

Pirjo Havukainen & Tuula Ikonen (eds.)

# Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing

Transatlantic Degree Project



LAUREA

TIKKURILA

*Promoting Wellbeing*

Pirjo Havukainen & Tuula Ikonen (eds.)

# Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing

Transatlantic Degree Project

Copyright © Authors &  
Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Technical editor: Tarja Laakkonen

Cover picture: “Elämä kuljettaa” by Riitta Aho

ISSN-L 2242-5241

ISSN 2242-5241 (print)  
ISSN 2242-5225 (online)

ISBN 978-951-799-321-0 (print)  
ISBN 978-951-799-322-7 (online)

Editä Prima Oy, Helsinki 2013

# Table of content

Introduction .....	6
<i>Pentti Rauhala</i>	
Project management of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme at Laurea University of Applied Sciences .....	8
<i>Tuula Ikonen &amp; Taimi Rautiainen</i>	
Laurea teachers' views on learning in the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme .....	20
<i>Pirjo Havukainen</i>	
Students views on learning nursing through the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme .....	34
<i>Pirjo Havukainen</i>	
Mobility experiences of incoming students in the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme at Laurea University of Applied Sciences.....	59
<i>Tuula Ikonen &amp; Taimi Rautiainen</i>	
Recognition of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme .....	71
<i>Sandor Hollós, Marcel Pop &amp; Judit Mészáros</i>	
FIPSE-Atlantis Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing: Experiences, Challenges and Advantages of Faculty Mobility .....	84
<i>Mary Dahl Maher &amp; Zoltan Balogh</i>	
Continuation and future of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme .....	94
<i>Taina Viiala</i>	
Atlantis Blues .....	98
<i>Leena Pekkonen</i>	

# Forewords

Planning for the Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing (TCN) programme started in 2006 with the purpose of developing and applying a transatlantic dual Bachelor's degree programme in the field of nursing education. The TCN Atlantis programme, which receives support from both the EU and United States, was accepted for the years 2007-2011 and it continued until the end of 2012, constituting an important strategic milestone in the internationalisation of all three participating universities: Nazareth College in Rochester, NY, Semmelweis University in Budapest, Hungary and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Vantaa, Finland. The objectives of the TCN dual-degree programme were to offer students and academic staff members a multinational and multicultural perspective and a broader understanding of the nursing profession as it is practiced in Europe and the United States.

The main objectives of the TCN programme were defined as follows:

- To prepare a culturally competent international nursing workforce for the processes of globalisation and to provide them with broad educational experiences;
- To create mechanisms for the exchange of undergraduate students majoring in Nursing;
- To develop a dual-degree model that facilitates the growth of the nursing workforce by developing international nursing leadership and providing them with a global, trans-cultural perspective;
- To share evidence-based practice standards for education that cross international boundaries.

The TCN dual-degree programme has been seamlessly integrated into the various institutions. It has been built on the strengths of each partner institution, in which Laurea UAS is known for its own pedagogical approach, called "Learning by Developing", as well as for its improvements to the field of health, Nazareth College is recognised as an expert in transcultural nursing and Semmelweis University is recognised for its competence in crisis situations and in making professional improvements. Rather than create a new teaching programme, the objective of the TCN programme was to incorporate the already existing and accredited teaching programmes into a dual-degree structure.

Semmelweis University was responsible for coordinating the entire project, while Nazareth College handled the trans-cultural nursing leadership and Laurea UAS facilitated mobility within the project. The three universities organised several project meetings, coordinated their final exams and thesis work evaluations, organised staff conferences in all three countries and devised common ways for handling personal reports and student interviews as well as the quality assurance methods conducted according to best practices.

Out of a total of 70 applicants, 49 were selected for the TCN dual-degree programme. As a result, 26 dual degrees, 90 student exchanges, 76 faculty member exchanges and 26 US HESI exams have been completed as a part of the project. These facts have all been

recognised and are greatly appreciated in all three institutions. Moreover, additional personal resources and efforts, such as building friendships during the project, have helped form the basis for future successful collaboration.

Enormous gratitude should be expressed to all those involved in the TCN programme due to their professionalism in developing, implementing and evaluating this project. Key persons responsible for the success of this project include Dean Judit Mészáros and Dr Sandor Hollos from Semmelweis University, Associate Dean Marie O'Toole and Dr Mary Maher from Nazareth College and Senior Lecturer Tuula Ikonen from Laurea UAS. Furthermore, the staff members, lecturers, steering group members, administration and international department from each institution, as well as Patrizia Moreau and Rea Brunilla from the EU's EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency), deserve mention for their active support for the programme.

In terms of making the whole project possible, I will address my final appreciation to all the wonderful students who have participated in the TCN programme.

Thank you!

*"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."*

- Martin Luther King Jr.

Vantaa, 21 February 2013

Taina Viiala  
Director  
Laurea University of Applied Sciences  
Finland

# Introduction

*Pentti Rauhala, PhD, emeritus President of Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

The Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing (TCN) programme is the first dual degree programme in nursing organised between the United States and Europe. In the United States, it received the Innovation in Nursing Award in 2010. The TCN programme has created totally new pathways to internationalising higher education institutions. Traditional international activities at higher education institutions have included student exchanges and staff exchanges. Deeper forms of co-operation, for instance offering dual degrees or co-operating in curriculum work, have not been so common. The increasingly globalised world makes it necessary to search for more profound forms of international co-operation between higher education institutions. The top universities in the US are already offering world-wide teaching over the internet. That type of development also requires that curricula be co-created on a more intensive level.

The TCN programme is also a good example of long-lasting international co-operation. The first visit between Semmelweis University in Hungary and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland took place already in the mid-1990s. It was important that the delegation from Laurea consisted of a broad and comprehensive range of staff expertise. The co-operation that began at that time gave both higher education institutions the possibility to become familiar with each other. This was a necessary first step towards deeper levels of co-operation. A little later, these two higher education institutions were happy to include Nazareth College in Rochester, New York as a partner, which made the cooperation truly international and transatlantic.

The nurse profession has some special features that recommend it for international co-operation programmes such as the TCN programme. It is in some way uniform in all countries, because illnesses and human biology are the same everywhere. But the societies, their laws, nursing practices and the cultural features of nursing in various parts of the world are different. In all countries, the nurse profession is also protected by national degrees. On the other hand, nurses are extremely mobile and often move between different countries. Some countries have too many nurses and other countries have too few nurses. Also, the salary levels in some countries may be tempting, especially for nurses from developing countries who want to work abroad. The surplus and shortage of nurses in various parts of the world has shifted periodically from one country to another. For instance, in Finland there is now a shortage of nurses, but during the recession at the beginning of the 1990s many nurses were unemployed. Therefore, the dual degree programme can help guarantee that students will

find employment in the international labour market. It was noted during the TCN programme that it also encouraged students to think more seriously about working abroad.

The main result of the TCN programme, however, is not that it contributes to the international mobility of nurses. A much more important result of the project is that it has offered new ways for developing the profession. It has made it possible to benchmark good practices in nursing in Finland, Hungary and the US. The social conditions are different. In the United States, health care is mainly handled on a private basis. In Europe, especially in the Nordic and Eastern European countries, the health care responsibility is more equally divided between the public and the private sector, with the public sector having the greater share of the responsibility.

There are also different pedagogical approaches in the different higher education institutions, even though, for instance, certain pedagogical influences such as problem-based learning have become disseminated throughout the world. Additionally, the practical applications may differ in higher education institutions. For instance, the Learning by Developing (LbD) model, which has been part of the pedagogical framework at Laurea for many years, has interested other partners. It has also been possible to compare the thesis requirements at Laurea, Nazareth and Semmelweis. So, the project has also provided an important learning environment for the staff as well as for the students.

The dual degree programme between Europe and the United States has also been a good means of developing project management skills. There were hardly any guidelines about how this kind of a project should be implemented. In Finland, we received a good amount of help from the planning guidelines produced by the National Board of Education in 2007. But many details still needed to be resolved. The experiences of the participating staff will be useful in the future when carrying out similar projects.

This publication has gathered together the experiences and good practices from the staff, students, project management and faculty management that helped foster new opportunities in the field of dual degree programmes. One article deals with recognition matters, which are essential when it comes to the nursing profession.



# Project management of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme at Laurea University of Applied Sciences

*Tuula Ikonen, MSc, RN, Senior Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

*Taimi Rautiainen, MSc, RN, Senior Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

## Introduction

This article describes the planning, implementation, outcomes and closing of the Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing project and evaluates these aspects from the perspective of Laurea as an EU project partner. Of the higher education institutions participating in the project, the Hungarian Semmelweis University took charge of the project's EU coordination partnered with Laurea University of Applied Sciences from Finland. The project partner and coordinator in the USA was Nazareth College of Rochester.

The participation of Laurea University of Applied Sciences in the TCN project (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing) was made possible by Laurea's long-standing cooperation with Semmelweis University, which had an existing partnership in place with Nazareth College. The TCN project was funded by the EU-US Atlantis programme based on an application addressed to the EACEA (The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) for 2007- 2011. The general aim of the EU-US Atlantis programme is to promote closer understanding between the peoples of the European Community and the United States of America including broader knowledge of their languages, cultures and institutions. The operative objectives of the programme were improving the quality of transatlantic student mobility by promoting transparency, mutual recognition of study and clinical study periods and, if necessary, the transfer of academic credits. In addition, the programme promotes partnerships among higher education and vocational education and training institutions, professional associations, public authorities, business and other associations and debate on operating policies, and stimulates exchange of experiences. Other aims include transatlantic

mobility of professionals between the European Community and the United States. (European Union 2006.)

The general and operational goals of the EU-US Atlantis programme were taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of the TCN project. The TCN project aimed to promote a global and multicultural perspective in developing nursing education. In addition, the project strived to share good practices in nursing education in various countries. The goals also included creating and developing the practices of the international student exchange programme. The more extensive aim of the project was to produce an international model for a programme leading to a dual degree in nursing.

Project implementation started in 2007 and continued until 2012. Each of the project partners determined the personnel resources and operating methods required in the project following the practices of their own organisations. Project implementation comprised determined efforts to reach the set objectives. What made the project particularly challenging was the fact that this was the first EU-US dual degree programme in nursing, and consequently, all regulations, recognition of degrees, agreements and practices had to be carefully examined, or new practices had to be modified.

The TCN project was highly successful in achieving its goals regarding student exchanges. Almost all Laurea students taking part in the programme obtained a dual degree in nursing, which means that they received a certificate both from their home institution and from its counterpart in the USA. Student feedback indicated that the students had developed their global and multicultural thinking. Finnish students, in particular, said that their language skills had improved dramatically. (Ikonen & Rautiainen 2012.)

In the course of the project, methods related to process management were created, including a joint online application programme, reference tables for comparing studies, a recognition procedure, and methods for verifying the correctness of certificate details and completing the final HESI examination (Comprehensive Exit Examination).

The TCN project has been evaluated annually with reference to the programme aims through interim reporting, at project meetings between the partners, at management meetings organised by the EACEA and on the basis of the quality systems in each participating country. Based on the evaluations, for example programme visibility in the electronic media was improved. The final project evaluation was implemented in autumn 2012 in connection with submission of the final report and the closing seminar held at Semmelweis University.

## A project as a work method

A project generally refers to a work process that has goals, a schedule and resources. Traditionally, a project has been considered successful when it has kept to its schedule and budget and achieved the goals and quality standards set for it. (Kerzner 1998, Tonnquist 2008.) This mainly applies to delivery and product development projects.

The project has also become more common as a work method in service organisations, where developing operations is at the core of projects. In projects of this type, the goals are not easy to specify in the planning stage, nor are the goals and operating methods always clear-cut. Communication, relationships between the actors, experiences and interpretations are a key part of a development project. (Uotila 2011.)

According to Bryde and Leighton (2009), a project-oriented working culture is a relatively new work method in higher education institutions, and as a consequence, such institutions have not yet developed the structures, management techniques, personnel and operating models needed in a project organisation. Higher education institutions are increasingly turning into organisations operating on the same principles as businesses, in which project work is the usual operating method. However, project work as a teaching method remains an unusual concept.

The starting points of education at Laurea combine teaching, research and development as well as regional development. The principle of Learning by Developing (LbD) is followed in teaching, in which projects play a key role in the teaching, learning and guidance processes. This operating model has helped to turn Laurea increasingly into a project organisation. (Fränti & Pirinen 2005.)

## The planning of the TCN project

According to Viirkorpi (2000), planning a project means "solving certain core questions in advance, so that the participants will know what they intend to do, why and how". A key part of the core questions is defining the purpose and objective of the project at a sufficiently detailed level to ensure that all project participants know what they should be aiming for. The project plan must also identify the customers and stakeholders and their needs. It is necessary to consider how the project will benefit the customers, and how the required resources will be acquired and managed. After this, the parties implementing the project should be activated and their commitment ensured, and the activities should be organised. Agreement should be reached upon the means and solution models needed to ensure that the project will be productive, and upon the steering of activities and exploitation of results. (Viirkorpi 2000.) While the plan must be sufficiently detailed, it must also allow for modifications as the project progresses, especially in case of development projects (Viirkorpi 2000).

Process-like unfolding and multiple alternative solutions and channels are typical for development projects. The goals set at the beginning will become more specific, or less so, during the process. The project may also inadvertently become side-tracked. On the other hand, selecting to digress may be necessary in some situations. What is essential is that choices between alternative directions are made consciously. (Seppänen-Järvelä 2004.)

The planning phase of the TCN project started as early as in 2006, at which time Semmelweis University and Nazareth College drew up the first version of their application to the EU-US Atlantis – Fipse programme. A complemented application was requested in 2007. Laurea joined in the same year, and the project was approved and funding was

granted for 2007 - 2011. In addition to bilateral agreements, a joint MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) between all partners was required, and this was drawn up in the early stages of the project in 2008. The Memorandum of Understanding specified the purpose and goals of the cooperation, which included expanding academic cooperation and promoting the internationalisation of the education and multicultural nursing. The specific goal was to create a degree programme that would lead to a dual degree in nursing that is formally recognized both in the USA and the EU. The MoU also contained more detailed guidelines on such aspects as project organisation, student and teacher exchanges, funding, follow-up, publications and the roles of the project partners.

In addition to the Memorandum of Understanding, the Finnish National Board of Education recommendation (2010) on Design and Implementation of Joint/Double Degrees was taken into account in project planning. The Finnish National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health (Valvira) was contacted to establish the possibilities of those having completed a dual degree in nursing originating from outside the EU/EEA area to apply for a right to serve as a qualified nurse and their entitlement to use the professional title of a nurse in Finland.

The project plan may be helpful when evaluating the progress of the project, and it may be used as a tool if the project activities do not proceed as planned. In development projects in particular, it is extremely common that the goals and methods will only be specified in the course of the project, as a result of which some changes need to be made in the project plan. (European Union 2004.) The TCN project was a development project in its nature, and the goals set for the project were based on the very general objectives of the EU-US Atlantis-Fipse programme and also the operational goals set for the project derived from this programme. Even the latter were drawn up at such a general level that further critical success factors that could be gauged in greater detail had to be formulated for them. For this purpose, the project was divided into sub-processes, for which goals, resources, responsibilities and critical success factors were specified. (Rautiainen et al. 2009.)

## The implementation of the TCN project

When implementing a project, it must be made sure that the project aims for certain goals, it keeps to its schedule and budget and that the resources are adequate and optimally used. In the implementation phase, the need for reform or modifications during the process needs to be assessed as well. This requires flexibility, close cooperation with stakeholders and self-directiveness. The funding decision concerning the TCN project was received in autumn 2007, and project implementation was launched in spring 2008. In the initial phase, the Coordinator for International Activities was appointed Project Manager, and a project team and a steering group were set up for the project.

According to the project plan, four students from Laurea, eight from the USA and four from Hungary would take part in the student exchange every year. The overall target for student exchanges was the mobility of 48 students. The first four American exchange students came to Laurea Tikkurila as early as in January 2008. Laurea's task was to offer them studies amounting to 34 ECTS credits = 17 US Credits, with clinical placements and theoretical studies combining to form a consistent module. Finnish studies were also part of the

programme. All the American students followed their own curriculum and personal learning agreements were signed by the students.

In order to set up a consistent application process for the student exchanges, an online application form was developed during the project by Laurea. This also made it possible for the partners to monitor data related to student mobility, both regarding incoming exchange students and Laurea's own students. In addition, from 2011 on the Sole Move system was introduced for all incoming and outgoing exchange students at Laurea.

The application process of students sent out from Laurea was different from the typical application process for international exchanges in the institution. Due to the need to coordinate the studies with the schedules in the USA, the application process had to be brought forward, and the students were coached as a separate group. The exchange students were selected based on an entrance examination that tested the applicants' language skills and motivation, and their study attainments so far were also evaluated. All second-year nursing students at Laurea were eligible to apply. A total of 34 students from Laurea applied for a place in the TCN programme, and 17 were selected. In total, the number of applicants from the various partner institutions was 70 students. A substantial grant from the EU-US Atlantis programme was available for the students for the exchange period in the USA. The grant available for exchange period to Hungary consisted of clinical placements under the Erasmus programme.

The selected students took part in a coaching period, the essential contents of which covered cultural knowledge of the host country, different educational systems, ideas of learning, the role of the student in the host country, studies and practical arrangements including travel, health regulations and housing arrangements. The selected students had an opportunity to get to know each other, and they received additional instructions for their exchange period during an international week organised at Laurea.

The exchange students had to complete studies at Nazareth College amounting to 30 US Credits = 60 ECTS credits. In the beginning, registration for courses presented problems, as a result of which the students had to take extra studies after returning to their home country in order to also obtain a certificate from the USA. The planning and registration of studies was brought forward for the following groups of students to allow them to complete at least the requisite 60 credits.

At Nazareth College, the students took nursing studies in such areas as maternity care and women's health, internal and surgical nursing, transcultural nursing and leadership. Compulsory general studies included American history, world religions, music and literature. A separate terminology course prepared the students for the HESI examination. Clinical placements were integrated in theory studies, and they were also partly realised in a group supervised by a teacher. Study visits were also part of the studies.

Immediately after returning from the USA, the students continued their studies at the beginning of the year in Semmelweis University. Their studies in Hungary mainly included clinical studies promoting professional skills both in hospitals and in primary health care. In

Hungary, the students took at minimum 20-25 ECTS credits during the three-month Erasmus exchange programme.

The credit recognition plan was checked several times during the exchange period, and final recognition took place immediately after the conclusion of the exchanges with the help of the officer responsible for the study register. For the purposes of credit recognition, similarities between courses were examined, and the contents, goals and workloads of courses, aims of the programme, learning outcomes and the qualification obtained were verified several times. Laurea's degree certificate, a transcript of records and the Diploma Supplement were drawn up to comply with the Finnish National Board of Education's instructions (2009). The students first received their degree certificates from their home institution, after which their studies at Laurea and Semmelweis could be recognised as part of their degree from Nazareth College. In this programme the students received two separate degree certificates, in addition to which a separate TCN Certificate was attached. A condition for obtaining the degree certificate was passing the HESI examination, which proved a challenge for the students. A requirement for taking the HESI exam outside the United States was that the host institution granted Laurea rights to administrate a HESI examination.

The exchange students coming to Laurea from Semmelweis University and Nazareth College came at different times and with different study backgrounds. As they arrived, orientation studies were organised for these students on subjects including the pedagogical LbD model in Laurea, Finnish culture, the student's role and practical arrangements. The students from Semmelweis University were fourth-year students who had already completed their studies in the USA. The Americans were as a rule second-year students who had completed their general studies and started on their first year of nursing studies.

The studies offered to the exchange students at Laurea included an introduction to the Finnish health care system, evidence-based action in health promotion, evidence-based nursing, making a start with a Bachelor's thesis, clinical placements mainly in primary health care as well as Finnish studies. Other exchange students in various degree programmes and a few of Laurea's Finnish students also took part in these studies.

Additionally, the students took part in the planning and implementation of the annual International Week as project work. After they had completed their studies, feedback was collected from the students on the progress of and arrangements for their studies using the online INKA feedback form targeted at international students. An e-mail questionnaire was also sent to them on the theme of health promotion. Based on the feedback and teacher self-evaluations, modifications were made in the way the teaching was implemented the following year. The American students completed 34 ECTS credits at Laurea, whereas the Hungarian students completed 27-29 ECTS credits. Their studies were regularly guided by teacher and student tutors.

The first teacher exchanges took place in 2008 with the key aim of comparing curricula as well as the contents, implementation and methods of study. Later on, teacher exchanges played a role in implementing the teaching together with the teachers at Nazareth College,

which improved the recognisability of the dual degree programme. The exchange teachers from Semmelweis University and Nazareth College annually took part in the International Week organised at Laurea. Teacher exchanges also took place at other times, and they were used to pilot new courses including Dance Movement Therapy in Nursing, Health Terminology and a course in Health Assessment. In order to improve the results of the HESI final examination, Nazareth College sent a teacher specialising in these issues to Laurea.

## TCN project evaluation

### **Evaluation of the project's planning stage**

Semmelweis University and Nazareth College had jointly prepared a plan for launching a dual degree project within the framework of the EU-US-Atlantis programme. Laurea was invited to join in because of the institution's long-term confidential cooperation with Semmelweis University. Laurea only became involved as the parties were about to submit their application for EU and FIPSE funding. As a result, Laurea had no joint and clear understanding of the project's goals and the operating methods the partners intended to use to organise the education. Project implementation started immediately once the funding decision had been received, and project planning and implementation thus coincided. For this reason, the personnel and teaching resources required to cope with the project were not adequately taken into account in the planning stage. Neither was any preparation made for publication and research activities.

Laurea had plenty of experience in organising international student exchanges, but none in planning and implementing a dual degree programme in nursing with a partner from outside the EU area. Knowledge of the American nursing education system would have been vital in the project planning stage, and it would have considerably facilitated the planning, organisation and recognition of studies.

### **Evaluation of the project's implementation phase**

The evaluation methods used included self-assessment and external evaluation. Self-assessment refers to a critical evaluation of the activities made by the project organisation members. Optimally, self-assessment is carried out both in the implementation and the closing stage. An external evaluation provides a neutral view of project implementation. External evaluators can pinpoint strengths or weaknesses that those working with the project on a daily basis may miss. (Paasivaara et al. 2008). The external evaluator in this project was the EACEA, which provided annual feedback on project implementation and development needs. The annual reports served both as self-assessment and external evaluation.

Drawing on the methods of continuous improvement, it was possible to develop the programme in the implementation stage of the TCN project by means of questionnaires completed by the students and almost daily tutor meetings. Finding clinical placements for the students was difficult, partly because of their poor availability. Additionally, the critical attitudes of persons providing clinical placements concerning their own language skills and

competence to supervise students from different cultures required extra efforts and legwork in order to find placements. Cooperation between primary health care actors and supervisors became closer as the project progressed. Another development target emerged as well: the fact that the studies should have been integrated better in the actual offer of education to give Finnish students a better chance of taking part in the studies offered.

