

The European Nursing Module, a tool for developing the intercultural sensitivity of students on a nursing degree

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Background

We live in a globalized world where people have similarities as well as differences. Human rights must be the foundation of any society. Developing intercultural awareness is a means of widening the understanding of oneself and others. People must have respect for each other regardless of their sociocultural origin.

The European Nursing Module (ENM) has been designed to provide a structured framework for the exchange of international students on the undergraduate degree in Nursing in order to acquire the maximum amount of knowledge in a relatively short period of time (2 weeks) of international study. The exchanges take place between students of institutions that are members of the ENM Network. The focus during the exchange is on clinical practice in which the students, though unable to practise their nursing techniques, will observe the activities conducted by the nursing students and professionals of the host centre and the clinical environment as a whole, including the relations established with the patient, the patient's family and the nurses, the cultural

differences with respect to their own country, and the most characteristic aspects of the health system of their host country.

We believe that the ENM student exchanges promote intercultural understanding. The experience of being 'a foreigner', together with analysis and intercultural reflection, can help one to restructure values and recognise the need to develop intercultural competence. These programmes allow students to gain more knowledge and to enrich their curricular profile, which gives them greater awareness when it comes to valuing the diversity of an individual since they will have had the opportunity to get to know and to enjoy different cultures. It also allows students to face different working environments, which will help them to increase their level of autonomy and resilience and to build networks (1).

The aim of internationalizing higher education is to promote the professional and cultural growth of students and instructors by constructing social and knowledge networks that enable them to come together in a relationship of mutual support that has purely positive intentions and whose ultimate goal is to support human growth in all its forms.

The European Nursing Module (ENM) is a specific programme on the Degree in Nursing. It began in Sussex, England, in 1994, during a meeting of professionals who offered basic training in Nursing. The aim of the Module was to allow students to join a short exchange programme in the institution of another country and to enable the time they spent there to be recognized as part of their studies in Nursing (2).

At the URV Faculty of Nursing, other exchange options with students from other institutions and countries are available in addition to this programme. Perhaps the best-known of these is ERASMUS, which involves institutions from the European Union and was promoted significantly in the 1999 Bologna Declaration, which established a system of European credits to facilitate the free exchange of students, professors and researchers. Students who participate in this programme can study courses at the host university and have them validated on their own study programme. The exchanges can last from three to twelve months and students have the chance to apply for a grant to help them with the cost of mobility.

Smaller programmes and agreements at the Faculty of Nursing also allow the mobility of students to other countries. These include the MOU Programme of the Universidad de La Frontera in Temuco (Chile) and the agreement established with James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia (United States).

The culture of caring

Student exchanges in the ENM Programme effectively began in 1997. The URV Faculty of Nursing first participated the following year with the aim of working with the students on the culture of caring, developing awareness, understanding and their acceptance of an individual's cultural differences, which is a crucial aspect of our profession.

Madeleine Leininger is the founder of the field of Transcultural Nursing, which focuses on research and the theory of comparative human care. If we recognise that nursing is an art and a science, we can view our profession from a cultural perspective (3). This theory has been accepted and adopted around the world. The broad acceptance has led to the creation of new branches that support these premises, one of which is the cultural care theory (4).

An important aspect of this theory is emic and etic knowledge. Emic knowledge comes directly from informants within their own cultural context. Etic knowledge comes from the view of people from outside, such as nurses (5).

According to Cecilia Rohrbach (6), caring is the aim of every nursing student and professional. Until now the theory taught in classes has been biomedical, i.e. scientific, quantitative and positivist. The moment the relationship between culture and health appears, the curiosity to study health in a much wider context that favours the identity of the nurse also appears.

In 1995, the American Academy of Nursing defined culturally competent nursing care as care that is sensitive to topics such as culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, social class and economic status (7).

For professionals to have culturally adequate etic knowledge, regulated training must include specific theory as well as concepts and methods for researching and discovering care based on different cultures and subcultures (5).

Nurses today need an anthropological vision in order to offer culture-based care (4). Leininger's "rising sun" model explains which factors must be taken into account. These include religion, politics, economics, a world vision, the environment, cultural values, history, language, and gender (4).

One of the key points in this transformation is that the relationships established between students and instructors from different countries and cultures via a well-informed and carefully planned mobility programme have been shown to enrich the overall pedagogical experience. National and international mobility programmes help to broaden criteria, to promote greater respect for human rights and less racism and, above all, to transfer knowledge (8).

Europe has its own continental culture and a strong and enriching cultural diversity (6). Learning other languages helps to promote the exchange of knowledge.

