Understanding student perceptions of becoming a nurse in contemporary European society

11 – 13 June 2009
RCN Conference, Glasgow, United Kingdom
Background

- Challenge of EU enlargement
- Bologna Declaration versus personal reality
- The developing role of universities and colleges in preparing nurses
- Need to understand student perceptions in order to deliver effective nursing for the future
  - Cultural competence
  - Best health care practice
  - Personal effectiveness
Study aims

- To compare perceptions of internationalization and intentions for mobility amongst 3rd year student nurses’ in three European Schools of Nursing
- To develop evidence based teaching and new learning strategies for internationalization of curriculum
- To develop further multi-national, collaborative research in this area
Study Design

- Partnership participative approach: 3 workshops
  1. Nottingham, January 2008: study protocol
  2. Tartu, June 2008: data collection design
  3. Ghent, September 2008: analysis

- Exploratory qualitative study design
- Focus group method
- Sample design: aim to recruit (10%) of third year students in each School
University of Nottingham (UK)
First workshop – 01/2008

- Review national contexts
- Develop research protocol
- Agree ethics and access arrangements:
  - submitted for ethical review to University of Nottingham Faculty of Medicine and Health Science
  - Participation based on voluntary informed consent with participant information sheet, signed consent form and commitment to anonymity
Tartu (Estonia)
‘City of good thoughts’
Second workshop – 06/2008

- Agree process of the focus group interviews

- Development of the focus group interview tool (in English for later translation into Flemish and Estonian)
  - Initial topic areas were adapted from previous work of Wihlborg (1995)

- Focus group methodology - preparation of interviewers
Focus group interviews - Ghent
FGI QUESTIONS

1. What does the idea of internationalization mean to you?
2. How do you feel about the ideas of internationalization described just now?
3. Do you think that you are open to influences from other countries?
4. What would increasing your opportunities to travel and work abroad mean to you?
5. Do you think if nurses did more work in other countries, there are any benefits to health care, nursing or patients?
6. Tell me about your experiences of working with/providing care for people from other countries?
7. Do you think there are benefits to you of being able to work in other countries?
8. How should your nursing course prepare you to working in other countries?
Focus group interviews (FGI)

- 3 FGI were conducted in June and September 2008
  - Participants: Nottingham n= 8; Tartu n = 7; Ghent n = 12; TOTAL n= 27
- Enabled students to share opinions and experiences
- Impact of the group process on perceptions of the individual student was taken into account
- The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to  84 minutes per group
- Interviews were recorded and later transcribed
- Preliminary summary and analysis of key themes in each centre–back translation into English
University College Ghent (Belgium)
Third workshop – 09/2008

- Analysis of the interviews
- Sharing the key themes from the interviews
- Initial comparisons were drawn
- Discussed about the context of the meanings of the themes in English
The Results
General meaning of internationalization

- impact on national/ethnic identity and awareness of other cultures/countries
- impact of prior personal contacts with foreigners
- personal/professional freedom and sense of belongingness
Personal/professional freedom and sense of belongingness

*People do see themselves as, I think, world citizens.*
UK

*I can work where I want and that gives me a feeling of freedom. ... The world has become my village.*
BE

*... life, after you have been somewhere else, is much more “multicoloured”... develops the sense of belonging together.*
EST
Motivating factors

- familiar language/culture/people
- better quality of personal and professional life (income, weather, work conditions etc)
- personal growth and learning
Better quality of personal and professional life

I would like to go to a country where the sun always shines and where it doesn’t rain all the time. BE

...[abroad nurses’] attitude to the patient is absolutely different, they are more energetic, more positive. EST
Barriers

- safety and security issues (social, emotional, physical)
- family relations and close relationships
- insufficient opportunities to communicate with family/friends
- language and cultural barriers
Language and cultural barriers

It's the language thing that gets me, the fact I can't speak another language fluently. UK

If you, for example, go to a country where you can't speak a word of this language, and when you are alone, it’s crazy how hard it is to get to used to all these new things... EST

I would never want to go to a country where I would be obligated to wear a burka or where I would be discriminated as a woman. BE
Impact on health care

- positive impact
  - exchange of good practice
  - increase of cultural awareness
  - joint efforts in research
  - comparison of health care systems

- negative impact
  - problems related to work force/salary issues
  - decrease of care quality
Negative impact on health care

They might have a very thick accent from the country of origin which a patient can find very difficult to get through. UK

It could also negatively influence our salaries... maybe they will even take these nurses instead of ours because they are cheaper. BE

Perhaps younger people have a better attitude [to foreigners] they accept better foreign nurses but the older generation might not be so tolerant in this sense. EST
Support expected from education

- education and information
  - language and medical terminology
  - cultural and religious issues
  - requirements and standards

- ways of educating and informing
  - peer supported
  - exchange programmes
  - via modern ITC means
Synthesis

- Small study with limitations
- Important as rich data observed and questions asked
- Preliminary findings indicate positive development of international perspectives in nursing curriculum
- Supported by findings of other small but similar work
Future perspectives?

Writing up provisional results for publication

Looking for funding now to extend the work

Plans for bigger study with a wider range
- Focus groups (1) with students who have been on exchange / (2) who don’t want to do it
- Methodological triangulation using survey with wider sample
- Inclusion of other schools/countries using same focus group methodology
Research Team