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Review Juggling to survive: MSc postgraduate nursing students' experiences of studying far from home

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This study provides narrative around the experiences of 11 international students of Asian origin while studying on an MSc Nursing Studies programme in Ireland. This is a relevant topic to consider when most universities are striving to attract international students. While a diverse student population offers many opportunities for intercultural learning, the study considers challenges from the perspective of the international student while studying far from home and feeling uncertain. The impact of international teaching is often considered from a curriculum development perspective and there is merit in considering the wider complexities for the individuals themselves.

The three themes identified in the findings offer rich narrative around the student experience and focus on:

- (1) The environmental, social cultural and economic differences, which presented challenges for the students; the authors titled this theme *differing realities* and loneliness, concerns about accommodation and anxiety about the ability to survive the experience featured.
- (2) Initial coping strategies are identified, which involved sticking together, however, as confidence grew so did integration with the wider group, which involved coping with anxieties about being judged by peers. The authors have titled the second theme *working through*.
- (3) The third theme *learning new ways* identified that the students were more used to an approach to teaching and learning which included 'spoon feeding', and through their studies with other students they became more confident in questioning and developing critical thinking skills.

This study identifies some of the challenges and opportunities for international students and argues for thoughtful decision-making and ethical practices in promoting international, intercultural, global learning. It is questionable whether findings from this small-scale study

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can be generalised beyond Asian students in Ireland, thus limiting impact. However, the participants were recruited from the first cohort of students studying on the MSc Nursing Studies at a higher education institute, which indicates that the organisation is conscious of meeting the specific needs of international students. Consideration could have been given to the psychosocial impact of studying far from home and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of such students. Diversity in the classroom offers a rich learning experience with many opportunities to meet learning aims. This study identifies the requirement that lecturers should be culturally sensitive and address concerns around academic literacy, language and study skills. I would argue that being aware of the requirement for self-care and supporting students to develop coping strategies while studying far from home is also an essential requirement.

Joy L Darch has a strong academic background in nursing and healthcare and most recently introduced nursing to a higher education institute. Her research into nurses as healthy role models received a Florence Nightingale Research Scholarship for two consecutive years.