The global migration currently taking place makes culturally competent care extremely important. However, good care does not mean simply treating everybody in the same way and demonstrating good intentions. Rather, a good nurse is one who is aware that different cultures have different behaviours, values and perceptions about health.

Characteristics of the ENM programme

Thirty academic institutions from fifteen European countries take part in the ENM programme: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Italy, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.



The programme is intended for students on undergraduate and Master's nursing programmes and teaching staff from the participating institutions. The aim is to promote mobility during these academic programmes and for students to learn nursing from different cultural perspectives.

Each institution signs a multilateral cooperation agreement with the other institutions. There are only two requirements for students wishing to participate in the programme. First, they must demonstrate that they have a good level of English since this is the language that will be used during the two weeks of the programme irrespective of the home country and/or country of destination. Second, the student's school or university must belong to one of the member institutions of the ENM.

Each institution decides the number of places they can or wish to make available and the time of year they wish to offer the programme (see Annex 1). Three months are available for the exchange: March, May and October. The programmes are organised so that the internships for the students of each country coincide.

The host institution can plan the stay, the internship, and other organisational aspects in different ways. Students making an application must list up to three institutions in order of preference. In one section of the application form they can state whether they would like to do their clinical practice in a hospital or at a primary care centre. When a student is accepted, the ENM coordinator at the requested institution contacts the student and provides the relevant instructions. There are then roughly four months in which to plan the stay.

The URV has offered places for foreign students since it became a member of the ENM in 1998. In the last few years it has offered places only in March and October (see Annex 2).

Nursing students can participate in the programme in one of two ways. The first and best-known way is to visit one of the participating countries for two weeks in order to observe and compare the similarities and differences of clinical practice. The second way is to become a guide for foreign students during their internship in our country. The function of the foreign student is to analyse, while the function of the guide is to teach, show and translate all the tasks and activities in which they are involved.

The two weeks the foreign students spend with us are organised to be intense both personally and professionally. As well as organising the internships, we arrange for the students to take part in as many of our activities and traditions as possible.

The total length of the programme is from four to five weeks. The first two weeks and the last week take place in the student's home country, while the second and third weeks (for those who are travelling) take place in the host country. The participation of the student guides is voluntary and before deciding to participate, they are explained by the instructor in charge of the programme what their collaboration consists of. Each visiting student is assigned a guide who is a student on the URV's undergraduate Nursing programme with a good command of English to accompany them during their internship in the hospital or at the primary care centre. In the weeks before the exchange, the instructor in charge of the programme holds a couple of

meetings with the student guides to prepare them for their participation. At these meetings, the students commit to preparing a session for the ENM students to explain the URV Nursing programme, our city, our traditions and the peculiarities of our health system. They must also participate in the leisure and cultural activities planned for the two weeks of the students' visit.



Reflection day at Campus Catalunya with the ENM programme delegate, students from Ostfold University College (Norway) and their URV student guides. March 2015.



ENM lunch with typical products from the region, with three students from Winterthur (Switzerland), one student from Antwerp (Belgium), the ENM programme delegate, and their URV student guides. Campus Catalunya, March 2016.



Reflection day at Campus Terres de l'Ebre with students from Rumania, Macedonia and Norway and their URV student guides. October 2015.



Reflection day in Tortosa with students from Norway and Sweden. March 2016.

To make the most of their experience, two weeks before their departure students who are to visit other countries and institutions must work with the delegated ENM instructor to learn about the characteristics of the health system and study other geographical, political, historical and cultural aspects of their host country. We also ask them to prepare a presentation on the URV's undergraduate Nursing programme, our city, our traditions and the peculiarities of our health system for the students and lecturers at their host institution (see Annex 3).

Conducting activities at a different teaching institution in a different country and with a different culture enriches students both personally and professionally because the human values and professional techniques they share will help them to improve their overall professional development and can produce positive synergies.

The main aims of the European Nursing Module are to:

- ✦ Develop the student's understanding of the concept of "culture".
- ✦ Develop the student's understanding of European cultural and professional issues practised in different departments in order to promote and improve the healthcare of individuals.
- ✦ Train students to recognise the international dimension of professional nursing knowledge in order to promote health care.
- ✦ Develop an awareness, perception and acceptance of cultural differences.
- ✦ Develop awareness of the need to respect the patient's individual culture.
- ✦ Develop the student's understanding of her/his own professional culture and the culture of others, bearing in mind the influence of historical, philosophical, ethical, economic and political factors.
- ✦ Develop the student's understanding of professional culture and its role, thus raising awareness of his/her own cultural identity.

