















SHORT COMMUNICATION

Professional Development and Nursing Education: An Experience Report on Cultural Diversity and International Mobility

Desarrollo Profesional y Formación en Enfermería: Informe de Experiencia sobre la Diversidad Cultural y la Movilidad Internacional

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: growing cultural diversity presents new challenges and opportunities in healthcare, requiring approaches that promote culturally sensitive care. Differentiated nursing education advocates for an active methodology, providing strategies to develop skills connected to social reality, such as participation in mobility programs in diverse international contexts. This study aims to conduct a reflexive analysis of the learning experiences gained for the formative and professional development process.

Method: a descriptive study, experience report type, which describes the journey of five students of the Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Nursing during the Blended Intensive Programme (Erasmus+) at the University of Applied Sciences in Tarnów.

Discussion: description of the activities carried out during the physical mobility period, which included various theoretical and practical classes on postural assessment, posture self-awareness techniques, interactive activities on posture evaluation and interpretation across different cultures, linguistic and cultural differences, role-playing games applying culturally sensitive language in different contexts. The program emphasized cultural diversity awareness, communication, self-awareness, and understanding of others.

Conclusions: it is essential to promote the use of these educational resources in academic practice to share knowledge, change practices, and strengthen peer relationships, fostering an open-minded approach to the world.

Keywords: Nursing; Cultural Diversity; Communication; International Educational Exchange.

RESUMEN

Introducción: la creciente diversidad cultural presenta nuevos desafíos y oportunidades en el área de la salud, que requieren abordajes que promuevan una atención culturalmente sensible. La enseñanza diferenciada en enfermería aboga por una metodología activa, que ofrece estrategias para el desarrollo de competencias vinculadas a la realidad social, como la participación en programas de movilidad, en diferentes contextos internacionales. El objetivo de este trabajo es realizar un análisis reflexivo de los aprendizajes obtenidos para el proceso de desarrollo formativo y profesional.

Método: estudio descriptivo, tipo relato de experiencia, que describe el recorrido vivido por los estudiantes de la maestría en Enfermería de Rehabilitación durante el programa intensivo de movilidad mixta, realizado en la Universidad de Ciencias Aplicadas de Tarnów.

Discusión: descripción de las actividades desarrolladas durante el período de movilidad física, que incluyeron diversas clases teórico-prácticas sobre evaluación postural, técnicas de autoconciencia postural, actividades interactivas sobre evaluación e interpretación de la postura en diferentes culturas, diferencias lingüísticas y culturales, juegos de interpretación de roles con aplicación de un lenguaje culturalmente sensible en distintos contextos. El programa enfatizó la sensibilidad a la diversidad cultural, la comunicación, la autoconciencia y la comprensión del otro.

Conclusiones: es fundamental promover el uso de estos recursos educativos en la práctica de los estudiantes académicos, con el fin de compartir conocimientos, cambiar prácticas y fortalecer las relaciones entre pares, integrando una postura de apertura al mundo.

Palabras clave: Enfermería; Diversidad Cultural; Comunicación; Intercambio Educativo Internacional.

INTRODUCTION

European societies are evolving towards multicultural contexts, bringing new challenges and opportunities for health systems, and the need to integrate cultural content into nursing education curricula is therefore emerging, in order to promote safe, fair and equitable care.⁽¹⁾

The Blended Intensive Programme (BIP), also known as a blended intensive or blended mobility program, is an educational and training initiative promoted by the European Union under the Erasmus+ program. These programmes are short and intensive, characterized by the use of innovative forms of teaching and learning, through cooperation between higher education institutions in partner countries.⁽²⁾

Mixed mobility programs are made up of a combination of physical mobility and a virtual component and their objectives are to expose students to different international contexts, with different perspectives, experiences and professional practices; the development of different types of skills, including critical and reflective thinking, language, digital, intercultural and research skills, which will enable them to better respond to future challenges and, not least, personal development through training to adapt to change.⁽³⁾ BIPs are thus a modern, inclusive and flexible way of increasing international cooperation, through the use of digital strategies and sharing knowledge from different areas, addressing issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals and other challenges related to specific areas of intervention.

In nursing, it is essential to promote learning environments with shared experiences and knowledge, which allow for the development of self-critical skills and self-knowledge that are essential for acquiring competencies based on reflective praxis and conscious decision-making.⁽⁴⁾ Participation in mobility programs allows for the exchange of knowledge that is transposed into the development of more conscious and culturally adapted care. Sharing experiences in a reflective and accessible way is a driving force behind the internationalization of nursing teaching and research, promoting the exchange of knowledge and the expansion of knowledge.⁽⁵⁾ Postgraduate education should provide opportunities to develop and improve cognitive functions and critical self-awareness, encouraging autonomy, reflection, criticism and proactivity, underpinned by solid theoretical foundations that add value to the learning process.⁽⁶⁾

This report describes our experience as students of the Rehabilitation Nursing Master's Degree, as part of the BIP mobility program "Intercultural differences in perceiving the human body through reflection on body posture and body-mindfulness". This study aims to describe the acquisition of skills related to understanding body posture and well-being across different cultures, as well as to identify the contributions that students perceive—through the critical-reflective analysis process—to their formative and professional development.

