These concerns create a need for social support.

Orientation programs and study groups already discussed in academic support, also support international students' social needs. The students can there meet other international students, build relationships and discuss social issues. The international students often feel that native students are difficult to get into contact with and that they are not interested in international students. (Major 2005:91; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:35,38.) The students should be offered and encouraged to participate in different

social events where to meet international students as well as native students in a more relaxed atmosphere (Brown 2008:188,189; Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:31). These events would also provide native students with opportunities to expand their cultural knowledge and understanding. Participation in extracurricular activities also leads to lower stress levels. (Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:31,41.)

Student mentors should be assigned for international students to support the students' adjustment process and help with the difficulties that the students' experience. This is especially important in the beginning of the studies. (Brown 2008:189; Gilchrist & Rector 2007:283.) Co-national mentors could be most beneficial in supporting the students, as already discussed before (Major 2005:88-89,91-92; Poyrazli & Rector 2007:34,41). Mentoring could also be arranged in two complementary phases. First, before arrival the international students could be paired with a co-national mentor who could help with the adjustment process. After arrival, the student could be paired with a native mentor who could help with adjusting to the American culture. This would also enhance relations with native students. (Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:41.) The students could also be offered services like pick-up from the airport upon arrival, temporary housing services until the students find a place to live or household merchandise donation programs (Poyrazli & Grahame 2007:40).

7 Discussion and conclusion

Critical appraisal means examining the reliability, strengths and limitations of studies and it is used to evaluate quality of the studies and as a mean to provide evidence-based knowledge (Maltby et al. 2010:240-241). Framework can be used to critically appraise qualitative studies. The interest is for example in the aims, sample, data collection and analysis as well as data presentation. Questions like whether the data collection process is clear for the reader and whether the data analysis process is rigorous should be answered. (Maltby et al. 2010:252-258.) This final project has been strived to be conducted in an ethical and reliable way. Relevant databases were used for the literature review and articles were chosen carefully. Own opinions were not expressed and the results were aimed to be presented objectively.

To produce an ethically acceptable and reliable research, the research needs to be conducted according to good scientific practices. Good scientific practice is defined by the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in Finland (2002) and it includes for example applying ethically sustainable data collection, research and evaluation methods as well as respecting other researchers' work and giving them due credit in our own work. (National Advisory Board on Research Ethics in Finland 2002.) This final project was conducted according to these good scientific practices: references were marked precisely and reporting and analysis were done carefully.

With these limitations and keywords in this final project, the amount of relevant articles was limited. There was a reasonable amount of articles about support services for international degree students that were conducted in the 20th century and therefore were not included in this final project. Also a limitation in this final project could be the lack of evaluation of the support services described in different articles. Many of the articles only explained the support services being offered, but there was no evidence about the functionality or usefulness of the services. This decreased the quality of the studies.

The findings from the literature review were in line with the studies conducted in Finland that described the challenges that international degree students face during their studies. The support programs and general recommendations explained in the findings seem to meet the challenges. According to the findings of the literature review, a proposal for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Nursing, was made.

8 Proposal for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Nursing

The proposal for Metropolia University of Applied Sciences on how to support their international nursing students consists of the provision of 1) language support, 2) academic support and 3) social support.

1) Language support

In Metropolia University of Applied Sciences the study language for international students is English which can be their native language, but Finnish language is still vital for the students in order to work in Finland after graduation which creates language difficulties as well as need for support. It should also be noted that in Degree Programme in Nursing, some knowledge in Finnish language is needed before the beginning of the studies.

If the international degree students have English as their second language, a vocabulary journal should be recommended during the courses that present new terminology. The vocabulary journal could also be used with Finnish language. Towards the end of the studies, the international degree students could participate on tutoring sessions to support their Finnish language development. The tutoring sessions could be arranged according to the template by Guhde. This could ease the transition into the working life in Finland.

The international degree students as well as native students from the Finnish degree programmes should have courses or lectures together where the international degree students could meet native students. This could also result in the development of Finnish language and support of the adjustment process to the new educational system.

2) Academic support

Metropolia should have extended orientation programs for starting international degree students, particularly if the Finnish educational system is new to the students. Different learning techniques and skills that would benefit the international students in their studies should be discovered. This orientation program could start with only international degree students, but the native students in the degree programme could be then asked to join the program later, in order to give the group time to get used to English

as a teaching language as well as learn about the different cultural backgrounds of the students. Orientations for the faculties about the academic needs of the international degree students should also be arranged in order to enable the teachers to use different teaching techniques.

3) Social support

Open group meetings for the international degree students should be arranged, for example monthly, particularly in the beginning of the studies where the students could meet other international degree students and discuss any concerns they have. Also students with the same cultural backgrounds should be introduced to each other. Furthermore, a native tutor could be assigned for the international degree students who would help the students with practicalities and get the students adjusted to the Finnish culture, if the student has recently moved to Finland. An extended orientation program would also provide the international degree students with social support as well as lectures or courses with native students.

