

# CAN WE GUARANTEE THE SUCCESSFUL RECOGNITION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC CURRICULUM IN NURSING PROGRAMME ON BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC?

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**ABSTRACT.** There is a worldwide shortage of nurses and international nursing groups are calling for 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."

**Keywords:** transatlantic curriculum, nursing programme

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## INTRODUCTION

There is a worldwide shortage of nurses and international nursing groups are calling for 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 addressing critical issues in the nursing workforce. At present, nursing and education science do not possess evidence based researches which are able to respond to these problems of the nursing profession. Semmelweis University (SU), Nazareth College (NC) and Laurea University (LU) processed the dual degree model of professional nursing education with the financial support of EU EACEA and US FIPSE. The project's title is Transatlantic Curriculum in Nursing (TCN), the main objectives of which are: to prepare an internationally and culturally competent workforce; develop the practice of Nursing students' exchange programs; process the model of dual-degree independent on

geographical, political or cultural borders; spread the evidence based Nursing standards in the daily practice.

## Objective

At the end of the 3rd year of the 4-year pilot project we introduce the training programme realized in an international trilateral cooperation, analyze our results and its expected effect on research related to the possible acknowledgement and utility in the international and national platforms.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the analysis of documents we introduce the major elements of the produced training programme and teaching process. We made a questionnaire-based survey among health care professionals to discover what the demand is for our objectives among stakeholders. We processed the acquired data with the help of an SPSS statistics programme.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Specifically, the preparation of a culturally competent international workforce and globalization of that workforce through educational experiences requires the achievement of graduation.

The planned activities in the framework of the program: mutual student and staff mobility, joint curriculum development and teaching process, determining joint standards.

The outcomes are:

- Developing a standardized model for the enhancement and implementation of international Nursing educational programs.
- Improving institutional work culture.
- Improving professional terminology and cultural abilities.
- Creating the model of a new type of nursing professional possessing a high level of cultural and language competence, which are indispensable for participating in global programs.

Before starting the Program the partners signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding, and agreed on the basic principle of cooperation. The main aspects of this agreement were that the nature of nursing education is practice oriented, and that

nursing is an interdisciplinary profession. Our goals within the TCN programme were to add values otherwise not accessible, such as intercultural competence, proficiency in a foreign technical language, and transatlantic characteristics of language, culture and society. Another aspect of the agreement was to set that participating senior students in the programme have to meet the requirements of their home institutions (e.g. HESI exam in the US and final exam in Europe). The TCN study programme is designed student by student individually, based on the preliminary studies of particular students.

We also took into consideration the checklist of CIDD, the Consortium of international double degrees (1), which gives recommendations for developing dual-degree programmes. In this way we hope the common recognition of the curriculum and degrees awarded to students.

Table 1

**The number of mobility describing the past three years from the start of the project  
(Student mobility data)**

Host Institution	Laurea	Semmelweis University	Nazareth College
2008 January - 2008 May	4 students from NC		
2008 June - 2009 January			5 students from SU 4 students from LU
2008 August - 2008 December		2 students from NC	
2009 February - 2009 April	5 students from SU 2 students from NC	4 students from LU	
2009 May - 2009 December			3 students from SU 4 students from LU
2009 August - 2009 December		2 students from NC	
2010 February - 2010 May	3 students from SU 2 students from NC	4 students from LU	
2010 May - 2010 December			4 students from SU 4 students from LU
2010 August - 2009 December		2 students from NC	
Total number of incoming students	16	14	24



The next important step was to design the curriculum. We created the so called “TCN course-bank” with the following characteristics mutually agreed upon by partners:

- Not necessary to create new courses!
- „Common courses”: shared topics (launched in common work, with a strong multicultural aspect like)
  - Practice in clinical placements
  - Strengths in institutional programs
  - Innovation in teaching and learning methodology
- Registrars must be involved from every institution
  - What are the innovations?
  - Host teaching, tutorial system, student to student tutorial
  - Innovative assessment: student involved in the assessment, self-evaluation, student reports also taken into consideration
  - Changing role of the teacher acting as a moderator of the learning process in a multicultural student group

As the table 1 shows the total number of students who participated in the program is 55; 41 European and 14 American students.

Table 2 describes in detail the structure of faculty mobility among partner institutions.

The subject of teachers’ mobility is an essential tool to meet programme goals, and at the end an essential part of the recognition process. Besides teaching, TCN teachers engage 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 and is able to work in a cooperating TCN team (table 2).