### **Evaluation of the project's closing phase**

Project competence also includes concluding a project appropriately and following instructions. All reports and other project activities assigned to the project staff must be completed within the time period set for the project in the funding decision. (Karhatsu & Rossi 2002.) Few researches have been carried out on the subject of concluding projects. According to Barkley & Saylor (2001), the more customer-oriented a project is and the more essential its goals are, the more important the critical evaluation and analytical conclusion of the project is considered. Paasivaara et al. (2008) note that in the closing phase of a project, the stakeholders are informed of the outcomes, an evaluation is carried out and the integration of the outcomes in usual activities begins. The project tasks are wrapped up in a joint closing meeting and concluding the activities of the project team plays a key role. In the closing phase, the project outcomes are presented and disseminated as widely as possible, and the organisation thinks about and plans the future use of the outcomes.

In the closing phase, the outcomes are transplanted as part of practice. The activities continue even if the project ends, and the activities have achieved an established position in the organisation. The project may also be combined with another similar project, resulting in a new project which in fact consists of the old projects or their best operative or goal-oriented ideas. (Virtanen 2000.)

The TCN project was concluded in September at a Closing Conference, which took place in Hungary at Semmelweis University and in which papers evaluating the project were given. The conference described the outcomes from the perspectives of the teachers and students and the opinions and experiences of exchange students who came to Laurea regarding study arrangements and learning experiences (Ikonen & Rautiainen 2012). All partners involved in the project, including the students, took part in the conference. The final report of the project evaluating the success of the entire project and its budget was submitted to the EACEA by the end of October 2012.

### **Outcomes of the TCN project**

As stated in the Memorandum of Understanding, the project's goals included expanding cooperation and promoting the internationalisation of education and multicultural nursing. A specific goal was creating a degree programme that leads to a dual degree in nursing and that is formally recognized in the USA and the EU. The MoU also contained more detailed operating guidelines on such aspects as project organisation, student and teacher exchanges, funding, follow-up, publications and the roles of the project partners.



The TCN project extended academic cooperation in the transatlantic direction, as this was the first American-European international dual degree in nursing. Furthermore, the programme was the first dual degree in nursing in Finland funded by the EACEA. In the USA, the programme received the Innovation of Nursing Award in 2010. Awareness was raised of the dual degree programme in Finland by presenting it at the National Nurses Conference organised by the Finnish Nurses Association, events promoting education in North America organised by the CIMO, at an information event on education held by the US Embassy and at Laurea's LbD conference.

Internationally, information about the programme was disseminated at a nursing conference in Washington, at a meeting of project managers for joint and dual degree programmes in Berlin, at an EAIE conference in Copenhagen, at an ICERI conference in Madrid, at a Going Global education conference in London and at student conferences in Warsaw and Turkey.

Based on feedback collected at Laurea, an understanding of transcultural nursing can be attained in the clinical placement. The students had a greater understanding of the differences between health care and education systems in various countries. The student exchanges also helped them gain insights into the different roles of nurses, appreciation of the work and areas of responsibility. The students started networking while pursuing their studies, and they continue to keep in touch through a group set up in the social media (Huusko & Savolainen 2012.)

A specific goal was to create a degree programme leading to a dual degree in nursing that is formally recognized in the USA and in Europe. Based on a comparison of curricula, tables were prepared on similarities between the studies, based on which a personal study plan was prepared for each student at Laurea. In the planning of the study schedules, the timing of teaching arrangements in the USA had to be taken into consideration, and the students had to register for the courses at least two months before their started. A model for study recognition was prepared to adjust the student administration system (Winha) and the certificate templates. During the project, Laurea's own guidelines on international dual and joint degrees were prepared in Finnish and English based on the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2008 (Laurea University of Applied Sciences 2011).

The students found the dual degree programme in nursing attractive from the start. At Laurea, the total number of applicants to the programme was 34, of whom 17 were selected. So far, 12 students at Laurea have obtained certificates in the dual degree programme. The study times of the students in the dual degree programme did not become extended, and they graduated within the regular time limits. After their graduation, the students have experienced no problems in finding employment in nursing jobs that correspond with their education. A few have gone to work abroad. Each of the American students completed studies amounting to 34 ECTS credits, and the Hungarian students took 25-30 ECTS credits at Laurea. On average, Laurea students completed a total of 80-85 ECTS credits at the partner institutions.

Based on the feedback received, the coaching period was developed by explaining Laurea's idea of learning and the LbD learning model to the students more thoroughly. To ensure that the student exchanges would be successful and to provide additional coaching, three of the graduating students prepared a manual for exchange students going to the USA from Laurea as their Bachelor's thesis (Jokitalo et al. 2010). In the coaching and during the exchange period, peer tutoring by the students themselves played a key role. Students having taken part in the programme also attended the entrance examinations of Finnish new exchange students and were able to answer any questions that the applicants may have had.

Teachers from Laurea went to the USA on teacher exchanges a total of 16 times, while teacher exchanges directed from the partner institutions to Laurea took place 24 times during the project. A steering group with six members was appointed at Laurea at the beginning of the project. In addition, other actors involved in the project representing administrative and teaching staff totalled eight persons during the project. In the course of the project, the nursing courses in English were developed and their number was increased so that courses amounting to 60 ECTS credits could be taken in English. The theme of the courses at Laurea was evidence-based health promotion, which was the focal point of the new courses.

For purposes of quality assurance, INKA feedback forms were filled in by the students on the arrangements of the exchanges and, on a separate occasion, issues related to learning. The teachers completed self-assessments of their courses, on the basis of which changes were made. A Quality Handbook (2009) was published for the purposes of quality assurance during the project, which described the sub-processes of the project and defined their critical success factors. (Rautiainen et al. 2009.)

## Conclusions

It can be said that the TCN project was highly successful in terms of the goals set, resources, schedule and budget. As the project was the first of its kind, the resources allocated to its planning and implementation turned out to be inadequate. Neither had any funding been set aside for research within the framework of the project. The project has ended, but the cooperation in terms of the dual degree continues, and in the future Laurea will also have the right to grant degrees to American students. Student exchanges will continue, and the student numbers will be agreed upon on an annual basis. There are plans to continue teacher exchanges on Fulbright grants. The project also sparked the idea of launching a Master's level degree programme and planning of Bachelor's level of Public Health programme in cooperation with the old and new partners.

## References

Barkley B & Seylor J. 2001. Customer - Driven Project Management. Building Quality in to Project Processes. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Bryde D & Leighton D. 2009. Improving HEI Productivity and Performance through Project Management. Sage Publications. Educational Management Administration & Leadership 2009 37:705.

European Union. 2006. Agreement between the European Community and the United States of America renewing the cooperation programme in higher education and vocational education and training. Official Journal of the European Union, 9.12.2006.

European Commission. 2004. Aid Delivery Methods Project Cycle Management Guidelines, Volume 1. Supporting effective implementation of EC External Assistance.

Finnish National Board of Education. 2007. Planning and Development of Joint Degrees. Recommendations August 2007.

Finnish National Board of Education. 2009. Diploma Supplement to be used in international contexts, instructions for drawing up the supplement. Recommendations 11/2009.

Finnish National Board of Education. 2010. Design and Implementation of Joint/Double Degrees.[PDFdokumentti][www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/ammattikorkeakoulutus/lomakkeita\\_ja\\_paeaetoeksiaa/Liitteet/125327\\_yhteistutk\\_muistio\\_heinakuu2010.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/ammattikorkeakoulutus/lomakkeita_ja_paeaetoeksiaa/Liitteet/125327_yhteistutk_muistio_heinakuu2010.pdf). <Read 4.5.2012>).

Fränti M & Pirinen R. 2005. Tutkiva oppiminen integratiivisissa oppimisympäristöissä BarLaurea ja REDLabs. Publications of Laurea University of Applied Sciences B 10. Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy.

Huusko A & Savolainen J. 2012. Sosiaalinen media verkostoitumisen välineenä hoitotyön kaksoistutkinto-ohjelmassa. Thesis 2012. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Ikonen T & Rautiainen T. 2012. Experiences of the Incoming Students' Mobility at Laurea University of Applied Sciences in the TCN – program. Closing Conference presentation at Semmelweis University, Budapest.

International Double and Joint Degrees. 2011. Instructions at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Laurea President decisions no 58, 27.5.2011.

Jokitalo K, Pahlman L & Koiranen M. 2010. Kansainvälinen hoitotyön kaksoistutkinto – Opas EU-USA Atlantis vaihto-ohjelmaan. Bachelor's thesis 2010, Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Karhatsu E & Rossi M. 2002. Projektin vetäjän opas. EU Structural Funds publications of Southern Finland State Provincial Office 2. State Provincial Office of Southern Finland. Department of education and culture. Helsinki: Hakapaino.

Kerzner H. 1998. In Search of Excellence in Project Management. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Paasivaara L, Suhonen M & Nikkilä J. 2008. Innostavat projektit. The Finnish Nurses' Association. Helsinki.

Pääkkä E & Makkonen S. 2003. Arviointi ja itsearviointi projektin työvälineinä. Publications of the State Provincial Office of Eastern Finland, no 82. Joensuun yliopistopaino.

Rautiainen T, Ikonen T & Havukainen P. 2009. Quality Handbook for TCN Program. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Seppänen-Järvelä R. 2004. Prosessiarviointi kehittämisprojektissa. Opas käytäntöihin. Stakes, FinSoc Arviointiraportteja 4/2004, Helsinki.

Tonnquist B. 2008. Project management, A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Project, Program and Portfolio Management, and Business change. Stockholm: Bonnier Utbildning Ab.

Uotila P. 2011. Projektin suunnittelun narratiivinen rakentuminen. Acta Wasaensia, 236. University of Vaasa, Faculty of Philosophy, Communication Studies.

Virtanen P. 2000. Projektityö. WSOY. Porvoo.

Virtanen P. 2009. Projekti strategian toteuttajana. Tietosanoma. Tallinn.

# Laurea teachers' views on learning in the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme

*Pirjo Havukainen, PhD, Principal Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the views of teachers participating in the TCN programme by means of interviews. The idea behind the TCN (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing) programme was to develop higher education studies in nursing in the participating countries. The educational institutions implementing this programme were Semmelweis University in Hungary, Nazareth College in the United States and Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) in Finland. Participation in the programme gave students the possibility to obtain a dual degree in Nursing (EU-US). (A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007.)

The TCN programme offered teachers the opportunity to participate in teaching at a home university as well as at partner institutions, to work in so-called steering groups and to participate in evaluative round table discussions between partners and students. The programme also gave them the opportunity to become acquainted with educational systems in other countries. These opportunities are very important because of the growing number of students and teachers participating in international exchange programmes. Teachers increasingly need international experience and competence to be prepared to guide their students to work in international placements and in an increasingly globalised world.

## Key features of project management in the TCN project

The Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing and the Transatlantic Degree Project endeavour to develop curriculums for the project participants. This process will be developed and teachers in the various countries will become acquainted with the teaching and learning methods and how to tutor and coach incoming and outgoing students. The project will be balanced between developing policy priorities and the priorities of the partners. (See Project Cycle Management Guidelines 2004.) In addition to balancing the project budget, the

success of the project demands good leadership and teamwork between the different partners (see Project Cycle Management Guidelines 2004; Larson & Drexler 2012). The project needs flexibility, close collaboration between partners and partner institutions. The definition of its scope, work breakdown structures, critical path scheduling, time-phased budgeting, resource levelling and earned value are all essential aspects of project management. Also, stakeholder management, leadership, problem solving, negotiations and issue selling are some of the many behavioural skills needed to complete the project. As a whole, project management is truly a socio-technical discipline. (Larson & Drexler 2012.)

Networking with partners in other organisations can be seen as a crucial point for the development of new products and processes. The TCN partner network is both relatively formal - it has been founded based on financial and educational property - and also based on personal contacts and a long-term collaboration relationship with one of the project partners, the Hungarian partner. (See Newell & Swan 2000.) This kind of educational network collaboration demands a certain level of trust between the co-operation partners. Trust means dealing with a certain amount of risk, uncertainty and vulnerability in terms of the project (see Newell & Swan 2000). Newell & Swan cite Luhman's (1988) impression of the project in their article: "trust occurs in situations of risk and uncertainty because a system requires trust as an input condition in order to stimulate supportive activities in situations of uncertainty or risk" (Newell & Swan 2000).

Partners in a collaborative group, such as the TCN partners, should be clear about their roles. Partners should communicate and co-operate fluently and openly. They also need to be flexible and adaptable in their co-operation. If the co-operation between partners work as well formally as it does informally, there are possibilities for successful project collaboration (see Connolly & James 2006). It is also important to be aware of the cultural differences between partners and different expectations about co-operation or attitudes and concepts of learning and teaching. The teachers and leaders in a project may have different values or they may make different judgments that result in different interpretations of "good education", and therefore, they can have diverse purposes and criteria for success when working together (see Connolly & James 2006). That is why it is important to take time to find a common ground and a common understanding of the partners' roles and duties and an understanding of the partners' learning and teaching concepts.

## Key features of the pedagogical issues

In Finland, the "Learning by Developing" (LbD) action model has been used in teaching and student learning. Organising this kind of teaching and learning requires collaboration among lectures, students and workplace experts. The subjects of teaching at Laurea included health promotion, health care in Finland (health problems and the system of health care), maternity health care and aspects of cultural sensitivity. The defining characteristics of the LbD model can be described by referring to the concepts of authenticity, partnership, trust, creativity and an investigative approach (Raij 2007). Authenticity was realised during the learning process when it came to real-life situations or working life projects. Partnership was an essential part of collaboration and competence-sharing situations during the lessons (see Raij 2007). In that case, learning can be seen as the empowerment of students'

intercommunication skills as a part of collaborative and dialogue learning (Janhonen & Vanhanen-Nuutinen 2005). Through discussions, students could share their know-how and learn more from other students. It is important that a partnership between participants is built on trust. In discussions and through their actions, participants share their experiences. (see Taatila & Raij 2011.) The idea in international discussions is that students can express their views without having to worry about being criticised by other group members. (See Sarja 2000; Lee 2003; Janhonen & Vanhanen-Nuutinen 2005.) During the learning process, students are seen as participants who are responsible for their own learning. During the study period, both assessments and development work allow students to use their creativity. Essentially, this means that everyone is on a journey somewhere. (See Raij 2007.) The LbD action model highlights an investigative approach to learning. This approach refers to a research-based and critically oriented way of working (see Raij 2007); for example, this may pertain to research-based decision making or to utilising research in learning assignments.

Tutoring, supervising and giving feedback all help promote student learning according to the LbD action model. Feedback has been identified as one of the most critical influences on student learning; in such instances, the quality and way that the feedback is provided are essential (Hattie & Timberly 2007). Teachers have to pay attention to culturally sensitive feedback in discussions with international students. Teachers need to take into account their students' cultural backgrounds. The relationship between the teacher and the students is central in tutoring. (Wang & Li 2011.) Wang & Li (2011) point out in their study that students who come from cultures where the authority of the teacher is emphasised may consider it challenging to communicate openly with their teachers. In tutoring and feedback situations, teachers should be aware of the cultural differences of students and the cultural influences impacting their tutorial discussions (see Wang & Li 2011).

International co-operation, student tutoring and student and teacher exchanges require being acquainted with the partner institutions' learning possibilities as well their theoretical frameworks and learning concepts. The Nursing Department at Nazareth College indicates that culturally congruent care is the cornerstone of its nursing education programme (Nazareth College – Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012). Leininger & McFarland also highlight the idea that “cultural care is the essence of nursing and a distinct, dominant, central, and unifying focus” (Leininger & McFarland 2002). Additionally, Nazareth College emphasises communication and critical thinking in education in order to prepare students to be well-informed, open-minded and flexible nurses (Nazareth College – Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012). These pedagogical ideas pertaining to cultural views and critical thinking are important dimensions of knowledge production for nursing students at Nazareth College.

Semmelweis University offers students participating in the TCN programme the possibility to learn and improve their professional competence in critical-care nursing in a clinical setting (See A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007). According to the American Association for Critical-Care Nurses, “Critical-care nursing is the specialty within nursing that deals specifically with human responses to life-threatening problems for

ensuring that acute and critically ill patients and their families receive optimal care” (see American Association for Critical-Care Nurses 2012).

## Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to describe the views of teachers participating in the TCN programme by means of interviews. The main goal is to produce knowledge that promotes curriculum development and international co-operation.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What kinds of views do teachers have about TCN programme management?
2. What kinds of views do teachers have on the pedagogical issues of the TCN programme?
3. What kinds of suggestions do teachers have for making use of the experiences gained through the TCN programme for further co-operation?

## Data and methods

The gathering and analysing of data was based on principles of qualitative analysis (see Mays & Pope 2000; Mayreing 2007). The data consisted of answers to interview questions posed to three Finnish teachers. The data was collected during the year 2011. Questions from the interview focused on the following themes: experience with project management, teachers' views on pedagogical issues, utilising the experiences gained through the TCN programme for further co-operation. The teachers who participated in the interviews had different positions in the project. One of the teachers was a project manager for the Finnish part of the programme and also helped tutor the students. Together with another teacher, she also taught classes and administered the entrance examination for students applying to the TCN programme. One of the teachers participated in the program mainly by teaching from home and in partner institutions.

The data was analysed qualitatively using inductive content analysis. A progressive way of action was used for the data analysis. The aims of the research, the themes and the research questions steered the analysis. (Lamnek 2005; Mayering 2007.) The written documents for this study were read thoroughly several times to gain a sense of all of the data. A thematic entity was used as a unit of analysis. The number of units of analysis was 560. Based on the data, the answers from teachers were classified into subcategories, and these inductively produced further subcategories, which then were categorised as main categories. The purpose of this qualitative study was not so much to try to find an objective truth as it was to identify the views of teachers regarding the TCN programme.



## Findings

The results of teachers' data analysis are presented according to the research questions.

### Teachers' views on TCN programme management

Based on the data, four main categories for teachers' views on TCN project management have been identified. The categories were as follows: learning how to work with applications and reports, learning about project management, learning how to handle negotiations and operational practices between international partners and learning how to create and participate in multi-professional networks (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Teachers' views on TCN programme management

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning how to write applications and reports</li> <li>• Learning the language of EU applications</li> <li>• Learning how to co-operate with partners</li> </ul>	Learning how to working with applications and reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding perseverance and the requirements of the project and the project organisation</li> <li>• Understanding the importance of early preparation</li> <li>• Learning how to create action model and tools</li> <li>• Understanding the importance of timetables</li> <li>• Learning about the validation process of qualification</li> <li>• Utilising supporting factors of the project</li> <li>• Creating an application and student admission practices</li> </ul>	Learning about project management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about the working methods of international partners</li> <li>• Learning the importance of confident and open communication</li> <li>• Learning about negotiation language in intercultural communications</li> </ul>	Learning how to handle negotiations and operational practices between international partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about multi-professional networking</li> <li>• Learning how to build national and international networks</li> <li>• Learning about tutoring and how to act in multi-professional networks</li> </ul>	Learning how to create and participate in inter-professional networks

Teachers gained experience in project management. They learned to anticipate different phases of the project. They learned to write applications and project reports. They learned to use different tools, plan timetables and use the help of the student office. The project language became familiar to them and their language skills improved. The teachers also learned about network co-operation. They learned more about their partners' learning and

teaching cultures. This all facilitated the running of the project, further co-operation between the partners and completing the project.

#### Learning how to work with applications and reports

*“I have learned to write applications and to read guidance books on applications during the TCN programme. I have also learned to understand the language and concepts of EU applications and the way of writing an application. With the help of collaborative writing with partners, I have learned to describe the progress of the project. This has also helped me to make applications consistent between partner institutions. Application text should be elaborated. The annual report from the US has been useful for EU reporting.”*

#### Learning about project management

*“I have learned about project management and how to organise a demanding TCN project. I have noticed that these kinds of projects demand perseverance. It is important to anticipate matters/issues as early as possible before the project has even begun. It is important to be able to make timetables. For the TCN project, there was no previous model available. At the beginning, I did not have any ideas about what kinds of tools would be needed for the model. Different tables have been useful for project planning and management. It has taken time to learn to modify the study register and follow and understand the legislation process of a double degree for American students. The student office has been very useful in [helping me understand] this legislation process. The application and selection process for students starts to become easy now and part of a normal routine. I no longer need a handbook for this application process.”*

#### Learning how to handle negotiations and operational practices between international partners

*“Cultural acknowledgement is very important in negotiation situations in order to manage and avoid personal insults and not underestimate the partners’ curricula and working methods. The working methods of our Hungarian partners have been helpful during the negotiation and collaboration process. We have become acquainted with our American partner with the help of our Hungarian partner. During this process, we have had the possibility to become acquainted with our partners’ working and teaching practices. Open discussions and argumentation is very important in international negotiations. My negotiation vocabulary and language skills in general have developed during these negotiations. We have learned to create a confident and open culture of negotiation.”*

Learning how to create and participate in inter-professional networks

*“I have learned to work and to move in different networks. I have also learned to look for new networks and in addition to this I have learned support and guide other colleagues to act in these networks.”*

Teachers’ views on the pedagogical issues of the TCN programme

Based on the data, three main categories pertaining to teachers’ views on the pedagogical issues that are a part of TCN programme management have been identified. The categories were as follows: being acquainted with international partners’ teaching practices as a way of developing and enriching teaching, comparing the studies and curriculums as a way of promoting how international studies are arranged and creating and developing international tutoring practices as a supporting factor in promoting student learning (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Teachers’ views on the pedagogical issues of the TCN programme

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning the importance of co-operative planning in international teaching</li><li>• Learning about participatory teaching according to the LbD model</li><li>• Learning about international partners’ teaching methods and assessment practices</li><li>• International teaching possibilities as a way of enriching teaching and learning experiences</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being acquainted with international partners’ teaching practices as a way of developing and enriching teaching</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increasing the transparency of the curriculums of international partners as a way of promoting and planning teaching</li><li>• Exact naming of study units as a way of promoting the comparison of the curriculums of international partners</li><li>• Curriculums in English as an enabling and promoting factor for comparing curriculums</li><li>• Learning about the educational systems of the international partners</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comparing the studies and curriculums as a way of promoting how international studies are arranged</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tutoring as a supportive factor in student learning and personal management</li><li>• Tutoring as a guiding factor in students’ patient and systematic learning and in their work</li><li>• Tutoring as an encouraging factor in students’ independent and individual learning</li><li>• Availability and timing of tutoring as a way of promoting student learning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating and developing international tutoring practices as a supporting factor in promoting student learning</li></ul>

Teachers have learned to know and value partners’ ways of teaching and conducting assessments. Teachers have also learned to teach exchange students according to the LbD model and to teach at the partner institutions. The transparency of the curriculums and curriculums’ availability in English are considered important because of the objectives of the

project and because of the possibilities for comparing the curriculums. The tutoring and guiding of exchange students and Laurea's students has proven to be very important both in terms of the progress of the students' learning and their emotional wellbeing.