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Table 1. Database search

DATABASE	KEYWORDS	HITS	TITLES	ABSTRACT	ARTICLES CHOSEN
CINAHL	International students AND support	27	10	4	1
	international students AND services	4	2	2	0
ERIC	international students AND support	278	8	5	2
	international students AND services	203	8	3	0
MEDLINE (OVID)	international students AND support AND ser- vices	77	9	6	4

IN TOTAL 7 articles + 2 from manual search

Table 2. Article analysis

Authors, title, year and country	Purpose	Sample	Data collection and analysis	Main results
Support programs				
Carr, J. L.; Koyama, M. & Thiagarajan, M., 2003, A Women's Support Group for Asian International Students, United States	To support the adjustment of Asian international female students to US culture and provide them with culturally sensitive counseling	Asian international undergraduate and graduate female students from the age of 20 to 55 years in a university in the United States		A time-limited, psychoeducational counseling group was designed for the students. The group met every week for 90 minutes and was led by a group facilitator. The facilitator is selected on the basis of interest in and experience with international students. The group provided opportunities to socialize with other Asian students, practice English, address academic, social, personal and acculturation concerns and receive support in a safe and accepting environment. The group sessions consists of free talk about every-day issues, positive and negative experiences and problems and concerns that the students have. The group encourages students to express their emotions. The group was open and all the Asian international female students were welcomed at any point of the semester. Through anonymous feedback forms, positive feedback was received.
Guhde, J. A., 2003, English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) Nursing Students: Strategies for Building Verbal and Written Language Skills, United States	To test initiated 4 exercise- individual tutoring sessions on an ESL student in order to improve their language skills.	1 Chinese ESL student	Case study, individual tutoring sessions for 10 weeks once a week.	The tutoring sessions were held every week for one hour and they consisted of four exercises. The sessions involved listening to taped nursing reports, composing an appropriate nursing note, listening to medical terminology tape, pronunciation exercises. The students verbal, written, reading and listening skills were all practiced. The student found the tutoring sessions helpful in learning the written and verbal language skills. She found listening and taking notes the most difficult task of the sessions, in the beginning she was able to record 25% of the data whereas after 10 weeks of the tutoring sessions she was able to record 40% of the data. The sessions also increased her willingness to participate and speak the language in groups.

<p>Owens, A., 2011, Supporting and evaluating transitional learning for international university students, Australia</p>	<p>To evaluate the outcomes of an undergraduate course The Principles of University Learning (PoUL) aiming to support diverse learners. The course was mainly directed to international students and domestic students who are at “academic risk”.</p>	<p>144 students in Central Queensland University who passed the course and a control group of 90 students who didn't participate in the course</p>	<p>Quantitative data about student grades before, during and after the course and qualitative written reflections and a focus group discussion.</p>	<p>A first year university course, The Principles of University Learning, was designed to help the transition of the students into the western model of university learning and teaching. The students were expected to learn different conceptions of learning, principles of effective learning and a variety of written, communication, presentation and teamwork skills.</p> <p>The grades of the students who passed the PoUL course improved significantly for the term in which the course was on-going. There was a slight decrease in the grades for the term after the course but the grades were still higher than before the course. The grades of the students who did not participate in the course stayed the same during the 3 terms but the level was better than the starting level of the students participating on the course.</p> <p>In the written reflections and a focus group discussion the students thought that the course was relevant and useful and that they learned a lot of skills that would be useful in the studies. They were able to develop social relations in the group works and understand adapt to the needs and the learning models of the University.</p>
<p>Robinson, K.; Sportsman, S.; Eschiti, V. S. & Bradshaw P., 2006, Preparing Faculty and Students for an International Nursing Education Experience, United States</p>	<p>To integrate a class of Indian nurses to the Western community, university and hospital for success in educational programs</p>	<p>A class of Indian nurses coming to the United States to study in master of science in nursing programs</p>		<p>The students participated on a 6-week bridge course immediately after arriving to the United States. The course consisted of help with practicalities like accommodation and visa, familiarization of the differences in the Indian and American health care systems, comparisons of the profession of nursing in the United States and in India, a beginning expertise in use of library services and computer technology, communication practices in order to communicate effectively in English, familiarization with the different teaching styles used in the university and arrangements of informal meetings and social gatherings.</p>