In 2010, our first two students attained dual degrees: one American and one Hungarian student. Additionally, one (other) Hungarian student has passed the HESI exam as a final requirement for getting the Nazareth Diploma. Based on our trilateral agreement, the successful completion of an exit examination at Nazareth College, and a thesis and complex exam (oral theoretical and practical exam) at Semmelweis University were components of the graduation requirements. The institutions taking part in TCN Project issued their jointly created „TCN-Certificate” for the above mentioned two students (table 3).

We also examined what workload means for students the successful completion of this course (table 4).

Table 2

<b>Teachers’ mobility from the start of the project</b>			
	<b>To LU</b>	<b>To SU</b>	<b>To NC</b>
From LU	-	6 teachers for 1-1 week	10 teachers for 1-1 week
From SU	7 teachers for 1-1 week	-	5 teachers for 1 week. 1 teacher for 2 weeks, 1 teacher for 4 weeks
From NC	8 teachers for 1-1 week	9 teachers for 1-1 week	-
Altogether		47 teachers for 50 weeks	
		EU to US: 17	
		US to EU: 17	

Table 3

**Recognition process at institutional and inter-institutional levels  
Status of Atlantis students 2008 – 2010 (situation at 25.10.2010)**

Name	Transfer of credits (outgoing studies)	Graduation at home institute	Graduation at host institute	TCN Certificate Dual degree	Extra (NCLEX) recognition (home, abroad)
<b>USA</b> 					
Pilot student	x	x			no data
Pilot student	x	x			no data
1st year student	x	x			no data
1st year student	x	x			no data
2nd year student	x	x	x	x	x
2nd year student	x				
3rd year student	x	ongoing mobility			
3rd year student	x	ongoing mobility			
<b>FINLAND</b> 					
1st year student	x	x			
1st year student	x				
1st year student	x	x			
1st year student	x	x			
2nd year student	x				
2nd year student	x				
2nd year student	x				
2nd year student	x				
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
<b>HUNGARY</b> 					
1st year student	x	x			
1st year student	x	x			x
1st year student	x	x	x	x	
1st year student	x	x			
1st year student	x	x			
2nd year student	x	x			
2nd year student	x	x			
2nd year student	x	x			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			
3rd year student		ongoing mobility			

For the diploma of the home institution US students have to complete 120 US credits (=240 ECTS), SU students 240 ECTS, and LU students 210 ECTS credits. Compared to this students in the programme complete the number of credits indicated in the table, the number of which is higher than expected by the home institution. This surplus workload results from the fact that content conformity is

not the same level as the conformity of outcome requirements, students have to attain competences formulated as added values, furthermore European students complete 3 more months in the European partner institution as Erasmus students besides the two semesters completed in the US.

### Investigation of the expected practical benefit of the TCN programme

We made a survey among registered nurses and nursing leaders from Hungary focusing on the added values of our TCN-ATLANTIS program, asking them about their expectations and the challenges related to their work in an intercultural environment. Our findings:

- 50% of nurses consider possessing sufficient knowledge
- 60% of them think that the current protocols are appropriate about transcultural nursing

At the same time just 19% of them think that current protocols in practice in Hungary respond in a proper way to the needs and challenges generated by a multicultural environment. However, 100% of students participating in the program from both sides of the Atlantic report that they have enhanced transcultural skills. About 50 % of registered nurses in Hungary think that they have moderate potential to respond in an appropriate way, and less than 10% answered that they have full potential to do so.

Table 4

Recognition of students' workload							
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	Summary 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!

Levels of recognition (4):

- institutional
- inter-institutional
- labour-market: national, international
- national
- international

We agree that lower levels of recognition, such as institutional, inter-institutional and the labour market recognition must be steps preceding national recognition. In this way we will have a recognition fitting to real societal needs.