Being acquainted with international partners' teaching practices as a way of developing and enriching teaching

*"International teaching demands an exact planning process. Participatory teaching and teaching according to the LbD model is challenging. I have learned to understand the American way of thinking - what they think about teaching, pedagogical issues, evaluations and assessment practices. It would be good to control student learning in the American way. The American way is not at all that bad a way to control students learning. It has also been useful and chastening to become acquainted with American online tests and assessments. I am very glad for these kinds of opportunities."*

Comparing the studies and curriculums as a way of promoting how international studies are arranged

*"Transparency and the availability of curriculums between partners are essential from a co-operation standpoint and also for the successful planning of teaching. It is also important that all of the partners' curriculums are available in English. This makes it easier to compare the curriculums. Having exact names for the study units makes it easier to compare the curriculums. Learning about the educational systems of the partner institutions has been helpful for organising learning and making teaching arrangements. Through this experience, my knowledge of and competences in curriculum planning have increased."*

Creating and developing international tutoring practices as a supporting factor in promoting student learning

*"It is very important to take a personal interest in incoming and outgoing students and to support the way in which their studies are managed. It is also very important to personally discuss issues with exchange students, to go through their study programme and to take care of their personal life as well as their home situation, homesickness, exhaustion and difficulties in listening to foreign languages. Students might not be willing to express their emotions and feelings in group situations. The purpose of tutoring in the TCN programme is to encourage and motivate students in their learning process and to guide students to act persistently and systematically."*

*"It is continuously important to keep in contact with students. The importance of guiding them is essential during the learning process according to the LBD model, while learning according to the LbD model demands an ability to work independently. Most international students have learned to keep in close contact with their teachers. Student exchanges and the international partners' differing*

*teaching methods have indicated the need for tutoring those students who come from different cultures. It is very important to make sure that the tutoring is appropriate, functional and well organised so that students make progress in their studies.”*

### **Teachers’ suggestions for making use of their experiences in working with the TCN programme**

Based on the data, six main categories of teachers’ viewpoints on how to make use of the experiences they have gained while working with the TCN project have been identified. The categories were as follows: regular communication between partners as a way of promoting project management, confirming possibilities for comparing and developing curriculums, investing in the steering of student learning and having feedback discussions as a way of promoting student learning, confirming possibilities for facilitating communication between exchange and Laurea students, disseminating the results of the TCN project and utilising international learning experiences for further international study programmes (table 3).

**Table 3:** Teachers suggestions for making use of their experiences in working with the TCN programme

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable progress and sharing of information between partners</li> <li>• Partners’ regular and personal appointments and meetings concerning project management</li> <li>• Confirming invulnerability of project management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication between partners as a way of promoting project management</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being acquainted with the partner institutions’ curriculum and learning methods</li> <li>• Viewing the exact naming of study units as enabling factor for comparing curriculums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirming possibilities for comparing and developing curriculums</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student coaching and investing in tutoring as a way of promoting student learning</li> <li>• Round-table feedback discussions as a way of promoting student learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investing in the tutoring and guiding of student learning and having feedback discussions as a way of promoting student learning</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating learning opportunities between exchange and Laurea students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirming possibilities for facilitating communication between exchange and Laurea students</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Treating the double degree as a notable possibility for students studying at Laurea</li> <li>• Reporting and disseminating the results of the TCN programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disseminating the results of the TCN project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing students’ international work experience and study possibilities</li> <li>• Transfer of international study experiences to international study programmes</li> <li>• Inducement for nursing applicants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising international learning experiences for application and further international study programmes</li> </ul>

It has been discovered that it is essential to maintain an open and continuous personal or virtual connection between the TCN partners. It is important to keep each other informed about the progress of the project and student learning. Utilising student experiences has helped teachers provide better tutoring both for our own students and for exchange students. Arranging meetings between Laurea and the exchange students and also common study possibilities has been productive, but these options still need to be developed further at Laurea. It has been difficult to compare the study programmes because the curriculums at the partner universities are quite different. Having the exact and understandable names and descriptions for the study units would make it easier to compare the different curriculums. It is important to highlight the benefits of the double-degree programme and to highlight the fact that the programme is a good opportunity for nursing students to improve their international skills.

Regular communication between partners as a way of promoting project management

*“Continuous communication between the partners is the most important factor for the success and progress of the project. The partners have learned to communicate and to ask necessary questions during the project. It is also important to make sure that the project is not in the hands of a few persons in order to avoid the vulnerability of the project. Monthly or weekly discussions concerning the project and students’ studies are necessary. Sometimes it is also important to act as an advocate for students.”*

Confirming the possibilities for communication between exchange and Laurea students

*“Meetings between Laurea students and exchange students have been very poor in Finland. In America, home and foreign students study together. At Laurea, common lectures for exchange students and Laurea students have mainly been organised during the international week. These common lectures for Laurea and exchange students are also desirable and target the development of Laurea.”*

Investing in the steering of student learning and having feedback discussions as a way of promoting student learning

*“It has been important to invest in coaching and tutoring for students. The experiences of the first exchange students have been utilised in order to develop coaching and tutoring for students. Round-table discussions between the partners and semi-regular meetings between the partners and students help promote student learning and develop the tutoring [services that are provided]. Project leaders’ discussions with individual students are important and fruitful. Discussions help promote learning for the individual student.”*

Confirming the possibilities for comparing and developing curriculums

*“Addressing the differences between the curriculums of the partner institutions has been challenging. The exact names and descriptions of the study units as well as*

*curriculums in English are some of the most important and enabling factors for transparency and comparing the curriculums of the partner institutions.”*

#### Disseminating the results of the TCN project

*“It is very important to inform [students about] the benefits of the TCN double-degree programme at their home institutions. It is also important to convey the fact that the double degree is a big opportunity for nursing students. The programme prepares students to manage in the international world. [Information about] the programme has been disseminated in national and international conferences and the results of the programme have also been presented in meetings.”*

#### Utilising international learning experiences for further international study programmes

*“The world is becoming increasingly international. Students can utilise their international experiences in their own countries. They have wide possibilities to work as nurses in different countries. After being exchange students, students have capitalised on their experiences by tutoring incoming and outgoing students and also by helping with the process of attracting new applicants. The double-degree programme in nursing has functioned well because it has offered opportunities for nursing applicants. The programme has made it possible for Laurea students to study abroad and for them to meet incoming exchange students during the Tikkurila international week.”*

## Discussion

According to the findings of this study, teachers have learned about project management and about such pedagogical issues as their partners’ curriculums and teaching practices. Teachers have also gained ideas about how to make use of what they have learned as part of the TCN programme in negotiations and tutorial situations and for disseminating the results of the project.

Teachers have also learned that project management requires perseverance and early preparation work on organising the programme, well-organized scheduling and suitable tools, for example tables and worksheets. They have learned how to easily create applications and organise student admission practices during the project. Learning the language of negotiation and about their partners’ culture and working and teaching methods has helped facilitate co-operation. Teachers have also learned to work in different networks and to seek out national and international networks. According to Newell & Swan (2000), these kinds of networking opportunities with individuals in other organizations can be seen as one of the crucial points for the development of new products and processes.

According to the findings, teachers have learned the importance of co-operative planning in international teaching. They have gained valuable practice in participatory teaching using the LbD model. Teachers have had the possibility to teach in partner countries and in

different cultural environments. For teachers, it was important to learn about their partners' teaching methods and assessment practices. These all functioned as ways to promote and enrich their teaching. Being acquainted with their partners' educational systems, making the curriculums more transparent and using exact names for the study units has made it easier for teaching and for comparing the curriculums. It can be assumed that all of this has increased teachers' cultural competences. This may be one of the most important elements in creating a global cultural consciousness at higher education institutions (see Nieto & Booth 2010). Teachers as curriculum developers need to be knowledgeable about the future environments in which their student will be working (see Joseph & Juwah 2012).

According to the findings, tutoring functioned as a supportive and guiding factor in student learning. It helped promote student learning and also helped encourage students to engage in independent and individual learning. Creating and developing international tutoring practices worked as a supporting factor in student learning. Wang & Li (2011) argue that dialogue and culturally sensitive feedback are essential when supervising international students. Tutors have to take into account their international students' cultural backgrounds in order to make the communication process easier and to avoid confrontations. (See Wang & Li 2011.)

It is assumed that participation in the TCN programme has increased both teachers' professional growth and their cognitive skills and competences in the international domain (See Law et al. 2011). International exchanges and cross-border education have become widespread in order to educate a workforce that can think and act globally. It is also acknowledged that many international organisations, including those in the health care sector, are seeking employees with characteristics and skills that enable them to be more competitive and skilful in the international area. (Gül et al. 2010.) A core mission of higher education institutions such as Laurea UAS, Semmelweis University and Nazareth College is to ensure that students are qualified and specialised in labour and able to serve the community. These institutes have also provided a public good by making a valuable contribution to creating a more globalised society. (See Joseph 2011.) The TCN programme, in its own small way, has supposedly helped teachers to make progress in this respect.

The TCN project has produced useful knowledge about international project management as well as about how to work and arrange teaching practices with international partners. During the project, the partners have been able to create practices concerning customs for project management and they have been able to devise comparable curriculums and student tutoring. The findings have encouraged and prepared TCN participants to continue co-operating with and developing shared curriculums for all the countries involved and to give study possibilities for new students.

## Ethical considerations and reliability

The collected data for this study was versatile in spite of the fact that there was only the possibility to interview three teachers. That is why this study can be considered a means for describing teachers' experiences and facilitating the progress of the project. The data was



collected separately from these three teachers. The principles of content analysis were followed in the data analysis.

In this study, the reliability of the study was evaluated according to the criteria for credibility, confirmability, reflectivity and transferability (Malterud 2001). The researcher's insight into the science of education and nursing increased the credibility of these results. The categorisation and data-based examples presented in the article have supposedly increased confirmability. The researcher was aware of his/her prior conceptions and of the aim of the study and was not deeply involved in the education part of the programme. That might increase the reflectivity of the study. The results of this study can be transferred to similar learning programmes in nursing.

## References

American Association for Critical-Care Nurses 2012. Address: <http://www.aacn.org/>. Read 19.2.2013.

Connolly M & James C. 2006. Collaboration in school improvement. A resource dependency and institutional framework of analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. 34(1), 69-87.

Gül H, Gül SS, Kaya E & Alican A. 2010. Main trends in the world of higher education, internationalization and institutional autonomy. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 9, 1878-1884.

Hattie J & Timperly H. 2007. The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research* 77 (1), 81-112.

Janhonen S & Vanhanen-Nuutinen L. 2005. Asiantuntijuuden kehittyminen sosiaali- ja terveysalalla. Teoksessa S. Janhonen S. & L. Vanhanen-Nuutinen (toim.) *Kohti asiantuntijuutta – Oppiminen ja ammatillinen kasvu sosiaali- ja terveysalalla*. Vantaa: WSOY, 12-53.

Joseph C. 2011. Internationalizing the curriculum. *Pedagogy for social justice Current Sociology* 60 (2), 239–257.

Joseph S & Juwah C. 2012. Using constructive alignment theory to develop nursing skills curricula. *Nurse Education in Practice* 12, 52-59.

Lamnek S. 2005. *Qualitative Sozialforschung*. Weinheim: Berliz Verlag.

Larson E & Drexler JA. 2010. Project Management in Real Time: A Service-Learning Project. *Journal of Management Education* 34(4), 551–573.

Law K, Mur N & Thompson K. 2011. An evaluation of a European teacher exchange programme. *Nurse Education Today* 31, 76-81.

Lee RLT, Pang SMC, Wong TKS & Chan MF. 2007. Evaluation of an innovative nursing exchange programme: Health counseling skills and cultural awareness. *Nurse Education today* 27, 868-877.

Leininger MM & McFarland MR. 2002. *Transcultural nursing: Concepts, theories, research & practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Malterud K. 2001. Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *Qualitative research Series* 358 (11), 483-488.

Mayering P. 2007. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*. Weinheim: Belz Verlag.

Mays N & Pope C. 2000. Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal* 1, 50-52.

Nazareth College – Department of Nursing student Handbook 2011-2012. 2011. Nursing Department Verification of Receipt of Nursing Student Handbook I.

Newel S & Swan J. 2000. Trust and inter-organizational networking. *Human Relations* 53(10), 1287–1328.

Nieto C & Both MC. 2010. Cultural competence its influence on the Teaching and Learning on International Students. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 14 (4), 406-425.

Project Cycle Management Guidelines – Aid Delivery Methods. 2004. Supporting effective implementation Institute of EC External Assistance. European Commission, March 2004. Address: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/world>. Read 19.2.2013.

Raij K. 2007. *Learning by developing*. Laurea Publications A. 58. Helsinki 2007: Edita Prima Oy.

Sarja A. 2000. "Dialogioppiminen ryhmä- ja yksilötasolla hoitotyön kontekstissa". *Aikuiskasvatus* 20 (2), pp. 99-108.

Taatila VP & Raij K. 2011. Philosophical Review of Pragmatism as a Basis for Learning by Developing Pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44(8), 831-844.

A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing. 2007. EU-US Atlantis Program – cooperation in higher education and training application form – Transatlantic degree consortium project. Submission: 31. May 2007.

Wang T & Li L. 2011. 'Tell me what to do' vs. 'guide me through it': Feedback experiences of international doctoral students. *Active Learning in Higher Education* 12(2), 101–112.

# Students views on learning nursing through the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme

*Pirjo Havukainen, PhD, Principal Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the views of nursing students (baccalaureate) participating in the four-year TCN (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing) programme by means of written and interview documents collected at the end of the study period. The idea behind the TCN programme was to develop a higher education programme in nursing in three participating countries. The educational institutions implementing this programme were Semmelweis University in Hungary, Nazareth College in the United States and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland. Participation in the programme gave students the possibility to gain a Dual Degree in Nursing (EU-USA). (A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007.)

The TCN programme offered students the possibility to benefit from the strengths of each partner institute. Students had the possibility to study emergency nursing at Semmelweis University, transcultural nursing at Nazareth College and health promotion and evidence-based health promotion and the ideas of “Learning by Developing” (LbD) at Laurea (A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007). The international exchange programmes offered students the possibility to gain experience in different aspects of the culture of the host country, for example to become better acquainted with the people and their customs (Shieh 2004). As an added value, the TCN programme addresses the global challenges of nursing and the cultural competences demanded by the job along with new demands set by society (A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007).

## Key features of the nursing content at the partner institutions

Each institution involved in the TCN programme has organized the nursing courses in their units; the courses address different nursing and clinical problems. Semmelweis University has concentrated on emergency (critical-care) nursing in clinical practice, while Nazareth

College has focused on transcultural nursing in different nursing subjects and Laurea University of Applied Science has addressed the need for health promotion and evidence-based health promotion. (see A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007.)

Semmelweis University is known for its ability to address crisis situations and improve professional competence in critical-care nursing (see A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007). According to the American Association for Critical-Care Nurses, “Critical-care nursing is the specialty within nursing that deals specifically with human responses to life-threatening problems for ensuring that acute and critically ill patients and their families receive optimal care” (see American Association for Critical-Care Nurses 2012). During the Hungarian part of the programme, students concentrated mainly on studying critical-care nursing in clinical practice: “Clinical placements in Hungary offered students the possibility to put their knowledge of critical-care nursing into practice and vice versa” (see Ousey & Gallagher 2007).

The Nursing Department at Nazareth College identifies culturally congruent care as the cornerstone of its nursing education. The organising framework for the nursing programme consists of Leininger’s Theory of Cultural Care, Diversity and Universality (2002) and Andrews and Boyles’s Conceptual Model for Understanding the Cultural Influences on Nursing-client Interactions (2003). (Nazareth College –Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012.) At the centre of Leininger’s discussion of cultural care is the idea that, “care is the essence of nursing and a distinct, dominant, central, and unifying focus” (Leininger & McFarland 2002; Clarke et al. 2009). The development of cultural competence requires a complex integration of knowledge, attitudes and skills to enhance cross-cultural communication; cultural competence, however, make it possible for nurses to interact with others (Andrews & Boyle 2003; Nazareth College –Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012).

Learning about cultural care requires making accommodations and taking assistive, supportive, facilitative and creative professional actions (see Leininger & McFarland 2002; Nazareth College –Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012). The aim of their education is to improve nurses’ global perspective on nursing and to help nurses provide culturally competent care through the development of a transcultural dual-degree programme. The goal of this part of the programme is to prepare a culturally competent, international nursing workforce and make the nursing workforce more globally aware through educational experiences (Nazareth College –Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012).

The Laurea nursing programme has mainly focused on helping students become acquainted with health promotion and evidence-based health promotion in Finland. The students learned about the various viewpoints and aspects of health promotion in their classes. The viewpoints and aspects of health promotion included highlighting what kind of knowledge about health promotion will be important and valid in the future and what kind of actions will be relevant and important. Two different approaches to health promotion can be noticed: an expert-oriented approach and a human- and empowerment-oriented approach. The expert-oriented approach concentrates on changes in the health behaviour of individuals, whereas the human- and empowerment-oriented approach emphasises the importance of autonomy, equivalence, partnership, participation, co-operation and

negotiation between nurses and clients. These approaches can function equally well at the individual, group and society/community level. (Liimatainen et al. 1999.)

Another important aspect in Laurea's part of the programme was to focus on evidence-based health promotion in theory and practice. According to Elomaa (2003), the definition of evidence-based health promotion and evidence-based practice in nursing care can be understood as integrating valid research and other relevant evidence and clinical expertise while also taking into consideration patient circumstances and preferences. An available recourse will often be added to the definition of evidence-based health promotion and evidence-based practice, which makes it possible to work according to the ideas of evidence-based health promotion (Brinker-Meyendriesch 2003; Schlömer 2000; Thiel et al. 2001).

## Key features of the learning concepts at the partner institutions

Semmelweis University's exchange programme concentrated on clinical practices. Clinical practices are an important component of nursing education, where students have the possibility to put their theory into practice, and vice versa. Clinical practice students have the opportunity to develop their professional identity and knowledge base and their ability to transfer classroom knowledge to clinical settings (Baxter 2007). An evidence-based, nursing-oriented clinical practice can help students bridge the theory-practice gap by reading and analysing literature in order to use it during their nursing practice (see Upton 1999). It requires that nurses and students have the possibility to become acquainted with suitable information and research (Baxter 2007).

During their clinical education, students have the opportunity to deepen their nursing knowledge and skills and increase their ability to solve problems and improve their critical thinking skills, as well as to develop professionally and personally. That means that the students' goals should focus on increasing their self-knowledge and scientific awareness in addition to making educational improvements in professional nursing. (Erenberg & Häggblom 2007.) The meaning of clinical practice is also to prepare students for the nursing profession and for their future working life in the health care system (Baker 2000; Erenberg & Häggblom 2007).

Nazareth College emphasises communication and critical thinking in its education in order to prepare students to become well-informed, trustful of reason, open-minded, flexible and fair-minded. In order to reach a high level of academic achievement, the curricula/teaching has to provide opportunities that promote students' intellectual development and ability to think critically. Fisher and Scriven (1997) point out that critical thinking is skilled and active interpretation and that it consists of observations and communications, information and argumentation. According to the Nazareth College Nursing Student Handbook (2011), the goal of a critical, reflection-oriented education is to prepare students to be able to make judgments and to be willing to reconsider matters and take an orderly approach when dealing with such complex matters. They should be diligent in seeking relevant information and reasonable when selecting criteria. They should also focus on making inquiries and be persistent in seeking results and they should be precise when inquiring about the issue and circumstances at hand. Research is a central part of scholarly inquiry; it can help students

study, e.g. health problems systematically, refine existing knowledge and generate new knowledge. (Nazareth College – Department of Nursing Student Handbook 2011-2012, 2011.) This view has been confirmed in a study by Profetto-McGrath et al. (2003), which points out that critical thinking is central to notions that nurses should also act as scientific practitioners and use research as an essential element in their practice. It is important to make critical thinking a central part of learning and teaching because nurses have to make many decisions that affect their nursing profession; their life and society general (see Halpern 1998.)

The module used at Laurea was modified according to the LbD learning model (Learning by Developing). Authenticity, partnership, experiencing, creativity and research will be emphasised in education (Raij 2007). Authenticity means being connected to a genuine working life environment. Partnerships are built on trust, equality and commitment between students, teachers, workplace experts and clients. In working environments, participants can encounter problematic situations where finding a solution to the problem demands creativity and the ability to produce new knowledge. Creativity can be seen as a vital part of introducing something new to the workplace, which also gives partners an opportunity for professional growth. (see Raij 2007; Taatila & Raij 2011; LbD Guide 2011.)

There are numerous possibilities for participants to become more experienced during the learning and development process. Experiencing can be understood as finding the meanings and constructing competences in order to produce new knowledge. This kind of a learning approach demands active participation from the students. The reason that the LbD model needs to be research oriented arises from a higher education context where developments in working life as well as producing new knowledge and innovation are linked to a research approach. (see Raij 2007; Taatila & Raij 2011; Guide 2011.) This kind of learning approach requires that students develop the ability to think critically, be active and responsible in different learning situations and share their experiences and knowledge with the other participants.

## Aim and research questions

The aim of this study is to describe the views of nursing students (baccalaureate) participating in the TCN programme by means of written and interview documents collected at the end of the students' studies.

The research questions were as follows:

What have students learned by participating in the TCN programme?

1. What have students learned about health promotion by participating in the TCN programme?
2. What have students learned about nursing by participating in the TCN programme?
3. What have students learned in different TCN learning environments?
4. How do students plan to put their experiences from the TCN programme into action in the nursing profession?

# Data and methods

Qualitative research is used to explore the ways in which individuals understand and experience social phenomena (Malterud 2001). The qualitative approach is useful in cases where the participating group is small and the domain of the study is new, which was the case with the TCN programme. Qualitative research involves the use of qualitative data, such as interviews, participants’ observations and documents, to understand and explain social phenomena. (Malterud 2001, Widebeck et al. 2007.)

## Data and data collection

The data consisted of documents from students who took part in the TCN programme. Data was collected during the years 2008-2011. The data from Hungarian students was collected after their periods of study at Laurea and in the US and it was collected from the Finnish students after their study periods in the US and Hungary. The data from the American students was collected only after their study periods in Finland. After the Finnish study period, some of the American students continued their TCN study period in Hungary and some of them returned to the US.

The data from the Hungarian and American students consisted of their answers to a thematic questionnaire and their answers to an open-ended questionnaire on an electronic feedback-form, whereas the data from the Finnish students consisted of answers to a thematic questionnaire and answers given during an interview. Sixteen of the Hungarian and American nursing students filled in the thematic questionnaire and 22 students filled in the open-ended questionnaire. Eleven of the Finnish students filled in the thematic questionnaires and eight of the students took part in interviews (See Table 1).