<p>Wang, J., 2012, Culturally Inclusive Practice: A Case Study of an International Student Support Initiative at an Australian University, Australia</p>	<p>To explore the effectiveness of an integrated culturally inclusive initiative in terms of facilitating international students' adaptation</p>	<p>10 students (8 international students and 2 Australian students) participating in the supportive program</p>	<p>A case study; a questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions and semi-structured in-depth interviews</p>	<p>The program the students participated in was called World Education. The goal of the program was to value international students' cultural diversity and to offer social, cultural and academic support in order to assist in the adaptation process of the international students. The program consisted of videos about Australian schools and multicultural schools and a pair-work in which the students explored each other's cultures focusing on the differences for example in schooling. The program was developed to be relaxed and involve different ethnic foods, songs etc.</p> <p>The students' experiences in the World Education program were mainly positive. They thought that by exposure to other cultures, they were better able to look into themselves and into their own culture, they found emotional and social support from the program and they experienced strong feelings of cultural inclusion. The program also helped the students to build up their confidence and relax. Overall the program was found highly successful.</p>
<p>General recommendations</p>				
<p>Brown, J. F., 2008, Developing an English-as-a-Second-Language Program for Foreign-Born Nursing Students at an Historically Black University in the United States, United States</p>	<p>To design a program to increase the retention and success of the foreign-born ESL students.</p>	<p>22 ESL students at Norfolk State University.</p>	<p>A close-ended questionnaire and an open-ended discussion.</p>	<p>In the questionnaire the students expressed difficulties in family support, interaction with non-immigrant English-speaking students and academic performance.</p> <p>In the focus group discussion the most challenges were found in reading, interpreting multiple choice questions, writing papers and the fear of not succeeding. Some of the strategies they acknowledged as effective would be study groups and peer and faculty tutoring.</p> <p>According to the collected data and four challenge areas for ESL students found in previous studies (language support, academic support, faculty support and social support) the faculty implemented strategies to support the students wellbeing into the ESL program.</p> <p>The effectiveness of the program has been confirmed mainly by positive student feedback as well a rise in the NCLEX-RN (National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses) first attempt pass rate from 0% to 50% in 1 year.</p>

<p>Gilchrist, K. L. & Rector, C., 2007, Can You Keep Them? Strategies to Attract and Retain Nursing Students From Diverse Populations: Best Practices in Nursing Education</p>	<p>To review the best practices to attract and retain nursing students and make suggestions for the best practices for nursing schools</p>		<p>A literature review</p>	<p>Ethnically and culturally diverse students need to be attracted into a nursing career in elementary school and keep the focus throughout high school. Campaigns and programs should be initiated such as Kids Into Health Careers initiative. Students need to be given the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the nursing profession through tours and providing clear information. Emphasis should be put on attracting men into nursing.</p> <p>When the students are accepted it is important to support students through tutoring, support groups, peer mentors and diversified curricula. ESL students may require extra support and guidance in time management, reading, writing, communicating and passing the NCLEX-RN exam.</p>
<p>Major, E. M., 2005, Co-national support, cultural therapy, and the adjustment of Asian students to an English-speaking university culture, United States</p>	<p>To understand the adjustment process of Asian students to an English-speaking university and make suggestions for institutional support and intervention.</p>	<p>10 undergraduate Asian students; 4 newly-arrived and 6 continuing</p>	<p>A case study which consisted of audio-taped individual interviews, the students' reflective journals, interviews with their instructors and advisers and observations of classrooms and special events.</p>	<p>The students described three stages in the adjustment process: entry, dissonance and adjustment. The students experiences intrapersonal, sociocultural and academic challenges during all the stages. The need for culturally specific support is evident, but it should be taken into consideration that there is a lot more to the adjustment process than just linguistic proficiency. The students did not seek for help from institutional support services because they were not aware of the services or they found co-national mentors more helpful.</p> <p>According to the results of the case study recommendations were made. The focus should be set on proactive sociolinguistic orientation instead of waiting for the problems to appear and require remedial courses. An extended orientation program should be offered to international students.</p>

<p>Poyrazli, S. & Grahame K. M., 2007, Barriers to Adjustment: Needs of International Students within a Semi-Urban Campus Community, United States</p>	<p>To examine the needs of international students in a semi-urban university, determine the extent to which the students felt their needs were met and suggest ways for higher education institutions to better serve international students in their efforts to integrate into their new community</p>	<p>15 undergraduate or graduate international students from different nationalities who had spent from 3 months to 5 years in the United States</p>	<p>Semi-structured focus group interviews for 4 groups consisting of an average of 4 students</p>	<p>The students expressed multiple concerns and needs in their adjustment process from the day they arrived to the country until their graduation. The problem areas that were identified were orientation, communication, transportation, accommodation, social interaction, academic life, advisors, financial concerns, health care, counseling and discrimination. The stresses that the students experienced were thus related to the large number of bureaucratic requirements, the lack of infrastructure and the isolation caused by the lack of infrastructure.</p> <p>The recommendations made according to the results of the interviews involve better information provision, pick-up services from the airport, shuttle services, temporary housing services, household merchandise donation program, student mentoring, peer networking, planning events to bring together international and American students, help with health insurances, advertisement for counseling services, workshop on discrimination, support group and training programs for faculty.</p>
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