During their stay in the foreign country, students must fill in a journal of reflection following Knowles' model (10). In the journal, they must express everything they feel is different or shocking to them. Whether the experience is positive or negative, this tool is valuable for students because it enables them to reflect and accept the differences.

We do not always learn from our experiences. We need to think about them, reflect on them and assimilate them in order to extract the maximum benefit. All this will help us to achieve the programme's learning objectives:

- ✦ The student will have developed his/her awareness of the influence of culture on health care, wellbeing and professional nursing.
- ✦ The student will value having had the experience and having shared multicultural knowledge.
- ✦ The student will demonstrate awareness and tolerance towards other cultures.

- ✦ The student will reflect on his/her own values and attitudes related to nursing and health care.
- ✦ The student will share his/her own learning experience with his/her classmates.
- ✦ The student will understand what being a foreigner is like and learn to empathise with foreigners.
- ✦ The student will develop his/her understanding of how nursing cultures define nursing and nursing tasks.

On their return, the students are required to evaluate their mobility programme based on a survey with standard questions agreed by all participating ENM institutions. The evaluation is about their stay, the tutor at their home institution, the tutor at their host institution, the organization, the accommodation and the internship. The results of the survey are shared between the host institution and the system coordinator. At annual meetings held at one of the participating ENM institutions, the questionnaire and its results are evaluated. Also at these meetings, the instructors' and students' experiences at the various locations are reported, aspects related to the goals of the module are discussed, and suggestions for improvements are made.



The annual meeting of participating ENM members took place this year in the Francisco de Vitoria University of Madrid. The picture shows the coordinators for next year's meeting in Belgium.

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Annex 1. Available places for the ENM in 2016

The table indicates how many students each institution can take during the three exchange periods. The specific dates for each exchange period are agreed at the annual Network Management Conference in April

INSTITUTION	MARCH 16	MAY 16	OCTOBER 16	TOTAL
Università degli Studi de Modena Reggio Emilia, Itàlia	3	3	3	
University College Zaeland Faculty of Health Education, Dinamarca	4	4	4	
VIA University College, Silkeborg, Dinamarca	5	5	5	
University College Lillebaelt, Vejle, Dinamarca	4	4	0	
University of Applied Sciences, Leiden, Department of Nursing, Leiden, els Països Baixos	4	0	0	
Artesis Plantijn University College, Antwerp, Bèlgica	4	4	0	
Karel de Grote University College, Antwerp, Bèlgica	4-6	4-6	4-6	
Haute Ecole de Namur Liège, Namur, Bèlgica	4	4	4	
Østfold University College Faculty of Health & Social Work Studies, Fredrikstad, Noruega	2	0	2	
Faculty of Nursing, Sør-Trøndelag University College, Trondheim, Noruega	0	0	6	
Higher Medical School in Bitola, Macedònia	2	2	2	
Carol Davila Nursing College Bucharest, Romania	15	15	15	
The Post Secondary Nursing School "Carol Davila", Pitesti, Romania	2	2	2	

Plovdiv College of Medicine, Plovdiv, Bulgària	4	4	4	
Taganrog Medical College, Taganrog, Federació Russa	0	2	2	
Rostov Base Medical College, Rostov-na-Donu, Federació Russa	0	0	4	
College of Health Education in Cuprija, Sèrbia	4	4	0	
Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, Madrid, Estat espanyol	10	10	10	
Universitat Rovira i Virgili Escola Universitària d'Infermeria, Tarragona, Estat espanyol	9	0	9	
Escuela de Enfermería de Vitoria, Vitòria, Estat espanyol	8	0	8	
Örebro University, School of Health and Medical Sciences, Örebro, Suècia	4	0	4	
Sophiahemmet University, Estocolm, Suècia	4	0	4	
Berner Bildungszentrum Pflege, Berna, Suïssa	0	10	10	
Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Winterthur, Suïssa	15	0	0	
Sanitary Medical School of Applied Sciences "VISAN", Belgrad, Sèrbia	5	9	5	
Milutin Milankovic High Medical College of Vocational Studies, Belgrad, Sèrbia	3-5	0	3-5	
University of Brighton, School of Health Sciences (Nursing), Brighton, Anglaterra	0	4	6	
University of Leeds, School of Healthcare, Leeds, Anglaterra	5	5	0	
University of Northampton / Milton Keynes Hospital, School of Health, Northampton, Anglaterra	4	4	6	

	2009-88	2009-63	2009-97	248
	2010-84	2010-57	2010-98	239
	2011-73	2011-72	2011-81	226
	2012-65	2012-74	2012-88	227
	2013-91	2013-88	2013-104	283
	2014-122	2014-106	2014-119	347
	2015			344

Annex 2. ENM student numbers in the last 10 years

OUT: Students of the URV Faculty of Nursing URV who have been abroad.