**Table 1:** Written and interview documents from TCN students as study material

	Hungarian (HU) – US students		Finnish students	
Documents	Number of documents	Units of analysis	Number of documents	Units of analysis
Thematic questionnaires	16	401	11	260
Answers to open-ended questionnaires	22	225		
Interviews			8	1017
Total	36	626	19	1277

The thematic questionnaires, open-ended questionnaires and interviews focused on the following themes: learning about health promotion, learning about nursing, learning methods and utilising learning experiences in their future nursing careers. Students answered the thematic questionnaires by email and the open-ended questionnaires using an electronic feedback form at the end of their study programme. Students could answer the questions in brief or they could write short examples from their learning experiences while participating in the TCN programme. The Finnish students’ thematic interviews were

conducted as a focus-group interview in small groups of 2-4 participants or as individual interviews. The interviews were conducted at the end of the TCN programme. A focus-group interview is a method in which a small group of participants gathers together to discuss a specific topic under the guidance of a moderator (Widebeck et al. 2007).

## **Data analysis**

The data was analysed qualitatively using inductive content analysis. A progressive way of action was used for the data analysis. The research aims, themes and research questions steered the analysis. (Lamnek 2005, Mayering 2007.) The written documents were read thoroughly several times to gain an overall sense of the data. A thematic entity was used as the unit of analysis. The number of units of analysis for the HU-US students' answers on the thematic questionnaire was 401 and for the open-ended questionnaire it was 225 (total of 626 units of analysis). The number of units of analysis for Finnish students' answers on the thematic questionnaire was 260 and for the interview it was 1077 (a total of 1277 units of analysis). (See table 1.) All of the data from the Hungarian and American students were analysed together as well as all of the data from the Finnish students. Based on the data, the answers from Hungarian and American students were classified into subcategories and these inductively produced subcategories were divided into main categories. The same categorising process was used to analyse the data from the Finnish students. The purpose of this qualitative study was not so much to try to find objective evidence of the truth so much as it was to assess students' views on their learning experience while participating in the TCN programme.

## **Findings**

The results from data gathered from Hungarian and American students as the results of the Finnish data analysis are presented and compared together according to the research questions. The results of the study will be presented according to the research questions in the following captures.

### **Nursing students' views on learning about health promotion in the TCN programme**

The first research question looked at what students have learned about health promotion as a result of participating in the TCN programme. Based on the data, five main categories have been identified that students' views on what they learned about health promotion. The categories were as follows: understanding health promotion as a value and respected, clarifying the concept of health promotion, clarification of how to use evidence-based health promotion, clarifying of the system of health promotion and understanding the guiding tools for health promotion (Table 2).



**Table 2:** Nursing students' views on learning about health promotion in the TCN programme

Hungarian (HU) – US students	Finnish students
<b>Understanding health promotion as a value and respected</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respecting health promotion as a value and as a way of empowering the views of individuals and society</li> <li>Respecting health promotion as an important competence of nurses</li> <li>Being aware of the importance of supporting health promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of the importance of health promotion in a welfare state</li> <li>Realising that health promotion is an important and multifaceted global question</li> <li>Respecting health promotion as an important competence of nurses</li> <li>Increasing the respect for health promotion in Finland</li> </ul>
<b>Clarifying the concepts of health promotion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying the knowledge basis for health promotion</li> <li>Clarifying the concept relationship between health promotion, prevention and evidence-based health promotion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sharpening and diversifying the of concepts of health promotion</li> </ul>
<b>Clarifying how to use evidence-based health promotion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening the understanding of the importance of utilising knowledge about evidence-based health promotion</li> <li>Clarifying how evidence-based nursing works in practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the possibilities for realising evidence-based health promotion with the help of small activities</li> <li>Understanding the importance of evidence-based health promotion as a responsible method for nurses</li> <li>Understanding the functionality of evidence-based health promotion in Finland</li> </ul>
<b>Clarifying the system of health promotion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying the active processes of individual, community and society level health promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying the health promotion system in different countries</li> <li>Perceiving different emphases in health promotion according to the country</li> </ul>
<b>Understanding the guiding tools for health promotion</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying the steering importance of health promotion for individuals, groups and the overall community</li> <li>Clarifying the meaning of steering in national and international health promotion programmes</li> <li>Clarifying the meaning of research, other written documents and the internet as supportive materials for health promotion</li> <li>Being aware of the importance of recognising the health requirements in order to be able to plan and evaluate health promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clarifying alternative action and solution models as steering factors for health promotion</li> <li>Understanding the importance of individually stimulating and supportive ways of health promotion as a tool of empowerment</li> </ul>

## Understanding health promotion as a value and respected

Nursing students understood health promotion as a value and source of empowerment for individuals and society; they also understood health promotion as an important and multifaceted global question. Students respected health promotion as an important competence for nurses. During the programme, students became aware of the meaning of health promotion in society and its importance for the welfare state. The Hungarian and American students pointed out the recognition requirements for health in order to be able to plan and evaluate health promotion. The Finnish students highlighted different points of emphasis regarding health promotion in the different participating countries and health promotion as a demanding part of their education.

*"If health promotion works well in a country, it can improve national welfare, and evidence-based nursing can offer good-quality health care."*

*"I noticed that Finland's health care values, preventative care and focus is on ways to improve the health of the community as a whole."*

*"I have a greater appreciation for the value of health promotion and a better understanding of how it can really make a difference in the lives of people."*

*"I think health promotion and prevention is the way to go. I think it should be valued more than just treating people when they are ill."*

*"I learned that health promotion is an extremely important part of a public health nurse's job."*

*"Nurses are very important because they can teach people how to promote their health properly."*

*"During my clinical internship, I have learned how important the public health nurse's role in health promotion is."*

*"Nurses are very important because they can teach people how to promote their health properly." (HU-US students)*

*"Health promotion is a very important part of the welfare state. It gives people basic living conditions and possibilities to live in a functional society. It also demands education and motivation and good will to maintain the quality and functionality of the level of health promotion in society."*

*"It [the state] should take care of peoples' health promotion all over the world. Health promotion is an important and multifaceted global question."*

*"Health promotion is also a very important part of nurses' work and their competence."*

*"The exchange period helped me to understand the worth of the Finnish health promotion system and Finnish nurses have a good ability and possibility to do health promotion work. ... At least now I'm sure that Finnish health promotion is very good." (Finnish students)*

## Clarifying of the concepts of health promotion

According to the findings, students' conceptual understanding of health promotion and evidence-based health promotion increased.

*“During this semester, I have learned what differences there are between health promotion and prevention.”*

*“As I was never familiar with the terminology of health promotion, my knowledge has grown significantly. ... But the idea of using credible studies to determine how to care for a patient seems to be common sense and so in that manner, I would say that this idea was already firm in my understanding of nursing.”*

*“Now, I understand more about why it is so important to understand the meaning of health promotion and evidence-based nursing and the connection between them.” (HU-US students)*

*“The concept of health promotion and prevention became more familiar and the meaning of health promotion became more versatile than before during the exchange period.” (Finnish students)*

### Clarifying of how to utilise evidence-based health promotion

Students understood how to construct knowledge about evidence-based health promotion. They also understood the functionality, usefulness, possibilities and importance of evidence-based health promotion as a responsible method of nursing.

*“I can clearly understand why health promotion needs to be evidence based.”*

*“I think the tasks where we had to analyze research articles helped us to understand the construction of evidence-based health promotion [in a] more practical way.”*

*“I have gained a stronger view of how important the nurse’s role is in providing and creating evidence-based nursing care.” (HU-US students)*

*“Evidence-based nursing can be carried out with the help of small actions. During the exchange, the content of health promotion has been enriched.”*

*“In the USA, different health promotion models are available based on the ideas about evidence-based health promotion. Nurses have to follow nursing research in order to be able to use this research in their health promotion practice in spite of the discrepancies between the findings of researchers.”*

*“I understood how functional evidence-based health promotion and using the findings of researchers are in health promotion practice in Finland.” (Finnish students)*

### Clarifying of the system of health promotion

Students learned to understand the health promotion system while participating in the TCN programme. The HU-US students focused on the health promotion system at the level of individuals, the community and society. Finnish students learned about how health promotion systems function in other countries.

*“I understood how the Finnish maternity health and community health care system works.”*

*"I have learned that Finland emphasizes holistic treatment and prevention in health promotion system ..."* (HU-US students)

*"Now I understand how functional and practical the Finnish health promotion system is."*

*"The different health promotion programs functions like a preventive factor for health problems."* (Finnish students)

## Understanding guiding tools for health promotion

Students' understanding of the guiding tools for health promotion increased during their education. The Hungarian and American students became acquainted with the importance of the meaning of steering health promotion for individuals, groups and the entire community as well as the importance of including it in national and international health promotion programmes. They also appreciated the available and supportive health promotion materials as well as the research material and other relevant materials for health promotion.

The Finnish students became familiar with alternative action and solution models for health promotion as a steering factor in health promotion. They also became acquainted with the American way of individually stimulating and supporting health promotion as a tool of empowerment.

*"I experienced that in Finland health promotion means that people can increase their control over their health condition by co-operating with public health nurses."*

*"Also, there are surveys which access, for example, children's drinking and smoking behaviours so they know the risks and can intervene in case it is needed."*

*"Education about healthy eating during pregnancy, exercise, safety, the birth [of the child] and how to care for the child is given in paper form and verbally."*

*"For example, I saw that the school public health nurses are handing out leaflets about a healthy diet to children with weight problems."*

*"The goal is to pay attention to health issues in all sectors and policies. This target is based on the Health 2015 public health programme, which has been approved by the government."* (HU-US students)

*"In the USA, I notice that the health promotion programs are supported by the state in order to help teenage mothers. Nurses visit mothers, they support mothers and they take care of both the mothers' and children's wellbeing. ... US nurses have alternative models available, which they can choose from according to the needs of the clients. Motivating and encouraging the clients is in a central position in health promotion."* (Finnish students)

## **Nursing students' views on learning about nursing by participating in the TCN programme**

Based on the data, there were identified five categories concerning nursing students' views on learning about nursing after participating in the TCN programme. The categories were as

follows: perceptions of the health care system, perceptions of a nurse's role and perceptions of the nursing therapeutics used by nurses, perceptions of the working environment of nurses, learning about language and the meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication in nursing (Table 3).

**Table 3:** Nursing students' views on learning about nursing by participating in the TCN programme

HU – US students	Finnish students
<b>Perceptions of the health care system</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about the health care systems in different countries</li> <li>• Perceptions of nursing activities in the public sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding insurance-based health care systems</li> <li>• Perceptions of health care systems in three countries</li> <li>• Respect for the Finnish health care system</li> </ul>
<b>Perceptions of a nurse's role</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for the nursing profession in each participating country</li> <li>• Perceptions of professional responsibility and the duties of nurses</li> <li>• Perceptions of the teamwork demonstrated by nurses and other staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect for the nursing profession in each participating country</li> <li>• Clarifying the professional responsibility of nurses</li> </ul>
<b>Perceptions of the nursing therapeutics used by nurses</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about different kinds of tests and screenings</li> <li>• Being acquainted with patient teaching</li> <li>• Being acquainted with the way in which nurses communicate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about different kind of tests and measurements</li> <li>• Perceptions about the way in which nurses communicate</li> <li>• Being acquainted with nurses' aseptic behaviour</li> </ul>
<b>Perceptions of the working environment of nurses</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of the multicultural and international working environment of nurses</li> <li>• Realising that nursing is an international profession</li> <li>• Increasing cultural sensitivity with the help of learning in different environments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of the multicultural and international working environment of nurses</li> <li>• Learning to respect the culture of their own country</li> </ul>
<b>Learning about language and the meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication in nursing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making progress in language skills as a way of promoting nursing</li> <li>• Learning to utilise non-verbal communication in nursing</li> <li>• Perceptions of communication difficulties when there is not a common language in a nursing environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making progress in language skills and the possibility to use the language in different situations</li> <li>• Learning to utilise non-verbal communication in nursing</li> <li>• Learning to understand nurse-patient communication difficulties when there is not a common language</li> <li>• Learning to communicate with patients from different cultures</li> </ul>

## Perceptions of the health care system

Students learned about health care systems in the exchange countries. The HU-US students got to know about activities of the public sector and the Finnish students learned how an insurance-based health care system operates and they learned to respect the health care system in their own country.

*"I have learned a lot about the Finnish health care system. ... that there are various organizations out there to help clients and that nurses must be aware of these resources to better direct their clients for when they need additional services."*

*"There are health care centres, nurses at schools, psychological nurses, nurses in hospitals, nurses in elderly day care centres, elderly homes, the Diacon organization and neuvolas (pre-natal & anti-natal clinics)."*

*"Things are very different to me because Finland has a public health care system and the U.S. [system] is based on private health care." (HU-US students)*

*"Patients' different forms of sickness insurance and physicians' agreements with the pharmaceutical industry works as a determining factor in patient care in the USA."*

*"It has been a good experience to see different kinds of health care systems—I have seen three countries' systems during this exchange period and I have learned to compare financial the contribution of each country. ... I can value the Finnish system more after that experience." (Finnish students)*

## Perceptions of a nurse's role

During the TCN programme, students became familiar with nurses' professional responsibilities and duties and the respect for nurses in the participating countries. They also became acquainted with the teamwork demonstrated by nurses and other staff in each country. The Finnish students became acquainted with the nurse-patient relationship in each country.

*"Nurses in Finland are well respected professionals by society."*

*"I was very surprised to see how much responsibility nurses at schools and neuvolas (mother and child clinics) had."*

*"I learned that here in Finland there are two different kinds of nurses, public health care nurses and medical nurses, and that they are responsible for different tasks. Public health care nurses are the main health coordinators for patients. They see the patient more than the doctor and are responsible for health promotion and check-ups/ appointments."*

*"Nurses work in teams with other organizations and people, but also very independently."*

*"A big part of a nurse's job is education as well as general health promotion." (HU-USA students)*

*"I have seen differences in the respect for the nursing profession according to the countries. In Finland and the USA, the nursing profession is more respected than the nursing profession in Hungary."*

*"It was also interesting to see differences between the duties of nurses according to the countries. In the USA, nurses have more responsibility in their work than in Finland. Nurses listen to the heart and to the lungs of patients in the USA. In Finland, they are the duty of the physicians. In the USA, it is the nurse's duty to take care of a patient's benefits and wellbeing. American nurses can delegate work and assess their work, where they can use their resources in caring for their patients. Nurses in Hungary are less independent and more Physicians' assistants."*  
(Finnish students)

### Perceptions of the nursing therapeutics used by nurses

Students emphasised that they had learned about different nursing therapeutics during their studies, for example about different kinds of tests and screenings, patient teaching and the way in which nurses communicate. Finnish students also learned to see the different aseptic behaviours of nurses in the different exchange countries.

*"I have learned the following practical skills: how to administer an intramuscular and subcutaneous injection, how to clean a tracheotomy tube, how to conduct basic palliative care for patients (washing, lifting, etc.)."*

*"I have learned to carry out different tests and screenings for school children and patients and I have seen patient teaching in different situations. I have also learned the Finnish nurses' way of communication. The nurse-patient relationship is confident and friendly."* (HU-USA students)

*"I have learned to listen to the sound of breathing and the sounds of the intestines and to measure manual blood pressure and to carry out the tests for new born babies. I have learned to use different tools and measurements but also to manage without measurements."*

*"I have seen the different communication styles of nurses between patients and colleagues."*

*"I have also seen how aseptic behaviour differs according to the exchange countries."* (Finnish students)

### Perceptions of the working environment of nurses

Both HU-US and Finnish students learned to work in the field of nursing in a multicultural and international working environment during the programme. Finnish students also learned to respect the culture of their own country.

*"I also learned to take the time to learn about other people's culture with an open mind. Working in multicultural environments helped learning about nursing and cultural sensitivity."*

*"The practices of another culture may enrich the care you provide. Adapting to a whole new and different culture has yielded personal growth and maturity."*

*“In Finland, I have learnt that nursing is a very international and multicultural profession. I realised that to be a nurse is a privilege, because wherever a nurse goes they can get a job. In Vantaa, I met several colleagues who came from some other country. I found that amazing how they could become a nurse here as well.” (HU-US students)*

*“Culture was the most important thing that I have already learned at the beginning. Regardless of social status, race and culture, a nurse is a nurse and a patient is a patient. I have learned [about] a lot of different cultures and cultural differences and cultural conflict. I also have learned about my own background. I learned a lot about American culture and how to communicate with Americans and my English skills got a lot better.” (Finnish students)*

Learning about language and the meaning of verbal and non-verbal communication in nursing

According to HU-US and Finnish students, the progress of language skills and the possibility to use language in different situations enriched their communication with patients. Students also learned to utilise non-verbal communication in nursing practice during their education. They learned to understand nurse-patient communication difficulties when there was not a common language. Finnish students also pointed out the importance of learning to communicate with patients from different cultures.

*“A major thing that I have learned about nursing during my study period is the value of non-verbal communication. During my practice placement, I had no experience with the Finnish language. I found myself able to understand portions of patient interactions just by watching body language and listening to the tones of voice. Even though I don’t know much Finnish, I was still able to communicate with the patient through body language and tone of voice.” (HU-US students)*

*“At the beginning, it was difficult with languages, especially in Hungary, without a common language. But it was very interesting to follow how people act and say something although I did not understand their language.”*

*“I have also learned the language and how to write the English language.” (Finnish students)*

### **Nursing students’ views on learning in different TCN learning environments**

The third research question looked at what students have learned in different learning environments while participating in the TCN programme. Based on the data, we identified four main categories, which were as follows: classroom learning as a promoter of learning, teacher-student relationship as a learning promoter, learning assignments as a learning promoter and clinical training as a learning promoter (Table 4).



**Table 4:** Nursing students' views on learning in different TCN learning environments

Hungarian (HU) – USA students	Finnish students
<b>Classroom learning as a promoter of learning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about different kinds of learning methods</li> <li>• Integrating theory and practice as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Real life-oriented teaching as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Goal-oriented and well-organized education as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Utilising students' experiences and know-how as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Learning material as a learning promoter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning about different kinds of learning methods</li> <li>• Reflective discussions as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Emphasising different kinds of nursing knowledge in the different participating countries</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher-student relationship as a learning promoter</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teachers having a flexible and supportive attitude as a learning promoter</li> <li>• A wise professional way of tutoring by teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in the teacher-student relationship in the different countries as a way of promoting cultural learning</li> </ul>
<b>Learning assignments as a learning promoter</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning tasks as a way for students to become acquainted with researchers and other material</li> <li>• Clear instructions for the learning tasks</li> <li>• Possibilities to find creative solutions to demanding learning tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework questions and case studies-tasks as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Research and other learning materials as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Writing in English task books and essays as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Cultural differences in knowledge production</li> </ul>
<b>Clinical training as a learning promoter</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical training as a strengthening factor of nursing education</li> <li>• Clinical training as a way of clarifying the health care system</li> <li>• Support and example of clinical teachers as a learning promoter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clinical training as a way of deepening nursing therapeutics</li> <li>• Learning about assessments and the arguments made in assessments as a learning promoter</li> <li>• Discussion in clinical situations as a learning promoter</li> </ul>

#### Classroom learning as a promoter of learning on nursing

Students learned to study according to different kinds of teaching and learning methods. According to the goals stated by the HU-US students, well-organized education and propriety learning material functioned as a promoter of learning about nursing and health promotion in the classroom. Real life-oriented education combined with theory helped students to put theory into practice. Utilising students' experiences and know-how acted as a promoter of learning in nursing. Teaching based on reflective discussions was very successful. Students benefitted from the homework assignments, although they felt that their homework was very hard and demanding.

*“As a student, I saw a different teaching method. Studying in Finland has shown me that there are many different, yet effective, learning methods that I will be able to use in the future. Learning by developing was a whole new concept for me. The learning by developing program has shown that I do not need a textbook and a formal lecture to learn. I remember more from my own opinions on topics rather than just memorizing facts. The Real-life orientation was typical of this method. We had the possibility to learn theoretical and practical things at the same time. Education was goal oriented and well organized. I prefer this method because it pays more attention to practical things.” (HU-US students)*

*“Students are encouraged to comment, and the teachers are always concerned if not everyone can hear and participate properly in small groups: there were different group-making methods, both self-forming and given groups, with diverse tasks, where the students have a chance to find their own focus and structure for the topic [during] individual tasks. We always received the materials and up-to-date information about our profession; it was easier to follow the lectures like that and do group work.” (HU-US students)*

*“In the classroom, there was a lot of discussion. We could really think about the nursing profession and nursing ethics in small groups. I learned to think critically. In the Finnish education system, there are trying to perceive the coherent whole or entity of the learning subjects, whereas in the American education system they are trying to perceive small facts. It was typical that during the next lectures we were asked about the learning subjects in the previous lectures. In a small group, you have to prepare very well. In Hungary, there was no classroom teaching, but in the practical placement you could learn, for example, about arguments for measurements.” (Finnish students)*

### Teacher-student relationship as a learning promoter

HU-US students emphasised that teachers should have a flexible and supportive attitude as a promoter of learning. Finnish students pointed out that they had the opportunity to learn how to manage in different learning cultures.

*“Teachers had a flexible and supportive attitude to students. Students could ask for help if they needed it. All teachers were willing to help in any situation with professional advice and also with a very personal attention. All teachers have the attitude of ‘you can do it’”.*

*“Students are naturally expected to find their own individual solutions, and they and their efforts are very much appreciated. It was somehow a wise and professional way of tutoring” (HU-US students)*

*“I have learned to manage in different learning environments and learning cultures.”*

*“In the US and Hungary, teachers were addressed by the surname and with their titles. In Finland, there is such a mutual respect between teachers and students without the need to use the title and surname.”*

*“At the beginning, I thought that the teachers do not like our direct comments, but I think they liked [them] and they understood that our way of stating our opinions was a Finnish way to express thoughts.” (Finnish students)*

### Learning assignments as a learning promoter

HU-US students mentioned that clear instructions for the learning tasks and the possibility to find creative solutions to demanding learning tasks functioned as a promoter of learning in nursing. Finnish students considered task books, case studies and essay writing as a learning promoter. All of the students appreciated the available research and other learning material as a supporting factor for their learning tasks.

*“All materials were available in classes, where I learned about clinical practices in the research findings [and how] to manage the health promotion of patients.”  
“The instructions for the learning tasks were well organized and the quality of the learning tasks was important, but personal differences were allowed.” (HU-US students)*

*“At school, different case studies were used in the research material and they were obligatory. I have learned to use and evaluate English research articles. Evidence-based nursing was the basis for the learning tasks. Task books and essay writing were also used. [Responding to] homework questions was a typical way of learning about nursing.”*

*“In Finland, students learn to utilize the knowledge that they have learned and to apply it in practice. In the USA, students have to learn more facts.” (Finnish students)*

### Clinical training as a learning promoter

According to the HU-US students, the practical training both clarified and strengthened their nursing education. They mentioned, for example, the importance of having nurses act as tutors and that the support they received was also a learning promoter. Finnish students felt that their practical training, including the reflective discussions and learning about nursing assessments, helped them learn more about nursing therapeutics.