### Institutional recognition

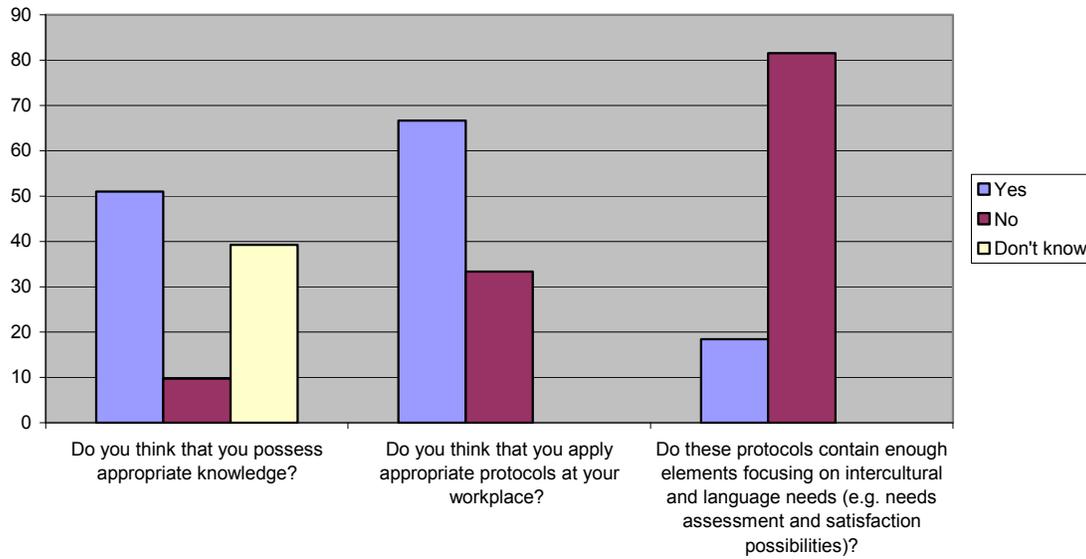
In the process of credit transfer – due to differences in some course contents (in the

US there are more integrated courses) – we took into consideration the learning outcomes of each specific course as a basis of recognition.

Besides recognizing credits we also analyzed and took into consideration the workload of students. We consider that in this way the program will be easily accepted at institutional level especially by students. We can say that our program is a balanced and student-centred.

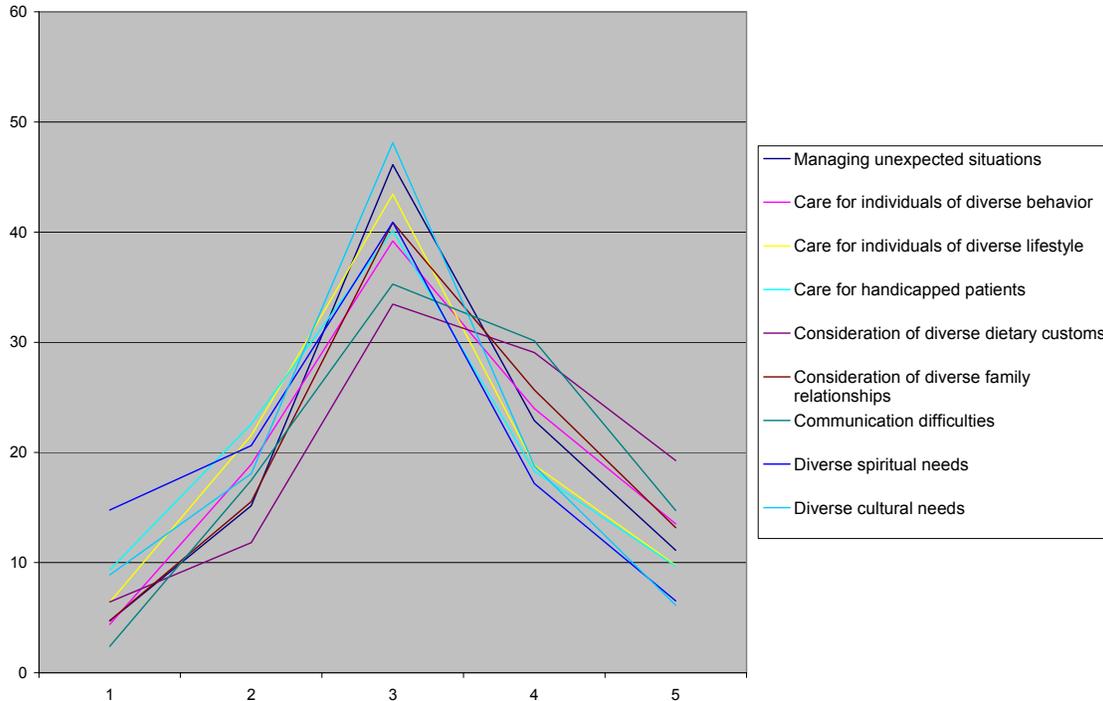
To guarantee the added values of the program the partners agreed that we must ask a reasonable amount of extra-work from students and teachers as well.