IN: Foreign students who have chosen our Faculty as their destination.

2007	IN	OUT
MARCH	7	0
MAY	8	0
OCTOBER	4	1

2008	IN	OUT
MARCH	6	0
MAY	5	0
OCTOBER	0	1

2009	IN	OUT
MARCH	7	0
MAY	6	6
OCTOBER	0	15

2010	IN	OUT
MARCH	8	0
MAY	6	0
OCTOBER	0	8

2011	IN	OUT
MARCH	6	0
MAY	3	0
OCTOBER	0	27

2012	IN	OUT
MARCH	10	5
MAY	-----	-----
OCTOBER	0	14

2013	IN	OUT
MARCH	7	12
MAY	-----	-----
OCTOBER	9	12

2014	IN	OUT
MARCH	7	0
MAY	-----	-----
OCTOBER	7	15

2015	IN	OUT
MARCH	6	14
MAY	-----	-----
OCTOBER	7	17

2016	IN	OUT
MARCH	8	10
MAY	-----	-----
OCTOBER	7	6

Annex 3. I want to participate in the ENM. What should I do?



Testimonial

The European Nursing Network (ENM) has organised student exchanges since 1997. It has always been an enormous pleasure to work with ENM students and coordinators.

We have collaborated with ENM all these years because it is hugely beneficial for our students. Although the students are abroad for only two weeks, the impact their experience has on them is extremely important. On a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 is the lowest score (not at all) and 4 is the highest (absolutely), over a three-year period 94% of the students (326 students) answered 4 to the questions: “To what extent has the module developed your understanding of cultural questions?” and “To what extent has the module developed your understanding of the culture of the profession?”. I think this is thanks to the comprehensive and detailed design of the module, which forces them to reflect and participate before, during and after the exchange.

My students return from their ENM exchanges with a host of new perspectives on their profession. When they visit countries whose cultures are different from Denmark's, they are surprised to discover what can be achieved with little money and few resources in a healthcare system that is not based on the Danish welfare model they are familiar with. They tell anecdotes about their experience that clearly show their awareness of the influence that politics and culture have on healthcare and the nursing profession. They take this knowledge into the classroom and talk about nursing. Hygiene is always an interesting topic for them because the rules differ a great deal from one European country to another. Ethics is another topic that stands out, especially in relation to patient autonomy, the patient-nurse relationship, patient involvement in healthcare, and the relationships between family members. The fact that they are made to write a journal of reflection helps them to record their thoughts and reflect on them. This also seems to be a great help to the ENM students who visit our institution: in the reflection sessions, they always say how their notes help them to remember certain points of interest. They have many impressions and are willing to discuss their experiences, especially those who are confident with their English. A certain level of English is necessary to broach a sensitive topic but, in general, the students tend to help each other when expressing their thoughts.

Meeting students from other countries is always a positive experience. Long-lasting friendships have been made even though this two-week experience is so short. Discussing student life also helps them to understand the country's culture and to see that different countries have different policies that give young people very different opportunities.

Many students find it difficult to be an observer for the two weeks of the module. Some find it uncomfortable to stand and watch the patients and observe how the

nurses work. They need help and supervision because they are used to participating at the nursing service of their previous clinical environments. However, once they accept their role of observer, most students appreciate it because it offers them a perspective they would not have if they participated fully in the nursing service. Lots of questions occur to them as they realise the differences from what they are used to and from what they had expected. This gives them with a valuable starting point from which to reflect in depth.

The ENM helps students who are unable to participate in long exchanges to gain an understanding of other cultures that would be difficult to acquire in their own cultural environment.

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The European Nursing Module offers students the opportunity to travel abroad to see, experience, hear, taste and feel another culture. This full immersion enables students to:

- ♦ see new places and different-coloured landscapes,
- ♦ experience at first hand the difficulties associated with being in a new place with different routines,
- ♦ hear a different language and sometimes different sounds and different music,
- ♦ taste new food, and
- ♦ feel the experience of living a little adventure.

In addition, students can observe the working environment that will characterise their future working lives. They can reflect on the similarities and differences between their home country and their host country, to help them better understand what nursing is like around Europe.

Two weeks is not a long time for a student exchange but it can be good for students who are unable to spend long periods away from home. A short stay abroad represents a little challenge that students can easily overcome. It can also lead to longer stays on other programmes, since they will have become more confident.

It is very important that the two institutions send each other information so that the students can take maximum advantage of this short but intense experience and be able to share and understand the new information they will receive.

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