*“I would say that 80% of my learning about nursing occurred while doing clinical internships, whether during my five weeks alone or through the study visits that we made to the hospital or to different social and health services. The study visits were a perfect way to see how things work in a hospital.”*

*“I think the clinical internships were much more useful than the theoretical courses. The clinics were a very strong experience for me. I was very pleased with this part of the education and could understand how nurses in Finland excel so much.”*

*“I thought that the clinics were the most enriching part of the experience here in Finland.” (HU-US students)*

*“During the clinical periods, everybody had their own tutor nurse who was teaching the students during their shifts. Students had to follow their schedule, which helped them to feel that they were involved in the system. Having an individual tutor nurse meant that I was able to watch, learn, and participate more than I could have ever done in the States. My tutor nurse was amazing and having one-on-one learning like that really helped me to learn all that I could with my little time here.”*

*(HU-US students)*

*“We also had to prepare for practical periods, because we were also asked questions.”*

*“On laboratory days, we had an opportunity to palpate different kinds of lumps in order to know if there could be the question of a cancer and also listen to the sound of the lungs through a tape recorder.”*

*“In Hungary, we learn [about] different nursing areas. There we learn to give oral nursing reports according to patient documents. It was very useful for me. Physicians also gave us articles to read and we also looked at articles via the internet and afterwards we discussed the findings of the articles. We also discussed the cases of departments and looked at additional information via the internet.”*

*(Finnish students)*

### **Nursing students’ views on utilising their learning experiences after completing the TCN programme**

Based on the data, there were identified three categories for how students plan to put their experiences from the TCN programme into action in their life and the nursing profession. The categories were as follows: utilising experiences from working in the health care system, utilising experiences from caring for patients and clients, and utilising their experiences of professional and personal growth (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Nursing students' views on utilising their learning experiences after completing the TCN programme

HU- US students	Finnish students
<b>Utilising experiences from working in the health care system</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking into account the strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish health care system</li> <li>• Applying experiences from the Finnish health care system for future reference for people in your own country</li> <li>• Utilising learned skills to identify health problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising learned knowledge about different health care systems in future development work</li> </ul>
<b>Utilising experiences from caring for patients and clients</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking care of patients in a human and friendly way</li> <li>• Encouraging patients to have a role in their own health</li> <li>• Promoting community health care</li> <li>• Utilising cultural sensitivity in nursing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking care of patients in a human and friendly way</li> <li>• Utilising cultural sensitivity in nursing</li> </ul>
<b>Utilising experiences of professional and personal growth</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising learned learning skills</li> <li>• Independent process as a benefit to personal life</li> <li>• Continuing to develop own professional skills</li> <li>• Openness to other cultures</li> <li>• Intercultural communication skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilising learned learning skills</li> <li>• Independent process as a benefit to personal life</li> <li>• Continuing to develop own professional skills</li> <li>• Openness to other cultures</li> <li>• Intercultural communication skills</li> <li>• Friendship as a means of life empowerment</li> </ul>

#### Utilising experiences from working in the health care system

HU-US students want to utilise their experiences with the strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish health care system. They also want to utilise the learned skills by identifying health problems in their future nursing profession. Finnish students wanted to utilise the learned knowledge about different health care systems for future development work in the nursing profession.

*"As a future nurse, I will take what I have learned about the strengths and weaknesses of the Finnish health care system and use them to improve the health care system where I will work."*

*"I have now seen an actual health care system and I think I have a better idea of what we need in the U.S. to better serve the people." "I will also use learned skills to identify health problems." (HU-US students)*

*"I can compare the health care systems and nurses' roles in three different countries after the exchange. I will use my experiences with different health care systems in my future profession." (Finnish students)*

## Utilising experiences from caring for patients and clients

HU-US students pointed out the need for taking good care of patients and clients. Patient care and teaching should follow the principles of humanity. Students also want to utilise their knowledge to help clients become better advocates for their own health. They want to promote community health care. During the exchange period, students became aware of the meaning of cultural sensitivity. They will utilise this awareness by caring for the patients and clients in the nursing profession. Finnish students noticed that social skills are important in order to meet different people from different countries. They will utilise these experiences in their future work in the nursing profession.

*“Finnish nurses act in a more humane and friendly way towards their patients, unlike what I experienced at home. I will try to find this common voice with my future patients. I also want to help patients to help themselves and I want to take care of community health. I have also become a more culturally sensitive and knowledgeable nurse.”*

*“I will also have a much more open mind to the traditions of others. Because of this, I will never de-value the traditions of my patients. Instead, I will try to incorporate them into my care. However, this additional experience of living and studying in a different culture will likely improve my ability to read texts with greater insight and cultural competence.” (HU-US students)*

*“I learned what kind of nurse I want to be. I learned how I want to work with patients in the future. I will be kinder towards those who don’t speak our language. I know what it’s like to be a patient in a place where you don’t know what’s going on.”*

*”I have to learn to be hard-working. In my future profession, I hope that after these experiences I can work as a good nurse in the global world. I believe in better care for different patients from different cultures. I am also more social and courageous.” (Finnish students)*

## Utilising experiences of professional and personal growth

HU-US and Finnish students wanted to utilise the skills that they have learned during the exchange period. HU-US students wanted to keep an open mind towards others and other nursing cultures. Both HU-US and Finnish students were encouraged to manage without a common language in different environments. They also could benefit from this sort of independent process in their personal life.

*“I will use the learnt study techniques and open-minded approach to different topics. I will try to make direct use of my study tasks in the same way as I experienced them, since I found it a great motivating force for myself.”*

*“I will use my learnt experience from Finland because I have learnt here to be an independent learner.”*

*”Finally, I think my semester here has helped me to become an even more independent, self-driven student. I strongly believe this semester was only as good as the time/effort you put into it. It helped to motivate me as an individual to strive*

*for bigger and better aspirations than I would have ever thought possible. I learnt a lot about myself as well as to be an educational informant” (HU- US students)*

*“I have learnt to take more initiative for my own learning and academic success—ability to communicate with patients and other people, even if we literally do not speak the same language—practical, real-world multicultural knowledge to help me interact with patients and other people who have different backgrounds and beliefs.” (HU- US students)*

*“I will use the obtained theoretical information and language skills in needed situations. I have learned a totally different way of learning and about different relationship between students and teachers. I also realized how important nursing ethics are and how all nurses should respect them. “*

*“I think that the exchange year made me more ready to meet different people. Also, my communication skills developed. My professional identity has also grown and strengthened. I have learned about internationality. I’m sure that I want to work abroad after I’ve graduated. I think I have learned more about myself (and my nursing skills) there, what are my strengths and weak areas. I have learned about myself more than ever. I became a good student during the education. Finally, I want to point out the importance of friendship as an empowerment factor in life.” (Finnish students)*

## Discussion

According to the findings, the HU-US students have learned about many aspects of Finnish health promotion as well as about the meaning of health promotion in general. As for the Finnish students, they have learned to respect the Finnish health promotion system and to compare it with the systems in other countries. They also understand the importance of health promotion as a global issue.

Both the HU-US students and the Finnish students have learned to respect health promotion as a common value for individuals and societies. The concepts of health promotion and evidence-based health promotion, and the connection between them, have also been clarified. Students considered health promotion an important part of nursing profession and one of the significant factors for the wellbeing and welfare of individuals and societies. Students also learned to perceive national and the international guidelines and programmes as a guiding factor in health promotion.

The HU-US students and the Finnish students became acquainted health care systems based on public resources and systems based on insurance. Students learned about different nursing therapeutics either in their practical placements, in laboratory lessons or during their study visits. Students also became acquainted with multicultural nursing environments. They learned to use languages and to manage with the help of non-verbal communication in different situations and in different nursing environments. Students also became acquainted with the status of nurses in different countries. They learned that the nursing profession is truly an international profession.

Students have learned about nursing in different learning environments during their exchange period. The HU-US students studied according to the Laurea learning model: LbD (see Raji 2007). According to the findings and the ideas of the LbD model (Tautila & Raji 2011), students highlighted the real-life orientation of their learning and the possibility to integrate theory into practice as well as the possibility to share their own experiences during lessons. The lessons and practical training helped students to strengthen their nursing knowledge and skills. Teachers' supportive attitudes towards students encouraged and promoted students' learning about nursing.

The Finnish students learned about nursing and nursing therapeutics with the help of substantial and versatile learning tasks in lessons and in practical placements. Reflective discussions, which took place both during lessons and during practical placements, promoted students' competences in nursing. Their mutual knowledge and written English knowledge also increased during lessons and practical placements. These kinds of face-to-face discussions seem to develop critical thinking and the quality of argumentation among students (see Joner & Jones 2003; Marttunen 1998).

Studying in the TCN programme increased students' cultural sensitivity and their ability to work and manage in international environments as well as in different cultural environments. The exchange period functioned as a promoter of professional growth and identity and it helped clarify nurses' professional responsibilities. Lee et al. (2007), Edmonds (2010), Fenell (2009) and Doyle et al. (2010) reported the same findings in their articles. According to their findings, students' cultural diversity in relation to their personal and professional development increased during the exchange period.

The TCN exchange period also increased students' strong desire to utilise their newly acquired nursing knowledge and skills in patient care and health promotion. Edmonds (2012) found that studying abroad has a strong impact on how students will care for their patients in the future. TCN students also become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of health care systems in the participating countries. This experience can serve as a valuable way to promote and inspire them to develop nursing and health promotion in their own countries. According to the findings, the TCN programme inspired students to use their new learning skills and to continue developing their professional and personal skills. These findings point out that student generally have reached the goals presented in the agreement "A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing 2007".

## Ethical considerations and reliability

Students were selected for the TCN programme and participation in the program was voluntary. Students were aware of the fact that all of the written and interview documents collected for research were subject to evaluation.

In this study, the reliability of the qualitative research was evaluated according to the criteria of credibility, confirmability, reflectivity and transferability (Mays & Pope 2000). Data triangulation and the researcher's insights into the science of education and nursing increased the credibility of the results. The categorisation and data-based examples presented in the article have supposedly increased confirmability. The researcher was aware



of his/her preconceptions and the aim of the study and was not deeply involved in the educational part of the programme. That could increase the reflectivity. The results of this study can be applied to similar learning programmes in nursing.

## References

American Association of Critical Care Nurses. 2012. About Critical Care Nursing. Address: <http://www.aacn.org/>. Read 19.2.2013.

Andrews MM & Boyle JS. 2003. Transcultural concept in Nursing Care. LippincottWilliams & Wilkins: Philadelphia.

Baker C. 2000. Problem-based learning for nursing integrating lessons from other disciplines with nursing experiences. *Journal of Professional Nursing* 16 (5), 258–266.

Baxter P. 2007. The CCARE model of clinical supervision: Bridging the theory–practice gap. *Nurse Education in Practice* (2007) 7, 103–111.

Brinker -Meyendriesch E. 2003. Evidenzbasierung: Wissen, Handeln und Lernen in der Pflege. *Pflege* 16, 230-235.

Clarke PN, McFarland MR, Andrews MM & Leininger M. 2009. Caring: Some Reflections on the Impact of the Culture Care Theory by McFarland & Andrews and a Conversation With Leininger. *Nursing Science Quarterly. Nursing Science Quarterly* 22 (3), 233-239.

Doyle S, Gendall P, Meyer LM, Hoek J, Tait C, McKenzie L & Loorparg A. 2010. An Investigation of Factors Associated With Student Participation in Study Abroad *Journal of Studies in International Education* 14, 471-490.

Edmonds ML. 2010. The Lived Experience of Nursing Students Who Study Abroad: A Qualitative Inquiry. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 14 (5), 545-568.

Ehrenberg AC & Häggblom M. 2007. Problem-based learning in clinical nursing education: Integrating theory and practice. *Nurse Education in Practice* (2007) 7, 67–74.

Elomaa L. 2003. Research Evidence Implementation and its Requirements in Nursing Education. *Turun Yliopiston julkaisu. Sarja – Ser. D OSA – TOM. 532. Turku: Kirjapaino PikaOY.*

Fenell R. 2009. The impact of an international health study abroad program on university students from the United States. *Global Health Promotion* 16(3), 17–23.

Fischer A & Strieven M. 1997. Critical thinking: its Definition and assessment. Edgepress: CA, USA/Centre For Research in Critical Thinking: Norwoch, UK.

Halpern DF. 1998. Teaching critical thinking for transfer across domains. Dispositions, skills, structure training, and metacognitive monitoring. *American Psychologist* 53(4), 449-455.

- Joner J & Jones S. 2003. The effects of communication medium on argumentation and the development of critical thinking. *International Journal of Educational Research* 39, 861–871.
- Lamnek S. 2005. *Qualitative Sozialforschung*. Weinheim: Berlitz Verlag.
- Law K & Muir N. 2006. The internationalization of the nursing curriculum. *Nurse Education in Practice* 6, 149-155.
- LbD Guide – Learning by Developing. 2011. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.
- Lee RLT, Pang SMC, Wong TKS & Chan MF. 2007. Evaluation of an innovative nursing exchange programme: Health counseling skills and cultural awareness. *Nurse Education today* 27, 868-877.
- Leininger MM & McFarland MR. 2002. *Transcultural nursing: Concepts, theories, research & practice*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Liimatainen L, Poskiparta M & Sjögren A. 1999. Terveystien edistämisen lähestymistavat terveysalan ammattikorkeakouluopetuksen haasteena. *Sosiaalilääketieteellinen aikakauslehti* 2, 99-100.
- Malterud K. 2001. Qualitative research: standards, challenges, and guidelines. *Qualitative research Series* 358 (11), 483-488.
- Marttunen M 1998. Electronic mail as a forum for argumentative interaction in higher education studies. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 18(4), 387–405.
- Mayering P. 2007. *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse*. Weinheim: Belz Verlag.
- Mays N & Pope C. 2000. Assessing quality in qualitative research. *British Medical Journal* 1, 50-52.
- Nazareth College – Department of Nursing student Handbook 2011-2012. 2011. Nursing Department Verification of Receipt of Nursing Student Handbook I.
- Ousey K & Gallagher P. 2007. The theory–practice relationship in nursing: A debate. *Nurse Education in Practice* 7, 199–205.
- Profetto-McGrath J, Hesketh KL, Lang S & Estabrooks, CA. A Study of Critical Thinking and Research Utilization Among Nurses. *Western Journal of Nursing Research* 2003, 25(3), 322-337.
- Schlömer G. 2000. Evidence-based nursing. Eine Methode fuer die Pflege? *Pflege* 13, 47-52.
- Shieh C. 2004. International Exchange Program: Findings From Taiwanese Graduate Nursing Students. *Journal of Professional Nursing* 20(1), 3-39.
- Raij K. 2007. *Learning by Developing*. Laurea Publications A-58. Vantaa, Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Taatila VP & Raij K. 2011. Philosophical Review of Pragmatism as a Basis for Learning by Developing Pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44(8), 831-844.

Thiel V, Steger KU, Josten K & Schemmer E. 2001. Evidence-based Nursing – missing link zwischen Forschung und Praxis. *Pflege* 14, 267-276.

A Transatlantic Dual Degree Program in Nursing. 2007. EU-US Atlantis Program – cooperation in higher education and training application form – Transatlantic degree consortium project. Submission: 31. May 2007.

Upton D. 1999. How can we achieve evidence-based practice if we have a theory–practice gap in nursing today? *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 29 (3), 549–555.

Widebeck W, Dahlgren MA & Oberg G. 2007. Learning in focus groups: an analytical dimension for enhancing focus group research. *Qualitative Research*, 7 (2), 249-267.

# Mobility experiences of incoming students in the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme at Laurea University of Applied Sciences

*Tuula Ikonen, MSc, RN, Senior Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

*Taimi Rautiainen, MSc, RN, Senior Lecturer, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to describe experiences of the incoming students at Laurea participating in the Transatlantic Curriculum Degree Programme in Nursing (TCN). The students came from Semmelweis University in Hungary and from Nazareth College in the United States; both schools were involved in the TCN programme between the years 2008 and 2011. The TCN programme was the first transatlantic nursing programme in the world. Within the European Union, the programme was a part of the EU-US Atlantis Programme and funded by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency during the years 2007-2011. The universities involved in this programme were Semmelweis University in Hungary, which coordinated the programme, and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland, which served as its partner. Nazareth College in Rochester, New York was the US coordinator for the programme. (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing 2007; Hollós et al. 2012.)

The aim of the TCN programme was to promote multicultural and global issues in nursing education. An additional aim of the TCN programme was to develop and share good practices both for nursing education and for the student mobility programme. The concrete mobility goals were published in a quality handbook for incoming students participating in the TCN programme at Laurea. (Rautiainen et al. 2009.) The goals for student mobility included students receiving basic information on mobility, learning what evidence-based health promotion and nursing means in Finland, becoming integrated within all of Laurea's

everyday activities, developing and enlarging their professional and cultural competence, receiving opportunities for multi-professional and personal development, improving their multicultural and Finnish language skills and networking skills, completing studies based on their own (TCN) learning agreement and achieving their learning goals and the required 20 - 25 ECTS credits.

The feedback was collected from every incoming student participating in the TCN programme at Laurea. The data was collected via an internet-based assessment of their educational experiences (the INKA system for quality evaluation and development in education) after the mobility period. Based on the feedback results, some improvements were made concerning both the practical arrangements and teaching. All of these activities are based on a continuing process of improvement and the quality assurance system in place at Laurea. (Laurea's Quality Assurance Handbook 2009.)

The respondents' experiences and impressions of the usefulness of the international exchange were mainly positive. Most of the students considered that living and studying in Finland had deepened their cultural competence and that the internship period had enlarged their vision of nursing. However, we also discovered some issues that we need to pay more attention to and that need to be improved. One such issue had to do with how to help Finnish, American and Hungarian students become more integrated with one another and learn to study together. Another issue had to do with improving students' multicultural and Finnish language skills and networking skills. Based on the outcomes, changes to the courses and tutoring system were made to get better results. Valuable information was provided by the student experiences both for the TCN programme and for the mobility programme in general.

## Data collection and methods

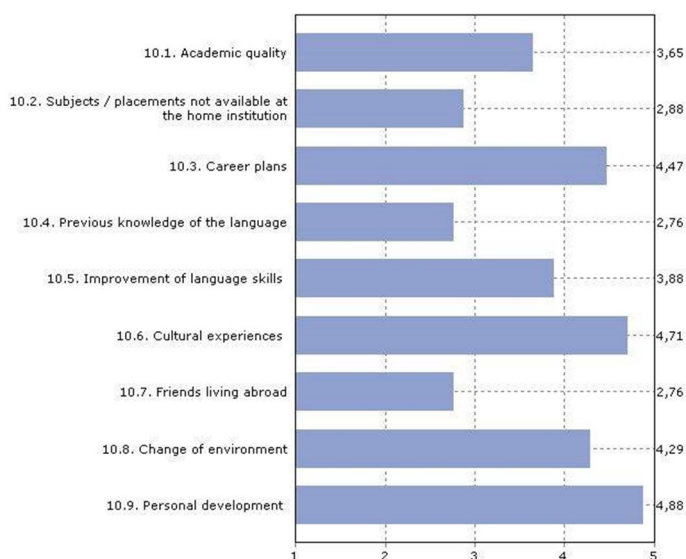
The INKA questionnaire data was collected included both quantitative and open questions. The quantitative questions were presented using a five-point Likert scale, where a rating of one (1) is poor, a rating of two (2) is satisfied, a rating of three (3) is good, a rating of four (4) is very good and a rating of five (5) is excellent. The questionnaire consisted of five parts, including questions about practical arrangements and learning based on the goals that students were meant to achieve as part of the TCN programme, as specified in the quality handbook. The themes on the INKA questionnaire were as follows: Background Information; Motivation and Preparation; Orientation; Support and Integration; Accommodation, Services and Costs; Academic Issues; and Overall Experience.

Fourteen Hungarian students and 15 US students responded to the questionnaire; hence, the final response rate was 29 students. The data was analysed statistically. The results are presented as arithmetic means. Attention was paid in particular to items that received a mean rating of only three (3) or less. Laurea has designated a rating of three (3) as the alarm limit that demands special attention and these particular issues need to be improved. (Laurea's Quality Assurance Handbook 2009.)

# The outcomes of the feedback by incoming students

## Motivation and preparation

The first part of the questionnaire concerns the motivation and preparation of the students.



**Figure 1:** The importance of the factors in the students' decision to study abroad (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

The highest motivation-related scores were for the issue of personal development (4.88), cultural experiences (4.71), career plans (4.47) and change of environment (4.29).

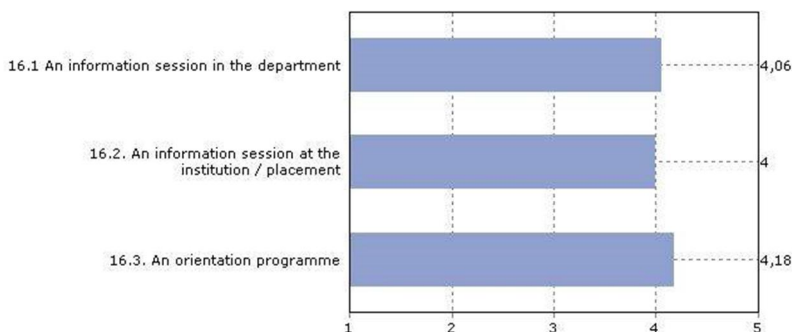
There were also open questions about the students' motivations for choosing the host country or place. Two sample answers were as follows:

*"Not in a bad way, but because of the Atlantis programme, we were without a choice as to which country we would study abroad [in]. I was truly excited though to come to Finland because I have never been in Northern Europe and was excited to see what life was like here."*

*"Because our university has [an] old relationship with Laurea University and I wanted to experience the differences in nursing between Finland and Hungary. Second this was the second part of the program."*

## Orientation, Support and Integration

The second part of the questionnaire concerned the orientation and support given to the students and the extent to which they became adjusted to the new situation.

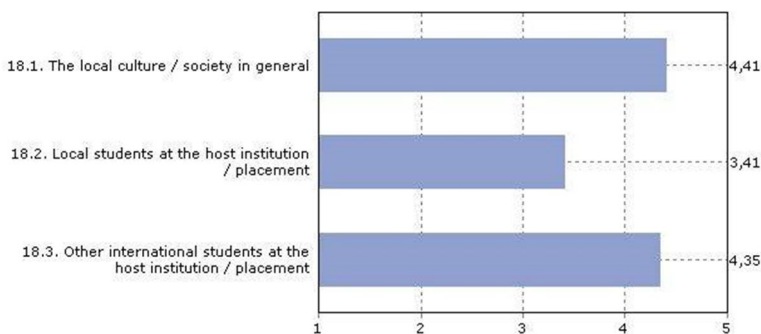


**Figure 2:** Information and support given to the students (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

The information given to the students seemed to be sufficient, and the students also rated the orientation and support given to them as very good (4). The students gave a rating of four or more for every issue included in this part of the questionnaire.