### Cooperation in a multicultural environment (Survey, 2010)



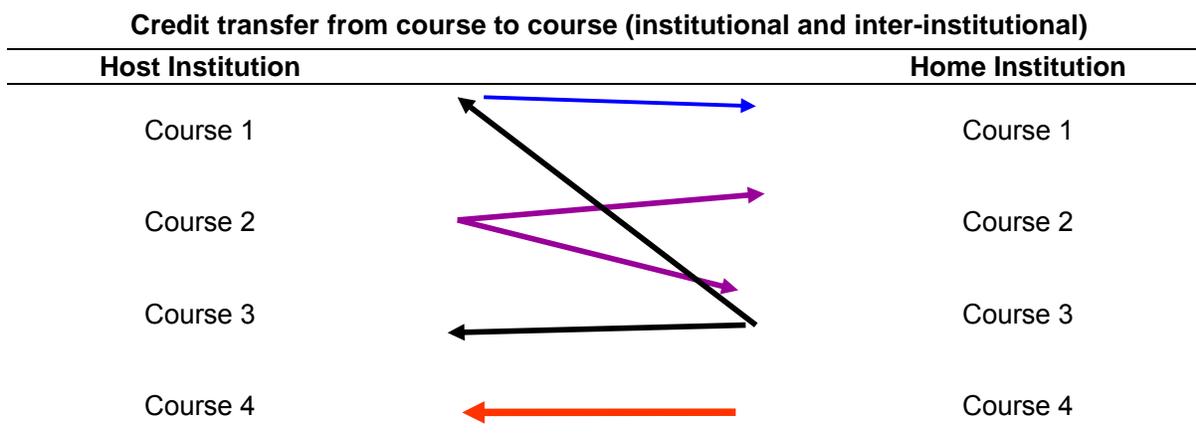
**Diagram 1** Cooperation in a multicultural environment

Do you have the chance (potential) to respond in an appropriate way to specific cultural, language or social needs?



**Diagram 2** Potential to respond in an appropriate way to specific intercultural needs

Table 5



### Labour market recognition

Placements in settings outside the classroom have been a significant factor in assisting local employers in understanding the nature of the program. All partners have done a good work in disseminating the Atlantis experience and results so far. Several presentations were made at different professional meetings at different levels. Possible way:

- Students' recognition during their internship
- To understand TCN philosophy
- Graduate students will be employed in the labour market – where is their position?
- Recommended best practice:
- Dissemination, marketing – health services
- Research
- Professional unions and associations

It is important to underline the good results and feedbacks of the stakeholder conferences. We got a positive evaluation related to the added values of the program: these values are highly appreciated by the labor market: leadership, management, community, transcultural skills, ethics, law, communication, and research. Our survey clearly proves this: competences generated by the TCN project appear in the present nursing practice as real necessities, which are acknowledged by stakeholders who indicate

at the same time that they are only little able to fulfil these.

On international level we have submitted and accepted posters and presentations this year:

- International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation ICERI, held in Madrid (Spain) on 15th-17th November 2010, submitted and accepted poster presentation
- 2010 Global Alliance for Leadership in Nursing Education and Science (GANES) Second Annual International Conference at the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City in Arlington, Virginia. December 11, 2010.
- Our program is cited as good practice in articles debating about the workforce in nursing. (5)

### National recognition

The next level to discuss is the national one. It means that the program and the issued degree are legally accepted in the partner countries. The main problem seems to be that some project partner countries are more prescriptive, while others value a more flexible, creative approach. There are some recommendations for joint and/or dual degrees that all partners can utilize.

Our major challenge is to establish a good practice that can be utilized by all project partners and also other projects.

At present, Dual Degree programs don't have any „extra status” among international

mobility programs at the level of national legislation in the EU countries. The national legislation specifies the Diploma Supplement (DS) form as mandatory, which can contain some extra information.

In the US and Finland professional organizations provide clear guidelines for the recognition of any programme charged with preparing students who are involved in patient care activities.

In summer 2010 the Finnish Board of Education published guidelines how to establish Dual Degree programmes but only in Finnish. Our TCN programme has every characteristic listed in this recommendation (6)

## CONCLUSIONS

The EU-FIPSE TCN-ATLANTIS programme meets the needs for a culturally competent global nursing workforce.

The work market plays the most important role in the recognition process as the beneficiary of the program output: the graduate student.

Our standardized system of tools (institutionalization) is eligible to be used in all subject areas. We still need to work more on national and international, widely accepted interpretation.

This summer the Finnish Board of Education published guidelines how to establish Dual Degree programmes but only in Finnish language! Our TCN programme has every characteristic listed in this recommendation.

In the US, Nazareth College will soon receive the Innovations in Education Award from the American Association of the Colleges of Nursing.

In Spring 2010 Semmelweis University got the elite title of a "Research University" from the Ministry of Education, and in a declaration the Hungarian Accreditation Committee classified the internationalization activity (student and teacher exchanges including the Atlantis project) of the Faculty of Health Sciences as "excellent".

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