METHOD

This is a descriptive study, of the experience report type, which aims to describe the journey experienced during the BIP exchange program, focusing on cultural differences in the perception of the human body and reflection on posture and body awareness. An experience report is a type of knowledge production that describes and analyzes an academic and/or professional experience in a particular area of knowledge, the main objective of which is to describe the intervention on a scientific and critical reflection basis.⁽⁷⁾

The program took place at the Tarnów University of Applied Sciences in southern Poland in May 2024. It consisted of three virtual sessions and five days of physical mobility with face-to-face activities. The group of participants included undergraduate and master's students in nursing, physiotherapy and engineering, as well as lecturers from different countries: Portugal, Poland, Malta and Hungary, reflecting a great cultural and academic richness. This experience report refers specifically to the 5 students from the Rehabilitation Nursing

Master's Program.

In the area of physical mobility, professionals from the fields of physiotherapy and nursing gave various practical workshops on postural assessment, body self-awareness techniques and interactive activities on assessing and interpreting posture in different cultures, linguistic and cultural differences, role-playing games, with the application of culturally sensitive language in different contexts. The program emphasized themes such as sensitivity to cultural diversity, the importance of effective communication, with an emphasis on non-verbal language, self-expression and feelings about body posture that differ between people, age groups, backgrounds and beliefs.

DISCUSSION

The experience of this program allowed us to identify and compare different cultural expressions in different contexts, recognizing the variations in the meanings attributed to body posture and stimulated critical reflection on posture after participating in the practical workshops, leading us to recognize the importance of postural awareness for well-being. The exchange of knowledge promoted the development of empathy and respect for cultural differences.

The training of health professionals is related to an approach of continuity, due to the evolution of the world, the transcendence of borders and globalization, the expansion of technologies and changes in lifestyles that require flexibility, creativity and a critical attitude in the exercise of functions, and to an approach of rupture with pedagogical practices that do not enable students to act in the face of the complexity and specificity of everyday situations.⁽⁸⁾

In this context, the use of role play and scenario simulation strategies during academic training in the health area has been widely described in the literature. These tools bring out feelings such as empathy and self-confidence, helping the process of building intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, developing communication skills and teamwork.^(6,9)

The basic aim of this exchange was to show participants the importance of proper body posture for physical and psychological well-being, while also understanding it as a form of non-verbal communication influenced by cultural factors. This purpose was clearly superseded, becoming more than an exchange of knowledge. Meeting and thinking about other cultures emphasized that caring for others begins with empathy and understanding the multiple ways of living and understanding the world.

In today's globalized context, characterized by growing intercultural interactions and wide-ranging diversity, it is essential to understand the complex interaction between cultural variations, body image and mental health, which goes beyond the individual, with clear repercussions at a social level.⁽¹⁰⁾

The BIP program provided a rich and transformative experience, combining theoretical and practical knowledge with the diversity of multiple nationalities, allowing cultural sensitivity to be enhanced. The activities encouraged reflection on the relationship between body and mind, exploring how different cultures perceive body posture, self-care and human interaction based on empathy. This approach was especially important for the professional context that surrounds me, caring for people from diverse backgrounds, with different beliefs and perceptions about the body, health and well-being.

Body awareness, a process of identity formation throughout life, is not only influenced by individual experiences, but also by social and cultural norms, and it is essential to recognize and value these factors in order to promote health in all contexts.⁽¹¹⁾

Learning, as a process inherent to the human condition, is essentially experiential and social in nature, with experiences throughout the life cycle becoming an integral part of the individual and acting as a driving force for the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.⁽⁴⁾

The activities carried out promoted reflection on body postures and the importance of non-verbal communication. Being aware of the various aspects and variations that influence body posture and non-verbal communication can make all the difference to how a person perceives us and how we perceive others. This experience, as nurses and students of the rehabilitation nursing specialty, has enabled us to recognize and respect individuality and prepared us to understand body language as a form of communication, promoting a holistic view of the person, where humanization is central to the quality of care.

Studies show that people in culturally disparate environments, due to different ways of understanding health and care, different needs and different expectations of health services, experience poorer quality care than the rest of the population.⁽¹⁾

The literature shows that mobility programs in the field of nursing have a personal and professional impact on the participants, broadening their knowledge, awareness and cultural sensitivity, as well as strengthening other fundamental skills for person-centered care, such as critical thinking and decision-making skills.⁽¹²⁾ In the academic training process, it's not just a question of training a good professional who is technically and scientifically competent. The aim is to develop an active attitude towards the profession, the world and life, which encourages people to express their uniqueness and potential and to seek alternatives to individual and

collective health needs.⁽⁶⁾

Contributions to nursing education

It is essential to promote the use of these educational resources in the practice of nursing students and future teachers, enabling them to expand their vision of the world and the other, promoting inclusive and humanized care.

The development of cultural sensitivity, resulting from direct contact with different cultures and disciplines, enables the student/professional to deal with the complexity of care in a globalized context and without borders in care.

CONCLUSIONS

This work provided us with the construction of an enriching dynamic analysis that allowed us to develop a deeper knowledge related to body posture.

The BIP was fundamental to the professional and personal development of the five students in the Master's Degree In Rehabilitation Nursing, thanks to the many lessons they learned that went beyond the academic context. Sharing knowledge about and with other cultures, integrating a posture of openness to the world, overcoming limitations and difficulties, re-signifying habits, practices and behaviors, allowed us to broaden our view of the world and strengthen relationships between peers, which is fundamental in building knowledge.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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