## Integration

The questions concerned the extent to which students became integrated with other foreign students, the university and society in general.



**Figure 3:** Students' level of social integration with other foreign students, with the university and with society in (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

The level of social integration in terms of culture and society in general achieved the highest scores (4.41), and especially integration with other international students was successful (4.35). Although the level of integration with local students at the host institution was rated as good (3.41), the students still felt that they were not so well integrated with local students.

The answers to the open question support the quantitative outcomes:

*"[The] tutors helped me much more than I could have figured out by myself."*

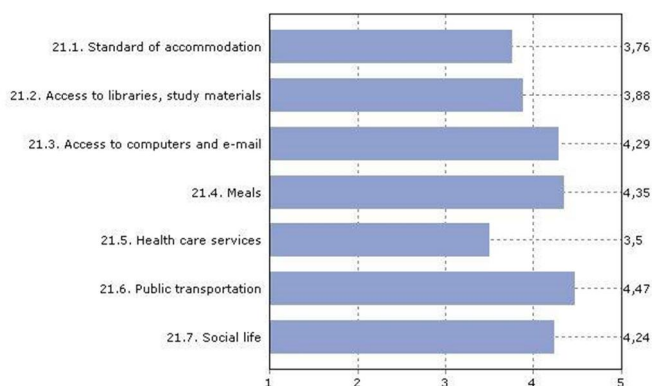
The answers to the open question also demonstrate a lack of integration with the local students and with the teaching method at the host institution.

*"It would've been helpful to know exactly how different the courses are here. It was very hard to adjust to the different teaching style, and it was scary to feel so in the dark."*

*"Because most of our classes were with other exchange students too it left little room to get to know any of the Finnish students."*

## Accommodation, Services and Costs

The questionnaire also included questions on accommodation, services and costs.



**Figure 4:** The living and studying conditions during the student mobility period (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

In general, students were satisfied with their living and studying conditions. In terms of their ability to access the library and computers, students gave scores that ranged between 3.88 and 4.29. Public transportation received the highest score: 4.47. The students rated the health care services as good, giving them a mean score of 3.5.

## Academic Issues

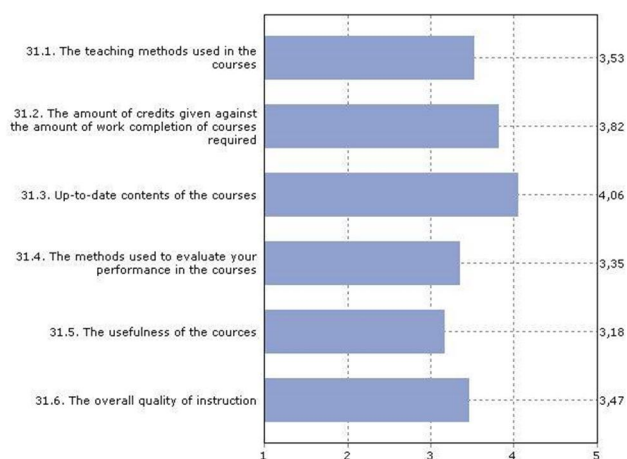
The students were asked to evaluate the courses they completed. TCN students from the United States completed 34 ECTS at Laurea, whereas students from Hungary completed 25-30 ECTS. The total number of courses offered in English accounted for 51-61 ECTS. Examples of the courses offered include: International Orientation for Exchange Students (3 ECTS), Social and Health Care in Finland (5 ECTS), Social and Health Care of Cultural perspectives (5 ECTS), Health Promoting Environment (6 ECTS), Health Assessment (5 ECTS), Developing Care for Older Adults (5 ECTS), Perioperative Nursing (5 ECTS), Basic



Finnish (5 ECTS), Professional Development in Practice (10 - 15 ECTS) and Thesis (5/15 ECTS).

All of the courses were integrated with the main themes of the Degree Programme in Nursing (210 cr.) at Laurea. Such themes include: Basic Nursing Competence (30 cr.), Health Promotion Competence (30 cr.), Clinical Nursing Competence (40 cr.), Teaching and Guidance Competence in Multicultural Nursing (20 cr.), Research, Teamwork and Management Competence in Nursing (25 cr.), Advanced Nursing Competence (20 cr.), Innovative Development Competence in Nursing including Thesis (30 cr.) and elective studies (15 cr.) (Study Guide 2008–2011).

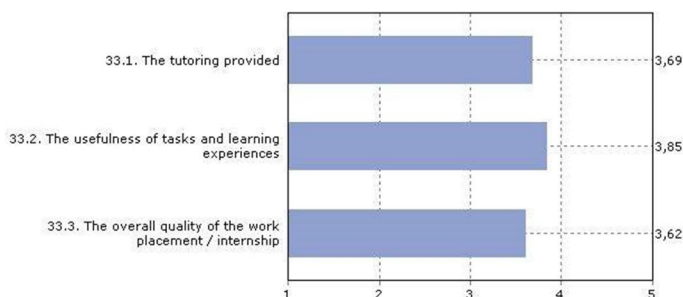
The Bachelor Programme in Nursing at Laurea is based on the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and students needed to reach at least level 6 (out of 8 levels) in terms of their knowledge, skills and competence. According to the EQF, these core competences include: 1) advanced knowledge of field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principals, 2) advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialized field of work or study, 3) managing the complex technical or professional activities of projects, taking responsibility for decision making in unpredictable work or study contexts, and taking responsibility for managing the professional development of individuals and groups (European Commission 2008). Specific professional nursing competences that need to be achieved include responsible nursing expertise, theoretical knowledge and core skills, ethical competence, competence in health promotion, teaching and guidance skills, team-working skills, research and development competence, innovative service competence, leadership competence, anticipation of the future of the sector and society, and welfare technology competence (Auvinen et al. 2010; Study Guide 2008-2011).



**Figure 5:** The students` evaluation of the courses completed during their exchange at Laurea (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

The feedback on the courses was good; the scores exceeding a rating of good (3) for every question.

The highest scores (mean: 4.06) were given when evaluating the up-to-date content of courses. The lowest scores were given to the usefulness of the courses (mean: 3.18).



**Figure 6:** The tutoring, usefulness and quality of the work placement/ internship (1=Poor, 2=Satisfied, 3=Good, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent)

Students also rated the usefulness of tasks and learning experiences during the work placement/ internship as good (mean: 3.85). Every item received at least a mean score of 3.5.

Some sample answers to open questions were as follows:

*“In the neuvola, I think I learned more than I did in the classes. My tutor nurse was amazing and having one on one learning like that really helped me to learn all that I could with my little time here.”*

*“Evaluation: the hospitals were well structured and well- equipped, nurses have their own competence. They were really helpful.”*

*“[There is more] about community health nursing and [the] different ways in which nurses can work within society than I ever thought I would understand. I also feel that my direction in the field of nursing has now shifted because I see the importance in health promotion and realize that to really make a change I will have to do this through some other venue than bedside nursing.”*

## Actions and improvements based on feedback

According to Laurea’s quality assurance system (2009), continuing improvement should be made based on the feedback given and the goals that the university aims to achieve. Based on the quantitative and qualitative feedback given by students, the following activities were made a part of the TCN programme:

- Trilateral, cross-cultural student tutorial system
- More advice on the LbD method
- Personal time management

- Survival Finnish language course
- All students participate together in same modules during their professional studies
- All students have participated together in the clinical workshops since 2011
- Get-togethers have been organised during international week since 2012

A trilateral, cross-cultural student tutorial system refers to a common orientation programme that begins before each mobility period and that is designed for newly selected students. Students from Finland and Hungary will already meet American students during their studies in the United States and also former students from the United States will be available for tutoring. It was also discovered that more concrete material for the introduction and tutoring is needed. As a result of this finding, two Laurea TCN students published a common Facebook group, 'Transatlantic Nurses', for the programme as part of their thesis at Laurea. Three other students published a guidebook for the programme as part of their Laurea thesis.

Because of the different teaching methods in each country, it was needed to provide more advice and explanation about the philosophy of teaching and the learning methods at Laurea based on the Learning by Developing method (LbD). The LbD action model is based on a development project that is rooted in the world of work; it aims to produce new practices and competences. This kind of progress demands collaboration between lecturers, students and experts from the world of work. (Fränti & Pirinen 2005; Raji 2007.)

It was also noticed that students had difficulties in managing their time because of the new learning and teaching culture. Arrangements for individual student counselling sessions were needed so that students could learn to better manage their time and clarify their personal schedule of studies. Students completed 5 ECTS in the Finnish language; we found that it was useful for them to concentrate on basic survival Finnish. We rearranged the schedule so that Finnish students could become more integrated with international students. Also, we organised clinical workshops together with a group of second-year Laurea students. All of the students worked together during the annual international week.

## Discussion

The findings from INKA survey showed that students have been mostly satisfied with the TCN mobility programme. The highest motivation scores pertained to the issues of personal development, cultural experiences, career plans and change of environment. Based on the responses, it seemed clear that the exchange students are very much professionally oriented. The answers to the open questions showed that students have both a professional interest in enlarging their vision of nursing in different countries and a personal interest in seeing foreign countries.

The students felt that the orientation and support offered to them was very good. They gave a rating of four or more for every item. The score for the orientation programme was also high, which showed that the information offered to the students seems to be sufficient. The outcomes showed that the orientation programme and the support given to the students were very good. The students felt that their level of integration with Finnish culture and

society in general was successful as well. Laurea has already created and updated a website containing a large information package for all incoming international students and this has been very useful for the TCN project. All tutor students took part in the tutoring workshops so that they could support new international students become better integrated at Laurea, and they seem to play a very important role in this process.

The students also reported that they were satisfied with their living and studying conditions. It was easy for them to access the library and computers. Public transportation received the highest scores. In the metropolitan area, public transportation is well organized and quite frequent. We had assumed that the students would rate the health care services more highly because they had access to the same services as the Finnish students. In addition, they all had their own personal health insurance. Perhaps they did not need these services or did not know all of the services available, even though this information was offered to them by the school public health nurse at the beginning of their mobility period.

The students rated the clinical tutoring and the usefulness of the tasks and learning experiences during their work placement/ internship quite highly as well. Every item received a score of more than 3.5. The answers to the open questions support our conception that the work placement is meaningful to the students. All of the clinical advisors (nurses) were able to speak English and some of them were former TCN students at Laurea. The TNC students had their work internship at different health care organizations: health care centres, child and maternity centres and hospitals. The students completed approximately 8 -10 ECTS in professional development during their work placement/ internship.

During the work placements/internship, reflective discussions took place between the student, their teacher and a clinical advisor to support the student's professional learning. These discussions were also based on the European Qualification Framework (2008) and students needed to reach at least level 6 (out of 8 levels) in terms of their knowledge, skills and competence. The professional nursing competences that students need to achieve during both their clinical and theoretic nursing studies are as follows: responsible nursing expertise, theoretical knowledge and core skills, ethical competence, competence in health promotion, teaching and guidance skills, team-working skills, research and development competence, innovative service competence, leadership competence, anticipation of the future of the sector and society, and welfare technology competence (European Commission 2008; Study Guide 2008-2011). We also received positive feedback also from the clinical advisors regarding the outcomes and usefulness of the clinical studies for TCN students.

The students also wrote their own learning portfolio during their clinical studies. The content of learning portfolio included their learning history, knowledge, skills and competences and learning goals both at the personal level based on their previous clinical studies and the current clinical environment. Similar to Laurea students, all of the international TCN students also expressed difficulties in specifying their personal learning goals. More concrete examples were offered to students to help them assess their own evidence-based nursing skills.

The feedback on the courses offered students during their mobility period at Laurea was good; in fact, the scores exceeded the average value of good (3) for every question. During the TCN project, new nursing courses needed to be designed together with Nazareth College in the United States, which was found to be very useful. More faculty members at Laurea took part every academic year in developing the curriculum, and the content of the courses has been reorganised based on student feedback. The courses have been arranged partly in cooperation with other Laurea students and interdisciplinary groups, which also made it possible to plan more project-type learning according to the LbD model. (Ikonen et al. 2011.)

The TCN programme was the first transatlantic nursing programme in the world. The student's experiences are important because they provide us with valuable information on how to develop both the TCN programme and the mobility programme in general. The number of conclusions that we can draw is limited because of the small number of respondents. With quantitative questions, we can obtain a great deal of information about the students' experiences within a very short amount of time. The findings reveal the students' general opinions and level of satisfaction with the practical issues and the quality of teaching and learning in the mobility programme. Items that received a poor rating, meaning a score of three or less, can easily be identified and improvements can be planned and made. Also, qualitative research is needed to obtain more detailed information. Such qualitative data might reveal quite unexpected results about what should be changed, improved or developed.

The experiences of the incoming students were very good and positive. They felt generally satisfied with the tutoring offered by students and with their teachers and clinical advisors. Other reports have also yielded this kind of an outcome. According to Koskeniemi (2008), research students found it useful to hear about the experiences and opinions of other students who had participated in mobility programmes previously.

According to the feedback, students are professionally oriented and they also have an open mind when encountering new cultures, which might help them a great deal when adapting to new situations. Leh et al. (2004) found that international student exchange is an effective means for nursing programmes to respond to the challenge of developing a global perspective in nursing education. Student exchanges also offer the opportunity to acquire an international view on health care by comparing and sharing nursing data across various populations, settings and geographical regions.

The level of integration between international students and the local students and host institution should be better. Niemelä's (2008) research also yielded the same kinds of outcomes: 56% of students studying at Finnish universities wanted more contact both with Finnish and with other foreign people. They reported wanting contacts with Finnish people even more as a way of becoming better integrated with Finnish society and learning more of the Finnish language.

As part of the TCN programme, a tutoring system has been developed to better integrate international students with the local students. By offering a tri-lateral tutoring system, students receive useful information from the other students at the very beginning of the

programme. We began offering courses were all of the students participated together to offer at Laurea. A thesis was published as a guidebook for Atlantis mobility and can be found in electronic form at Laurea's website. This thesis included both useful practical information for mobility and students' own experiences. Another thesis, 'Transatlantic Nurses', was published in the form of a Facebook group to share information and make it possible to create an active network for all TCN students.

More attention should be paid to conducting evaluations already at the beginning of planning phase. Also, resources for research should be made available as part of the programme. Though the programme does not receive any research funding, we considered it to be so important and unique that we decided to collect and publish feedback from the TCN students. Additionally, more longitudinal research is needed to assess the impact of the study abroad programmes. Cooperation with the same partners in Hungary and the United States will continue. New degree programmes at the master's degree and bachelor's degree levels and new forms of cooperation will be started in the near future. At Laurea, we can be proud of the very successful TCN programme.

## References

- Auvinen P, Heikkilä J, Ilola H, Kallioinen O, Luopajarvi T, Raji K & Roslöf J. 2010. Suositus tutkintojen kansallisen viitekehyksen (NQF) ja tutkintojen yhteisten kompetenssien soveltamisesta ammattikorkeakouluissa. ARENE. Ammattikorkeakoulujen rehtorineuvosto.
- European Commission. 2008. European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning. <[http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/eqf\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/eqf_en.htm)>. (Read 30.10.2012).
- Fränti M & Pirinen R. 2005. Tutkiva oppiminen integratiivisissa oppimisympäristöissä BarLaurea ja REDLabs. Laurea - ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisusarja B 10. Helsinki: Edita Prima Oy.
- Hollos S, Meszaros J, Ikonen T, O'Toole M & Dahl Maher M. 2012. Closing Report of TCN-EU-US 2007-2067 Project, Project Document, Budapest, Rochester and Tikkurila.
- Ikonen T, Havukainen P & Rautiainen T. 2010 - 2011. 2011. Self - Evaluation for study unit development. Annual report of TCN program during the academic year 2010 – 2011. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.
- Koskeniemi T. 2008. Miten sujui? Helsingin yliopiston opiskelijoiden kokemuksia opiskelijavaihdosta lukuvuonna 2006 - 2007. Helsingin yliopiston hallinnon julkaisuja 49. Raportit ja selvitykset. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Laurea's Quality Assurance Handbook 2009 - 2010. 2009. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.
- Study Guide in Academic Years 2008-2011. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Leh SK, Robb WJ & Albin B. 2004. The student/faculty international exchange: responding to the challenge of developing a global perspective in nursing education. *Nursing Education Perspectives* 25 (2), 86 - 90.

Niemelä A. 2008. Kansainväliset tutkinto-opiskelijat Suomen yliopistoissa. Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liitto (SYL) ry. Vaasa: Ykkös-offset Oy.

Raij K. 2007. Learning by Developing. Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisusarja A-58. Vantaa.

Rautiainen T, Ikonen T & Havukainen P. 2009. Quality Handbook of the TCN-program. Laurea University of Applied Sciences.

Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing 2007 – 2011. 2007. EU/US ATLANTIS Program. Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Training. Transatlantic Degree project. Agreement number: 2007 -2067 / 001 -001. EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY.

# Recognition of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme

*Sandor Hollós MD PhD, Professor, Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences Budapest, Hungary*

*Marcel Pop RN. MSc Director, Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences Budapest, Hungary*

*Judit Mészáros CB Sc PhD, Professor, Dean, Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences Budapest, Hungary*

## Introduction

The aim of this article is to describe the TCN (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing) programme and its recognition at the institutional, national and international levels. The internationalisation of societies and the processes of globalisation are presenting new challenges for health provision systems, including professional, ethical, social, cultural and communicational aspects of nursing and nursing education. Demographic changes and changes in the system of health care provision, technological developments and the mobility of clients have significantly affected people's expectations of how health sciences should be taught at higher education institutions.

Globalisation, which can be interpreted as the common responsibility of societies to solve common problems, has also prompted the Faculty of Health Sciences and its partners to react to the needs of society with timely, adequate and responsible answers and actions. The following global trends have had a tremendous effect on the well-being of people and communities: demographic changes, significant alterations in the health care system, the information boom, the development of science and technology and migration. (Roy 2000.) We must add to the above list the costs that, in our opinion, affect the quality of the health care that is provided. Advances in the above processes of globalisation have contributed to the breadth and intensity of interactions between different cultures, religions and civilizations. The changes have certainly affected the system of health care provision by generating new needs, expectations and requirements both at the individual level and at the societal level. (Lindeman 2000.)



There is a worldwide shortage of nurses and international nursing groups who have a trans-cultural approach to nursing practice. Moreover, the International Council of Nurses notes: “International recognition of nursing diplomas, post-basic studies or degrees is not yet widely established. This may be a source of frustration for nurses emigrating to work or to pursue educational programmes” (International Council of Nurses, 1999). International collaboration will play a key role in improving health care and in addressing critical issues that affect the nursing workforce.

Semmelweis University, Nazareth College and Laurea University of Applied Sciences implemented a dual-degree model (Rauhvargers et al. 2008) of professional nursing education with the financial support of the EU’s EACEA (Educational, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency) and the US’s FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education). The project’s title is the Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing (TCN) programme. Its main objectives include: preparing an internationally and culturally competent workforce; developing the practice of nursing students’ exchange programmes; processing the dual-degree model independent of geographical, political or cultural borders; introducing evidence-based nursing standards into daily practice. At the midpoint of the project, we gave a report on how the programme was launched and how we planned to seek recognition for the diplomas. (Pop et al. 2010.)

## Key issues addressed by the TCN programme

At the end of the project (it ran from 2007 to 2012), in addition to introducing a finalised and tested training programme, which was realized as a part of international trilateral cooperation, we also followed up on and analysed our results and their expected effect on research related to the recognition and the possible acknowledgement process and its utility for international and national platforms. (Hollós et al. 2012.)

## The recognition Process

### **Institutional recognition**

Before starting the programme, the partners had signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding agreement and had agreed on the basic principles of cooperation. The main aspects of this agreement were that the nature of nursing education should be practice oriented and that nursing should be treated as an interdisciplinary profession. Our goals within the TCN programme were as follows: to add values otherwise not accessible via standard educational courses, such as intercultural competence, proficiency in a foreign technical language and in the transatlantic characteristics of that particular language, culture and society, and to add professional values, i.e. to get new competences (specific strengths of the participating institutions).

Another aspect of the agreement was to ensure that the senior students participating in the programme meet the requirements of their home institutions (e.g. the HESI exam in the US and final exam in Europe). The TCN study programme is designed for each student individually based on the student’s preliminary studies. We also took into consideration the

CIDD (the Consortium of International Double Degrees) checklist, which gives recommendations for developing dual-degree programmes. In this way, we hope to secure the common recognition on the institutional level of the curriculum and the degrees awarded to students.

The institutional and inter-institutional recognition process was based on the mutual recognition of the TCN programme. The following main principles were taken into consideration: the nature of nursing education, the characteristics of nursing education, the added values of the programme, the transatlantic nature of language, culture and society, the institutional requirements and the previous studies of the senior students attending the programme.

The next important step was to design the curricula. We created the so-called TCN course bank with the following characteristics (Table 1):

- Common courses that involve working together and that have a strong multicultural focus, such as “Health and Society” and “Nursing Leadership”;
- Guest teaching, a tutorial system, student-to-student tutorials and language tutorials during the internship;
- Innovative assessment: involving students in the assessment, conducting self-evaluations and taking the students’ reports into consideration;
- We observed the hanging-on role of the teacher, who facilitated the learning process in a multicultural student group;
- The way in which the earned credits are recognised based on TCN studies is based on the intra- and inter-institutional credit transfer system, which has been harmonised with the registrars’ offices at the various institutions.

**Table 1:** Courses that are a part of the TCN program – the TCN course bank

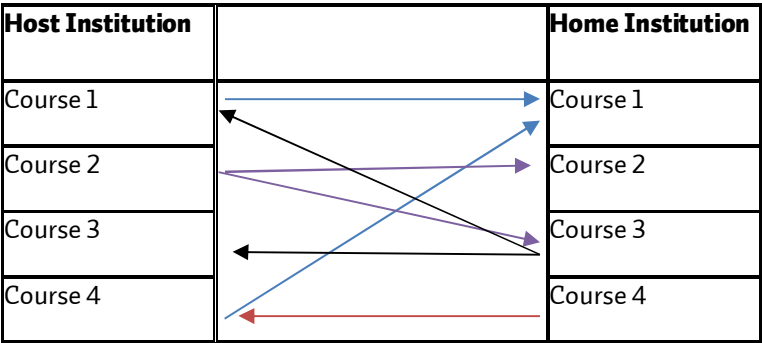
<b>Semmelweis University</b>	<b>Nazareth College</b>	<b>Laurea UAS</b>
<i>min. required: 35 ECTS</i>	<i>min required: 30 US (60 ECTS)</i>	<i>min required: 25 ECTS</i>
Nursing Practice in Primary Care	Liberal Arts (options: Fine Arts, History, Poetry – writing assessments, Introduction to World Music, Exploring Region, the American Republic)	Social and Health Care in Finland
Anesthesiological Nursing Practice	Health Care Terminology	Social and Health Care in a Cultural Perspective
Internal Nursing Practice	English writing	Developing Care for Older Adults
Nursing Practice in Rehabilitation	Foundations of Transcultural Nursing Theory and Lab	Health Promoting Environment
Surgical Nursing Practice	Care of Older Adults Theory and Lab	Basic Finnish Language
Introduction to Higher Education Studies at SU Orientation. European Aspects of Nursing Foundation	Maternity and Women's Health Care and Theory and Lab	Professional Development in Practice
Basic Hungarian Language	Nursing Leadership in a Multicultural Society	Thesis work
Public Health	Senior Clinical Experiences in a Multicultural Society	International Orientation for Exchange Students
Epidemiology	Community Health Nursing in a Multicultural Society	
Medical and Health Sociology	Nursing Comprehensive	
Psychiatry and Nursing		
Socialpsychology		
Theses work		

According to our final records, the total number of students who participated in the programme and fulfilled the programme requirements was 49 (30 European students and 19 American students). Of the total number of applicants (70), 26 students received the dual degree. It took two years for the curriculum to be accepted at the institutional level.

Due to differences in the contents of some of the courses (in the US, the courses were more integrated), we took the learning outcomes of each specific course into consideration as the basis of recognition with respect to the credit transfer process. In some cases, as Table 2 shows, there were many ways to acknowledge the transfer credits. The educators (teachers and regulators as well) needed flexibility and need to change their attitude about how to manage the acceptance process for credits earned at the partner institutions. All of the

transfer credits were assessed for each TCN student, i.e. the process was personalized in each case.

**Table 2:** Credit transfers for each course (institutional and inter-institutional)







We had to consider the specific needs of the students and the differences between the teaching and learning methods used at the partner institutions. The theoretical courses did not present a special challenge for the faculty in Hungary. Likewise, student feedback addressed the need to create new courses at Laurea for exchange students. Thus, the acquisition of theoretical knowledge was carried out partly in small-group seminars (for example, the theoretical part of clinical knowledge) and partly during traditional classroom lessons.

During the clinical internships, language barriers sometimes created difficulties for the patients (the majority of Hungarian patients do not speak English). We solved this problem by organising the TCN students’ clinical internships together with those of the English-speaking Hungarian students, thus providing continuous language tutoring. We also included Hungarian language lessons in the students’ programmes (“Survival Hungarian”). Finland represented a special case because most of the nurses who served as clinical advisers were able to speak English.

One of the challenges for Nazareth College was that it had to organise clinical internships for the European students and support all of the students in their thesis work. This is not a requirement in the United States. A large challenge for all of the partners was to prepare the European students for the HESI exam. The solution was to include a professional English language course in the study programme. After introducing the course, the number of successful exams increased from 20% to 80%. This fact demonstrates the importance of language skills as an added value.

Table 3 provides some examples of how credits were recognised by institutions in the United States and in Europe. These examples have been taken from the official credit transfer interim reports.

**Table 3:** Recognition of credits

<b>Recognition of credits</b> <b>US student in EU</b>	
Examples of courses studied in the EU	Equivalent course at Nazareth College
<b>Laurea University of Applied Sciences</b> 	<b>Nazareth College</b> 
00844 Social and Health Care in Finland 5 ECTS	NSG304 Care of Adults/Older I 3 US
00305 Basic Finnish language 5 ECTS	P II Elective 1 US
00064 Professional development in Practice III 10 ECTS (10 x 26 h = 260 h total)	Community Health NSG 425 2 US / 3 US NSG 427L 2 US
00843 Health-Promoting Environments part 1 Maternity and reproductive health 3 ECTS part 2 Community nursing 3 ECTS	Community Health NSG 425 1 US / 3 US Maternity and Women's Health NSG 337/337L 3 US Sociology 352 1 US / 3 US cr.
00043 Thesis 5 ECTS / 15 ECTS	SOC352W Social research Methods 3 US
<b>Semmelweis University</b> 	<b>Nazareth College</b> 
EBAAPFTT16 Physiotherapy 1 ECTS, EBAAPFTT17 Oncology 1 ECTS, EBAAPAPT55 Perioperative Care 2 ECTS EBAAPAPT38B Medical Nsg 2 ECTS EBAAPAPT39C Surgical Nsg 2 ECTS EBAAPAPT45B Critical Care Nsg 2	NSG404 Care of Adults/Older II 5 US
EBN_TET04A Medical and Health Sociology 2 ECTS EBN_APT32A Social psychology 2 ECTS EBNNUAPT33B Thesis work 3 ECTS	NSG 476 Health, Nursing, and Society 3 US
EBAAPKT30/31/43 Psychiatry and Nsg 7 ECTS	NSG406 Mental Health 5 US
EBN_NET12 Public Health 1 ECTS EBN_NET25A Public Health and Epidemiology 2 ECTS EBNNUAPT35C Thesis work 3 ECTS	NSG336K Health in Changing Multicultural Society 3 US

17

In addition to recognising the credits, we analysed and took into consideration the students' workload as well (Table 4). We felt that in this way, the programme was more easily accepted, especially by students at the institutional level.

We would like to point out the fact that the greater number of extra credits earned by the European students was generated during the second mobility period: according to the requirements of the grant, the European students must have a mobility period in another EU country (in our case, at Semmelweis University and Laurea UAS).

**Table 4:** Recognition of students' workloads

Institution	Required no. of credits (home institution)	No. of earned credits at home	No. of earned credits at NC	No. of earned credits at SU	No. of earned credits at LU	Summ. of earned Credits	Extra work in ECTS!
SU	240 ECTS	180 ECTS	25 US → 50 ECTS 10 ECTS		29 ECTS	269 ECTS	29 !
LU	240 ECTS	187 ECTS	30 US → 60 ECTS	18 ECTS		265 ECTS	25 !
NC	120 US cr.	90 US cr.		38 ECTS → 19 US cr.	39 ECTS → 19,5 US cr.	128,5 US cr	17 !

Table 5 presents a summary of how students in both the United States and Europe completed their studies. The different colours represent the course of studies at the different partner institutions. As was mentioned already, all of the students needed to fulfil some extra requirements to receive their degrees from the host institution. The proviso for obtaining the TCN (D.D. – Dual Degree) Certificate is that students acquire a diploma from their home university and a transatlantic diploma as well. The diplomas can be acquired in different ways at the different partner institutions:

- In Finland and Hungary, the students must complete the absolutorium (final examination) and pass the state (national) exam
- In the US, the students must take the so-called HESI exam (New York State Comprehensive Exit Exam)

**Table 5:** Path to TCN graduation – Summary

Way to the TCN graduation - Summary							
	SU student			NC student			LU student
Before mobility	SU courses			NC courses			LU courses
During mobility	NC course			LU courses			NC courses
	LU courses			SU courses			SU courses
After mobility	no courses			NC courses			LU courses
Added request to get degree	in SU	in NC		in SU	in NC		in LU
							thesis work
	thesis work	HESI		thesis work	HESI		defences of thesis work
	defences of thesis work			defences of thesis work			maturity exam
	closing exam*			closing exam*			

\* closing exam will be automatically accepted in case of successful passing of HESI both for SU and NC students

Our aim was to ensure that the TCN added values were fully documented in order to increase the value of the given degrees. In the US, the Diploma Supplement is not used. The credit report enclosed in the students' official Diploma Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing proves that they studied abroad and completed a clinical internship, but it is not sufficient for clarifying the additional competences that they earned as a result of participating in the TCN programme. That is the reason that we have created the "TCN Certificate document", which is given together with the second Diploma to confirm the earned additional extra values. These documents are signed by the legal representatives of each partner institution.

The subject of teachers' mobility is an essential tool for meeting programme goals, and in the end, it is also an essential part of the recognition process. Besides teaching, TCN teachers are engaged in the whole teaching process and thus better understand the complete training structure of the host institution and their teaching philosophy. In this

way, the educator will be able to identify the similarities and differences between the institutions and will be able to work as part of a cooperating TCN team (Table 6).

**Table 6:** Data on faculty mobility

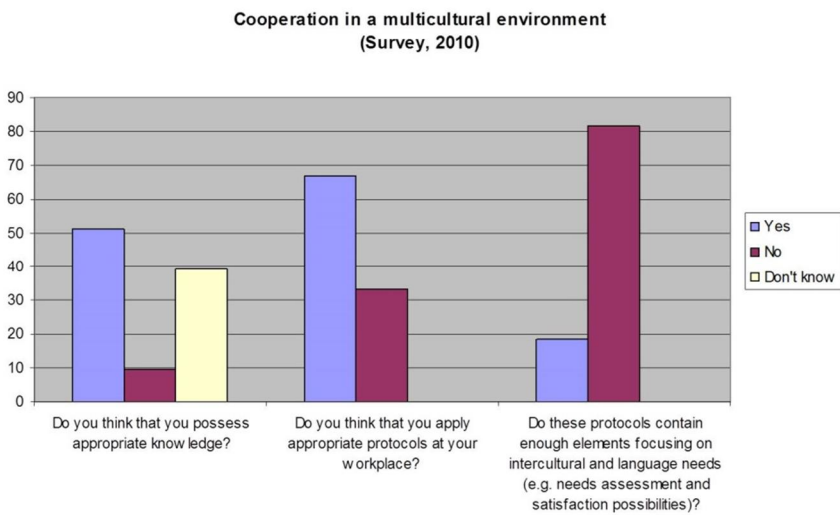
	No of teachers	No of mobility	Working days
From EU	26	61	366
From US	12	33	200
Altogether	38	94	566

**Working life recognition**

The students’ skills were developed during the clinical internship training periods. We received positive feedback at the stakeholder conferences in all three countries. Related to the issue of added values, leadership, management, communication, language, community and trans-cultural skills, ethics, law and communication skills were also highly appreciated.

We conducted a survey among Hungarian registered nurses and nurse leaders, focusing on the added values of our FIPSE Atlantis programme and asking them about their expectations and challenges related to their work in an intercultural environment (Figure 1).

Our findings show that 50% of nurses feel that they possess adequate knowledge and 60% of them think that the current protocols are appropriate for trans-cultural nursing. At the same time, only 19% of them think that protocols currently in place in Hungary respond in a proper way to the needs and challenges generated by a multicultural environment. However, 100% of the students participating in the programme from both sides of the ocean report that they have enhanced their trans-cultural skills. The FIPSE Atlantis programme meets the need for a culturally competent global nursing workforce (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Cooperation in a multicultural environment – Survey

Several questions on our survey focus on practitioners' intercultural readiness with respect to societal expectations and such phenomena as migration, segregation, discrimination and impoverishment. Approximately 50% of the registered nurses in Hungary think that they have a moderate ability to respond in an appropriate way and less than 10% answered that they are fully capable of doing so.

### **National recognition**

To be able to define a dual degree at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, the diploma supplement instructions from the Finnish Board of Education were used. Paragraph 2.1 of the diploma supplement instructions states that for a Bachelor of Health Care, "the qualification has been taken in a programme leading to a double degree" (Diploma Supplement 2009).

As a result of their participation in the TCN programme, the student will also be awarded a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing by Nazareth College when they have successfully completed the comprehensive exam and earned the Certificate of Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing at Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Our TCN programme corresponds to these guidelines.

In Hungary in spring 2010, Semmelweis University was awarded the title "Research University" by the Ministry of Education, and the Hungarian Accreditation Committee issued a declaration that recognised the internationalisation activities of the Faculty of Health Sciences and the student and teacher exchange programmes, including the Atlantis project, as excellent (HAC declaration). In Hungary, the new 2012 Higher Education Act says that students wishing to obtain a dual degree must acquire a minimum of 30 credits from the institution issuing the second degree. (The institution must have a national accreditation.) The programme is still subject to institutional approval in Hungary and has to be reported to the National Office of Education.

In the US, professional registration is open to all graduates who possess an EU-US Dual Degree (NC degree). TCN nursing graduates are recognised and acknowledged also in Europe-based on the EU degree (though language barriers might cause limitations in working life). The programme received the Innovations in Professional Nursing Education Award. The programme received the award from the AACN (American Association of Colleges of Nursing) in 2011.



## International recognition

**Table 7:** Publications – Scientific activity

### Publications/Scientific activity-updated

	First author SU	First author LU	First author NC	All together
Presentation	15	14	9	38
Poster	2	3	3	8
Article	3	6	2	11
Media communication	6	3	1	10
Thesis		2	5	7
PhD thesis	1			1
All together	27	28	20	75

SU = Semmelweis University, LU = Laurea UAS, NC = Nazareth College

Several international professional forums have also expressed an interest in the TCN programme. We have submitted more than 50 articles, posters and presentations this year (Table 7). Several articles refer to the TCN programme as a good practice. It has also been discussed, for example, at the International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation ICERI, held in Madrid (Spain) 15-17 November 2010, and at the 2010 Global Alliance for Leadership in Nursing Education and Science (GANES) Second Annual International Conference at the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City in Arlington, Virginia, 11 December 2010.

Several articles refer to our programme as a good practice when discussing the workforce in nursing:

- [http://www.gken.org/Docs/Workforce/Nursing%20Educ%20Reqs\\_FINAL%20102609.pdf](http://www.gken.org/Docs/Workforce/Nursing%20Educ%20Reqs_FINAL%20102609.pdf)
- Hiba! A hiperhivatkozás érvénytelen.  
[www.britishcouncil.org/recognition-of-joint-degree](http://www.britishcouncil.org/recognition-of-joint-degree)
- E Papastavrou, G Efstathiou, H Tsangari... - Journal of Advanced ..., 2011 - Wiley Online Library: A cross-cultural study of the concept of caring through behaviours: patients' and nurses' perspectives in six different EU countries

## Discussion

Our project is an example of successful international cooperation between Semmelweis University, Laurea University of Applied Sciences and Nazareth College; it offers students the opportunity to obtain a dual degree in nursing. Our results prove that it can take a long time for such a programme to obtain recognition at different levels and that the different levels can be mutually supportive during the process. The follow-up on the recognition process can serve as a guide for developing new similar projects.

Receiving recognition at the institutional level takes time and involves multiple steps. The milestones are as follows: curriculum, credit transfer and added values. The challenge of dealing with different cultures and different services should also be taken into consideration and the different educational structures need to be harmonised. The challenges for the TCN programme have included making the curriculums compatible and agreeing upon commonly accepted courses. However, the high number of graduates attests to the success of the programme.

Recognition at the national level means that the programme and the degrees issued as a part of the programme are legally accepted in the partner countries. While there are recommendations for joint and/or dual degrees that all partners could make use of, our major challenge was to establish a good practice that could be utilised by all of project partners and other projects. Finnish national legislation specifies that the Diploma Supplement (DS) form is mandatory; the supplement might contain some extra information related to the specifics of the programme.

Once we have completed the project, the results will be disseminated at the international level among all of our partners (in education and in the professional world) and recent graduates who have entered working life; the results will include different reports and research outcomes, student and faculty networks, eLearning methods and a presence in Facebook site – Transatlantic Nurses.

Analysing the extent to which the nursing field recognises such degrees will take a long time and is part of a long process. We do not have enough objective data yet. Placing students in settings outside of the classroom has been a significant factor in assisting local employers with understanding the nature of the programme. All of the partners have done a good job at disseminating the Atlantis experience and the results so far. Several presentations have been made at different professional meetings and at different levels. We would like to underline the good results and feedback that we received at the stakeholder conferences.

We received a very positive feedback related to the added values of the programme: these values are highly appreciated in the labour market. The workforce clearly recognised that a trans-cultural nursing curriculum, such as the one that we developed during this funding cycle, is important and needed. Our student surveys and the high number of applicants (70) support the hypothesis that the TCN Atlantis programme enhances the ability to provide trans-cultural nursing care.

To summarise the recognition process, we did the following:

- Developed a standardised model for the enhancement and implementation of an international Nursing educational programme;
- Improved the institutional work culture;
- Improved the professional terminology and cultural abilities;

- Created a model for a new type of nursing professional that possesses a high level of cultural and language competences, which are indispensable for participating in global programmes; the model was widely accepted by all stakeholders at different levels.

*“A whole that was greater than the sum of its parts”* - as one of the students who has graduated from the TCN programme noted. In terms of its overall philosophy: professional cultures are able to become more highly integrated to multiply their values. The TCN Atlantis programme, which receives support from both the EU and FIPSE in the United States, meets the needs for a culturally competent global nursing workforce. Working life plays the most important role in the recognition process. Our systems of good practices can be used in different baccalaureate programmes.

## References

Diploma Supplement. 2009. Kansainväliseen käyttöön tarkoitettu tutkintotodistuksen liite Diploma Supplement. Ohjeita liitteen laatimiseen. Information Identifying the Holder of the Qualification. Opetushallitus/ Board of Education in Finland 11/2009.

Hollós S, Mészáros J & Pop M. 2012. Recommendations on how to develop and launch a Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing. Experiences of the TCN Atlantis project. ([www.se-etk.hu/TCN2012](http://www.se-etk.hu/TCN2012)).

Hollós S, Mészáros J, Ikonen I, O'Toole M & Dahl Maher M. 2012. Closing Report of TCN-EU-US 2007-2067 Project, Project Document, Budapest, Rochester, Tikkurila.

Hollós S. 2012. Recognition and Dissemination of the TCN-ATLANTIS Programme, Keynote Presentation in EU-US Atlantis TCN Closing Conference, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary ([www.se-etk.hu/TCN2012](http://www.se-etk.hu/TCN2012)).

Innovations in Professional Nursing Education Award Winners. <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/membership/awards/innovationspastwinners>. Read 24.1.2013.

International Council of Nurses. 1999. Nurse retention, transfer and migration. Retrieved December 1, 2000 from the World Wide Web: [www.icn.ch/psretention.htm](http://www.icn.ch/psretention.htm). Read 24.1.2013.

Lindeman C. 2000. The future of nursing education. Journal of Nursing Education, 39 (1), 5-10.

Pop M, Hollós S, Mészáros J, O'Toole M, Dahl Maher M & Ikonen T. 2010. Can we Guarantee the Successful Recognition of the Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing Programme on Both Side of the Atlantic Ocean? Journal Medical Aradean - Vasile Goldis University Press, XIII (4), 59-66 ([www.jmedar.ro](http://www.jmedar.ro)).

Rauhvargers A, Bergan S & Divis J. 2008. How to Improve the Recognition of Joint Degrees? Bologna Promoters' Presentation Material, Education and Culture DG 2008.

Roy C. 2000. The Visible and invisible fields that shape the future of the nursing care system. *Nursing Administration Quarterly* 25 (1), 119-131.

*The project was supported by the EACEA's EU-ES Atlantis programme (EU-US 2007-2007).*

# FIPSE-Atlantis Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing: Experiences, Challenges and Advantages of Faculty Mobility

*Mary Dahl Maher, PhD, MPH, CNM, ARNP, Assistant Professor, Nazareth College Rochester, New York, USA*

*Zoltan Balogh, RN, PhD, Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences Budapest, Hungary*

## Introduction

The educational preparation of the 21st century professional nurse is a far cry from the days of Florence Nightingale. The basics of hygiene and fresh air, as well as the fundamental aspect of caring, are still critical to the professional nurse, but the knowledge and competencies of today's nurse are beyond the imagination of the founder of modern nursing. In addition to the rapidly expanding body of scientific theory, the advances of technology and access to almost instantaneous global communication have radically altered the provision of health care. In order to meet the requisite preparation, nursing programs have gradually transitioned from hospital-based apprentice training programs to the baccalaureate classroom. In turn, colleges and universities must meet the standards of external accrediting agencies such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education in the United States (American Association of Colleges of Nursing 2008) or the Ministry of Education for individual European Union (EU) member states (DiNauta et al. 2004), following the European Union directives (European Parliament 2011).

## International Networking

The primary objective of the FIPSE-Atlantis Transcultural Nursing Program was to prepare an international nursing workforce and to globalize nursing through educational experiences. This was a noble goal and, as in any pioneering effort, required a shared vision

with the ability to trust and to be flexible, while staying true to established standards. The effort was built on a long-standing foundation of close relationships among the institutions.

In 1995, the Department of Nursing of the Semmelweis University Faculty of Health Sciences in Hungary and its predecessor, the Psychological and Pedagogical Institute of the Haynal Imre University Health College Faculty, launched the first student exchange program with Laurea University Applied Sciences' predecessor institution, Vantaa Polytechnic, in Finland. At that time, communication was by fax rather than Skype and e-mail. However, a successful two-way student exchange program was established in which students participated for 2-3 weeks at a time.

In 2002, the International Nursing Conference was held in Toronto, and faculty from Semmelweis University had their first contact with nursing faculty from the United States. The Nursing Department Chair from Nazareth College in Rochester, New York, was a recognized expert in the theory of transcultural nursing (Andrews & Boyle 2012). By the following year, a group of Hungarian and American students were already making visits of varying lengths, to each other's countries. These were the beginnings, the historical steps that laid the foundations for the FIPSE-Atlantis funded research study that began the transatlantic Transcultural Nursing (TCN) student exchange in which students participated from August 2007 through August 2013.

## Communication

Relationships are the basis of all nursing care. The very essence of nursing is in the giving of self in the care of the other. The International Council of Nurses defines nursing as the "care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings (<http://www.icn.ch/about-icn/icn-definition-of-nursing> 2010)." This concept of relationship is also evident in the educational preparation of students. Professors who reflect a strong trust in students are more effective (Bain 2004) and more likely to provide an autonomy-supportive environment for learning (Reeve et al. 2004). These were the hallmarks of faculty who embraced the challenge of learning new ways of communicating as they worked together to build a new model of nursing education.

## Faculty Experience – Meeting the Challenges

The success of the TCN program was multifactorial but, from the faculty viewpoint, the most critical factor was the existence and nurturing of a trusting relationship by the faculty and administration of the three partner universities. All of the partners understand the role of the university to prepare nurses as engaged world citizens (Smith et al. 2010) and further subscribe to the belief that academic preparation in the nursing curriculum could contribute to achieving this goal.

It took the trust and vision of the leaders from each of the three institutions to develop a plan, and then they had to use their best diplomatic skills and passion to recruit faculty to operationalize this radical innovation in nursing education. In addition to the principal investigators, each university identified one or two lead faculty to coordinate the day-to-day

activities that involved such major areas of work as comparison of curriculum, identification of strengths of individual university courses, development of basic learning agreements, facilitating teaching exchange, and dissemination of findings.

All lead faculties, in addition to their responsibilities for the courses for their institutions' student body needed to deal separately with the program compiled and developed for TCN students so they would be able to fulfil the curricular requirements of two degrees, those of Nazareth College in the US and of Semmelweis University or Laurea University of Applied Sciences (Laurea UAS) in the EU. The faculty worked with their respective programs and hospital placements to find the best fit for the exchange students. For the European faculty, this individualization of coursework involved the task of running parallel courses in English as well as in Hungarian or Finnish.

## The Cultural Context of Teaching Methods

The variation in the approach to teaching required patience and adaptation by faculty and students. Each partner university has its unique culture. The baccalaureate preparation for nurses in the United States requires liberal arts courses such as history, music, fine arts and religion. A course of 3 US credits (1 US credit = 2 ECTS credits) translates to actual contact hours in which the student is expected to attend class for three hours weekly over the course of a 15-week semester, and formal documentation of participation is a common practice. Students from Laurea UAS and Semmelweis University were enrolled in regularly scheduled courses at Nazareth College so they needed to demonstrate fluency in written and spoken English as part of the application process. European students needed to spend a full academic year in the US, so they began courses in the first summer session and completed 30 US credits over the course of the summer and fall semesters (mid-May through mid-December).

Laurea UAS uses an innovative educational model- Learning by Developing – in which the learning process centers around a specific development objective. Learning has a clear, mutually defined objective among students, teachers, and working life partners and takes place through the process of abductive knowledge creation. There is an emphasis on the teacher as tutor and the mastery of course content is individualized with fewer formal classes and more one-on-one interactions.

At Semmelweis University, the primary language of instruction for the nursing students is Hungarian. To accommodate students from Laurea UAS and Nazareth College, instead of lectures, professors held consultative teaching sessions in small groups, tracking the experiences of the practical exercises from week to week.

## Enhanced Faculty Responsibility

In addition to acting in an advisory position for FIPSE-Atlantis exchange students, the faculty were simultaneously in remote consultation with the students from their home school. Whereas students are accustomed to meeting directly with faculty advisors in their home institution, the collaboration of three faculties necessitated the use of technology in

new ways. Regular e-mail communication and Skype conversations facilitated direct supervision of the students' thesis-writing and provided the opportunity to help students adjust to new learning modalities as well as to discuss the content of individual courses. Due to the differences in time zones, these discussions and consultations often lasted long into the night.

## Harmonization of Course Content across Curricula

Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the program represents the adaptation and application of credit transfer. This was no simple task, because in many ways, the programs displayed considerable differences, both in terms of the names of courses and their content. However, common standards are critical in regulated professions such as nursing, in which lives depend on the possession of specific competencies (Baumann & Blythe 2008). Instructors needed to share their syllabi so comparisons could be made and learning agreements developed with courses that would be accepted at each institution by their respective registrars.

The first task was for a designated faculty person from each of the three institutions to take the lead in comparing courses of the three curricula to ascertain which courses would fulfill the content and meet mutual learning outcomes. As a result of this comparison, a subset of courses was chosen in which students could enroll. This process was educational for faculty, as it illustrated both commonalities and differences among the curricula. For example, Laurea UAS had a separate course on nurse entrepreneurship, Semmelweis University offered extensive preparation in disaster preparedness, and Nazareth College required an introductory course in transcultural nursing.

Transparency of the process, coupled with a high degree of openness to change within institutional parameters, allowed lead faculty to explain to and support their respective faculty colleagues as they made adaptations for exchange students within the normal course sequencing of each institution.

## Sample Learning Agreement

Students were required to complete an application process as a FIPSE-Atlantis scholar. They were usually in their third or fourth year of study. Once accepted, an individualized learning agreement was developed for each student, dependent on course availability at the host school. Students from the EU spent the equivalent of a full academic year in the US, while American students spent one semester in Finland and one semester in Hungary. A major difference for EU students coming to study in the US was the requirement for the equivalent of 12 US credits (approximately 24 ECTS) of liberal arts courses, such as history, fine arts, poetry, and religion.

The learning agreement illustrated below is for a Laurea UAS student who will be involved in the exchange to Nazareth College mid-May and will leave mid-December, after which she will proceed to Semmelweis University before returning to Laurea UAS for her final semester.



**Table 1:** Example of the Learning Agreement for Laurea students

<b>Course owner Institution</b>	<b>Course unit code:</b>	<b>Course unit title:</b>	<b>Number of ECTS credits</b>	<b>Number of US credits</b>
Nazareth College	NSG201	Introduction to Transcultural Health Care	4	2
	NSG 329	Health Assessment	4	2
	NSG337/337L	Maternity and Women's Health Care and Clinical	6	3
	NSG404	Care of Adults/ Older Adults II	6	3
	NSG404L	Care of Adults/ Older Adults II Clinical	4	2
	NSG425	Community Health Nursing	6	3
	NSG 427L	Community Home Care	4	2
	NSG433	Nursing Leadership in a Multicultural Society	6	3
	NSG435L	Sr. Clinical Experience	4	2
	PI RES103G	Exploring Religion East	6	3
	PI HIS 205	American Republic History	6	3
	PI Fine Arts	Music	6	3
Semmelweis University				
		Public Health / School Health Internship	10	
		Paediatric Nursing Internship	10	
		Hungarian Language	3	

## Course Exemplars

Over the years, the lead faculty have managed to involve a growing number of colleagues in the program. The experience gained during the visits to partner schools was of great assistance in adapting syllabi and course methodologies. Our knowledge of the various syllabi, teaching methods and textbooks served as the basis for finding the optimum methods for the FIPSE-Atlantis students. This cross-fertilization has resulted in institutional changes. For example, Semmelweis University faculty report that they have used selected Nazareth textbooks to enhance the teaching of Hungarian students. Laurea UAS has developed a new course in health assessment.

A main purpose of the grant was to develop an infrastructure which would facilitate an ongoing exchange among the participating partner schools. During the process, faculty were careful to adhere to standards of accrediting agencies while creatively addressing the unique

needs of the program. This process occasionally required adaptation of the standard way in which courses were delivered. Two such examples follow.

### **Medical Surgical Nursing at Semmelweis University**

A specific example of the adaptation in teaching process is illustrated in the following teaching procedure for the theoretical and practical teaching of the “Medical-Surgical Nursing” module, offered through Semmelweis University, which is very similar to the process used both at Nazareth College and Laurea UAS.

The aim of the module is to expose students to the various fields of internal medicine and surgery, with a special focus on the application of the nursing process. The student learning outcomes include demonstration of competencies based on the development of nursing diagnoses, care plans, and skills specific to care of the patients in the medical-surgical setting. Faculty organize clinical experiences for students in units that include cardiology, endocrinology, general surgery, burns, heart surgery and neurology.

Students spend one week in each of the aforementioned departments. During the week prior to their assignment, faculty work on an individual basis or in small groups to help students prepare with theoretical knowledge and interactive patient simulation skill lab exercises. Faculty present the didactic materials at the weekly consultation, and then help to promote a deeper understanding through the performance of practical tasks and simulation exercises. At the consultations, faculty assess the students’ current level of knowledge, as well as their needs, and develop their continued program in line with this, thus ensuring that the teaching is tailored to the individual. The students also receive special tasks relating to all of the hospital practices. When describing a chosen case study, students maintain a checklist, which provides assistance for both the student and his or her mentor from the selected hospital department. Additionally, students are required to maintain an observation sheet, prepared specifically for them, on the patients they are observing.

Faculty check each case study, the check-list and the observation sheet, and discuss them with the students, at the post clinical consultation. Besides the case study, the students are given additional tasks such as doing literature searches and analysis of peer-reviewed evidence based articles related to the nursing diagnosis for their patient.

### **Dance Movement Therapy in Nursing**

During one semester, the timing of scheduled courses made it difficult for students from Laurea UAS and Semmelweis University to complete a required fine arts course at Nazareth College. After consultation among the Chairs and Faculty from Nursing and Music Departments, it was decided that one of Nazareth’s faculty would travel to Laurea UAS and offer a dance therapy course for the cohort of students and any other students or faculty who wished to participate. The course was organized at Laurea UAS during the summer of 2010. The course description is as follows: Dance movement therapy, the art and science of identifying and responding to non-verbal communication, has numerous applications in healthcare with notable contributions to health related quality of life of patients. The main

purpose of this course is to demonstrate the importance of non-verbal communication (specifically, body language which expresses an individual's emotions, feelings, and attitudes) between healthcare providers and patients.

Participation in this course will enable students to achieve these learning outcomes:

1. Develop knowledge of dance movement therapy and applications in healthcare, which contribute to health related quality of life outcomes for patients.
2. Assess the importance of non-verbal communication (specifically, body language which expresses an individual's emotions, feelings, and attitudes) between healthcare providers and patients.
3. Examine dance movement therapeutic processes and goals within the context of the bio psychosocial model of healthcare.
4. Critically analyze dance movement therapeutic processes and goals within the context interdisciplinary evidenced based research in neurophysiology and arts medicine encompassing the mind body connection.
5. Develop skills for connecting to patients including body awareness, impact of illness on body image and self-esteem, emotional awareness that is elicited through movement, movement and stress release, and connection to self and community through movement.

The instructor who constructed and taught the course was very excited as it was an element of her doctoral studies in public health. The course was well-received by all those who participated and students requested that it be offered as a regular elective class. It is a clear example of how the addition of fine arts enriches a holistic approach to nursing education.

## Faculty Exchange

During the five-year period, twenty-six faculty from all three institutions participated in sixty-one exchanges. These exchanges varied in length and format from a formal report on a research study to week-long concentrated courses. For example, nursing faculty from Nazareth College visited Laurea UAS on two occasions to offer intensive courses in health assessment and dance movement therapy in nursing and to Semmelweis University to teach an introductory module in transcultural nursing. Each March, Laurea UAS hosts an International Week Conference, and podium presentations were given by partner faculty on subjects ranging from Women's Health in the United States to the Effectiveness of Interactive Patient Simulation in Hungary. Nazareth College hosted a Global Health Summit in which faculty from all partner schools presented. In order to maximize opportunities, Finnish and Hungarian visiting faculty were invited into a variety of classes to lecture on the health care system in Finland and the rapidly changing professionalization of nursing in Hungary.

Since Semmelweis University was the leading EU partner in this TCN program, the Dean and faculty organized the oral and practical final exams for the American students and travelled to the US on two occasions to administer the examinations.

Beyond the personal professional experience that was gained, an important part of the trips abroad was to support the professional advancement of the students, listen to their opinions and suggestions, and to assist them with their work and their life in general. Based on personal experiences here, we can authoritatively inform and motivate the next generation of prospective FIPSE-Atlantis scholars with respect to the challenges and opportunities that await them. As educators, we have learned alongside and because of our students who took part in the program.

## Conclusion

The obvious value of the TCN program is that students have the credentials to practice professional nursing in both the United States and in member nations of the European Union. Through their studies, they learned to meet the expected professional nursing competencies in three different countries. In the process, they developed personal skills in cultural competence as well as a hands-on familiarity with three very different health care delivery systems.

Additionally, the faculty at each partner university have been directly impacted by their participation in the educational preparation of these international students. Having international students in the classroom and at clinical sites has enriched discussion and allowed opportunities for learning about how to work collaboratively using new approaches:

- Distance-learning opportunities (Skype, e-learning)
- Practice-oriented teaching, learning, and examination
- Reflective teaching and learning
- More consultation time with students
- More independent work and self-learning based on detailed instructions and requirements
- A relatively high degree of freedom for students to choose and enroll in the courses. The basis for this was the use of a credit transfer system between two institutions.
- The selection of courses comprised of compulsory and non-compulsory modules.

The effects of the TCN program are far-reaching and extend beyond those who were directly involved in teaching and learning. Each of the three partner schools has also experienced a change in its educational culture. Presidents and deans, as well as Department Chairs, have travelled and officiated at commencement ceremonies. The intricacies of developing mutually agreed upon Memos of Understanding between institutions allows the infrastructure developed during the grant period to continue beyond the funding period of the FIPSE-Atlantis grant. Administrative staff actively participated in transatlantic communication in many areas from the initial coordination of application for student visas to preparation of requisite documents for official transcripts. Faculty who teach in the liberal arts courses have had to rethink assumptions and approaches when presenting course content, such as the history of Native Americans in the United States.

In the community, the program has provided a cross-cultural experience for nursing, allied health, and medical staff at hospitals to interact with students who will provide a new cultural perspective.

At the professional level, the dissemination of TCN program results has garnered attention at prestigious conferences such as: the Global Alliance for Leadership in Nursing Education and Science, Going Global-Internationalising Higher Education, and the International Conference of Education, Research, and Innovation (ICERI). Faculty have participated in podium and poster presentations and have submitted articles to professional journals.

The success of the TCN program also provides a working model for other universities interested in developing a transnational nursing dual-degree arrangement. It is an explicit response to the mandate offered by Madeleine Leininger, the nurse-anthropologist who developed the Theory of Culture Care Diversity and Universality. Before the turn of the century, she wrote that, by 2010, nursing would appreciate the critical importance of transcultural nursing and that by 2015, she predicted that all health care would need to be transculturally based in order to serve an increasingly multicultural population (Leininger, 1995).

Perhaps the full effects of this innovative TCN dual-degree program cannot be measured so soon after its implementation. However, all of the faculty who have been involved in meeting the challenges, agree that the experience (and accompanying increased workload) has been life-altering in the formation of new life-long collegial friendships as well as professional development.

## References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. 2008. The essentials of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice. Washington, DC: Author.

Andrews MM. & Boyle JS. 2012. Transcultural concepts in nursing care, 6th ed. Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.

Baumann A & Blythe J. 2008. Globalization of higher education in nursing. The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, 13(2). Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/TableofContents/vol132008/No2May08/GlobalizationofHigherEducation>.

Baumann A, Blythe J. 2008. "Globalization of Higher Education in Nursing" OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing. 13(2) Manuscript 4.

Bain K. 2004. What the Best College Teachers Do. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

DiNauta P, Omar P, Schade A & Scheele J (Eds.). 2004. Accreditation Models in Higher Education: Experiences and Perspectives. Helsinki, FI: European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

European Parliament .2011. Directive 2005/36/EC of The European Parliament and Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications. Retrieved from: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:2005L0036:20110324:EN:PDF>

International Council of Nurses (n.d.). 2010. Definition of nursing. Retrieved from: <http://www.icn.ch/about-icn/icn-definition-of-nursing>.

Reeve J, Deci E & Ryan R. 2004. Self-determination theory: A dialectical framework for understanding socio-cultural influences on student motivation. In S. Van Etten & M. Pressley (Eds), Big theories revisited. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Press, 31-60.

Smith MB, Nowacek RS & Bernstein JL (Eds.). 2010. Citizenship Across the Curriculum: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

# Continuation and future of the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme

*Taina Viiala, MHPE, M.Sc, PhD (cand.), Director, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Finland*

## Abstract

The aim of this article is to describe the future alternatives and challenges for the TCN Atlantis programme based on its overarching strengths and results. The description is based on the four action lines of the internationalisation strategy of Laurea University of Applied Sciences, which are as follows: local is global, networking for results, virtual is real and world class. The fore action lines are proposed as a basis for further development and endorsement by the participating TCN Atlantis partner institutions.

## Introduction

The TCN Atlantis programme was established in cooperation with Nazareth Collage in Rochester, NY, Semmelweis University in Budapest, Hungary and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Vantaa, Finland. The main objective of the programme was to improve and develop higher education in nursing (Pop et al. 2009). Additionally, the TCN Atlantis programme focused on supporting and stimulating the international Bachelor in Nursing degree programme by increasing the commitment towards the mobility of nursing students and staff members between the partner institutions and facilitating the acceptance of the dual degree in both the EU and the US (EU-US Atlantis 2012). The expected goals of the TCN Atlantis programme have been reached through the active participation of each partner institution in the scheduled exchange as well as by developing common guidelines, learning methods and materials and collaborating in research and publications. All of the institutions are willing to continue their cooperation and continue to implement the programme results in the future. They are also willing to face future challenges in order to increase the competitiveness, effectiveness and quality assurance of nursing education.

## Local is global

Institutions of higher education generally have to take several steps to become internationally recognised (Laurea UAS 2012; OKM 2012). The TCN Atlantis programme

represents one important step in enhancing the internationalisation of its three participants. The internationalisation objectives can be reached by sharing expertise and building common capacities in terms of strategies, curriculum and planned staff development (Spring 2008). Examples include improving professional and cultural sensitivity and competencies and language skills as well as enhancing nursing policies, research and evidence-based practice.

Furthermore, health care is part of a universal academic culture with an informed trans-cultural approach and the potential to transform the nursing care work force (Pop et al. 2009). To ensure the sustainability of the goals and outcomes of the TCN Atlantis programme, it is necessary to integrate a common exchange programme within ongoing study programmes and involve both health care students and staff members. These programmes are an important part of an international environment.

## Networking for results

As institutions of higher education increasingly become part of global structural development, the following issues are becoming more important: an ongoing nursing shortage (Oulton 2006), aging societies and environmental problems (Su-I Hou 2012). Each of these issues requires an attention to quality and cost-effectiveness. The TCN network enables the development of joint study programmes, such as the Master of Management and Development of Welfare Services programmes, and joint modules, such as the Master's Programme in Health Promotion, as a part of health care study programmes. Furthermore, a joint product portfolio can be created from the TCN Atlantis modules that exports health care education and benchmarks various issues.

The processes and outcomes of the TCN Atlantis programme should be presented by all those participating in future international and national networks, conferences and seminars (Childress 2009). The valuable and trusted cooperation should continue in multidisciplinary agreements between the institutions.

## Virtual is real

Virtual tools are continuously becoming more important (the internet, social media) in higher education institutions (Vickers 2012). To ensure shared communication and information for the TCN exchange students, alumni and staff members, a useful web platform should be developed, one which includes an online toolkit with a knowledge base, an exchange student blog, a Facebook group (Pahlman et al. 2010) and a jobs section with professional posting information. Further virtual learning environments can help students and faculty increase their professional knowledge and develop their skills.

## World class

The TCN network can be used as a primary tool for acquiring international financing from RDI or the educational programmes of the European Union. The main goal is to acquire a



new project for the next EU Atlantis programme in 2014 by focusing on excellence in mobility, for instance as a part of the degree programme in health care.

In addition to the TCN network, an international fellowship programme based on Laurea's focus area, "Nursing and Coping at Home", can be developed to integrate RDI and pedagogical work to support the Learning by Developing model.

## Future challenges

In the future, the results of the programme can be successfully implemented in a cost-effective manner (Hummel-Rossi & Ashdown 2002) due to economic and legislative changes in Finnish higher education. Further challenges can also be found in different curricular structures and in pedagogical terminology as well as in the different structures and methods for achieving competencies related to the ability to work on an interdisciplinary team or in decision making. In addition, consensus is required for the development and administration of online tools. A strategy is required in order to ensure sustainability.

However, the TCN Atlantis programme enjoys a great deal of support at the institutional level. All of the participants have expressed their willingness to continue with the successful level of cooperation between the institutions and with the student exchanges and staff development programmes. All of the participants will increase the number, volume and quality of internationally financed RDI and pedagogical projects. This cooperation will help ensure future cultural competencies in health care and nursing education.

*"We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."*

-Martin Luther King Jr.

## References

Childress LK. 2009. Plans for Higher Education Institutions. In Journal of Studies in International Education. 13: 289-309. <http://jsi.sagepub.com/content/13/3> reviewed 29.1.2012.

EU/US Atlantis Programme.2012. Cooperation in Higher Education and Vocational Training. Final Report for a Transatlantic Degree project 2007-2007.

Hummel-Rossi B. Ashdown J.2002. The State of Cost-Benefit and Cost-Effectiveness Analyses in Education. In Review Educational Research. 72 (1), 1-30.

Laurea UAS. 2012. Internationalisation Strategy 2012-2015.

OKM 2012. [www.okm.fi](http://www.okm.fi) (Ministry of Education and Culture) reviewed 13.9.2012.

Oulton JA.2006. The Global Nursing Shortage: An Overview of Issues and Actions. In Policy Politics Nursing Practice, 7, 34 -39. [http://ppn.sagepub.com/content/7/3\\_suppl./345](http://ppn.sagepub.com/content/7/3_suppl./345) reviewed 27.1.2013.

Pahlman L, Koiranen M & Jokitalo K. 2010. Transatlantic Dual Degree in Nursing –A Guide for the EU-USA Atlantic Exchange. BSc-Theses, Laurea UAS, 16-20.

Pop M, Hollós S, Vingender I & Mészáros J. 2009. New Ways of Higher Education in Nursing; Globalisation of Nursing Leadership and its teaching. Semmelweis University. Published in PubMed.

Spring J. 2008. Research on Globalisation and Education. In Review of Educational Research. 78 (2), 153-167.

Su-I Hou. 2012. Aging, Society and the Life Course. In Health Promotion Practice. November, 13 (6), 729-732. <http://hpp.sagepub.com/content/13/6/729> reviewed 26.1.2013.

Vickers A. 2012. Modernisation of Higher Education. Joint Degrees and Recognition. London.

[www.tcn-atlantis.org](http://www.tcn-atlantis.org)

# Atlantis Blues

*Modified text by Leena Pekkonen*

*from W.H. Auden Funeral Blues*

Stop all the clocks, cut of the net,  
the double-degree nurses are here to get  
our admiration, our respect,  
a lot from them can we expect.

The project has shown art of nursing at it's best  
in Rochester, Vantaa and Budapest,  
We've learned from each other,  
made friends overseas,  
the end of this all puts me into tears.

Atlantis is known now in North, East and West,  
We've done our duty, now it's time to rest.  
I'm thanking Atlantis, making a song,  
I thought this love would last, I was wrong.







The TCN (Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing) programme was the first Transatlantic Dual Degree Programme in Nursing in the world. Within the European Union, the programme was funded by the EU-US Atlantis programme, which is a part of the EACEA (Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency), and in the US it was funded by the FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education) during the years 2007-2012. The universities involved in this programme were Semmelweis University in Hungary, which acted as the programme coordinator, and Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Finland, which served as a partner in the programme. In the United States, the Nazareth College of Rochester served as the coordinator for the programme. Participation in the programme gave students the possibility to obtain two degrees — a degree from their home institution and another degree from a US institution for EU students and from a leading EU institution for US students.

The aim of this publication is to describe the experiences, outcomes and future challenges for such developments in higher education. The publication consists of articles concerning students' and teachers' views on their experiences with the TCN EU-US Atlantis programme. In addition, the publication describes the levels of recognition, management activities and future challenges for the TCN programme. The programme provided teachers with the opportunity to become acquainted with different pedagogical approaches and different teaching and assessment methods. TCN students became aware of the strengths and weaknesses of health care systems in the partner countries. These experiences motivated students to utilise their new learning skills and to continue developing their professional and personal skills. The TNC project expanded international and national co-operation between partners and on the level of higher education. The TCN programme has been recognized both nationally and internationally and in working life.

Teachers and students need international experience and the competence for managing in a world where work and networking are increasingly becoming more globalised. During the project, the partners have been able to create common practices for project management and the comparability and transparency of curriculums and student tutoring. The experiences and findings from the TCN programme have been encouraging and have promoted the TCN partners to continue co-operating and developing curriculums in participant countries and to continue providing study possibilities for new students and teachers.



LAUREA JULKAISUT | LAUREA PUBLICATIONS

ISSN 2242-5241 | ISBN 978-951-799-321-0 (PRINT)

ISSN 2242-5225 | ISBN 978-951-799-322-7 (ONLINE)



**LAUREA**  
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

*Prime Mover*

