



Educators' perceptions of their experiences of transnational education in nursing: A grounded theory study

Collette Straughair^{a,*}, Jaden Allan^a, Tony Conner^a, Debra Morgan^a, Alison Machin^{a,1}

^a Northumbria University, Coach Lane Campus, Benton, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE7 7XA, UK

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ABSTRACT

Aim: The study aim was to explore educators' perceptions of their experiences of participating in transnational education in nursing.

Background: In an increasingly globalised world, involvement with the delivery of transnational education has become commonplace across the international higher education sector. In recent years, transnational education within the academic discipline of nursing has developed at pace, evolving in response to a global need to invest in nurse education, address nursing shortages and strengthen nursing leadership. However, despite acknowledgement that transnational education is a complex activity that needs to be more fully understood, research specifically exploring transnational education in nursing is scarce, as previous studies predominantly focus on other academic disciplines. The study addresses this knowledge gap, advancing understanding of transnational education in the context of nursing.

Design: The study was positioned within the interpretivist paradigm and underpinned by a constructivist grounded theory methodological design, acknowledging the prior knowledge and experience of the research team in relation to phenomenon under investigation.

Methods: Ethical approval was obtained before the study commenced, ensuring adherence to key ethical principles. The study was conducted during May to August 2020, in a university in the North of England that provides undergraduate and postgraduate nurse education in the United Kingdom and transnational context. Participants were recruited via e mail and invited to complete a brief questionnaire, informing a preliminary theoretical sampling strategy. Ten educators with experience of transnational education across a diverse range of international locations participated in individual, semi-structured, online interviews that were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were analysed using initial and focused coding, constant comparison, theoretical memos and diagrams.

Findings: The findings uncovered three overarching data categories, each of which were crucial to supporting effective transnational education in nursing. *Prepare-* involved developing an understanding of the context of healthcare and education, being supported and collaborating with transnational partners. *Perform-* involved recognising language and cultural influences, adapting to the environment and implementing responsive educational pedagogies. *Progress-* involved recognition of personal development at individual level and valuing the benefits at organisational level.

Conclusions: Although transnational education in nursing can be challenging and complex, it can offer worthwhile advantages for all stakeholders. However, effective transnational education in nursing is dependent on strategies which prepare educators appropriately and enable them to perform effectively, thereby promoting successful outcomes at individual, organisational and transnational partner level and facilitating advancement in future potential collaborative activity.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: c.straughair@northumbria.ac.uk (C. Straughair).

¹ Present address: Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Campus, Edinburgh EH11 4BN, UK

1. Introduction

Transnational education is ‘*the delivery of an educational award in a country other than that in which the awarding body is based. It can include, but is not limited to, branch campuses, distance learning, joint and dual programmes, fly-in faculty, or a mix of these, often referred to as blended learning*’ (Universities UK, 2018, p.4). Involvement with the delivery of transnational education has become commonplace across many international higher education institutes, with increasing educational initiatives developing over recent years in the academic discipline of nursing. However, it is regarded as a complex activity that needs to be more fully understood, to ensure successful outcomes for all stakeholders (Maxwell-Stuart and Huisman, 2018). The aim of this study was to advance understanding by exploring educators’ perceptions of their experiences of participating in transnational education in nursing.

In an increasingly globalised world, transnational education has developed at pace to establish itself as a core component of the business strategy across the higher education sector, with many universities positioning themselves as key leaders in the field (Arunsaalem, 2016; Wilkins, 2018). The extent of activity is evident across the international context, with examples of overseas educational programmes being delivered by numerous western hemisphere universities in countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey and China (Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Hoare, 2013; McNamara and Knight, 2015; Mackay et al., 2016; Hu and Willis, 2017). In the United Kingdom (UK) alone, 84% of universities are involved in transnational activity, situating education as a marketised commodity that can facilitate international growth and economic prosperity, which accounted for £ 19.9 billion revenue in 2016 (Lomer et al., 2018; UK Universities, 2018; Department for Education, 2019). In recent years, transnational education in nursing has evolved in response to a global need to meet sustainable development targets which seek to invest in nurse education, address nursing shortages and strengthen nursing leadership (World Health Organisation, 2020). Current empirical studies exploring transnational education across a wide range of academic disciplines identify an array of challenges, which include issues relating to educator preparedness, implementing appropriate pedagogies, overcoming language barriers and addressing cultural differences (Gribble and Ziguas, 2003; Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Seah and Edwards, 2006; Nawaz, 2017; Szkornik, 2017; Liu and Willis, 2021; Tran et al., 2021). However, as transnational education in nursing is an emerging market (Lee, 2020), there is a limited range of empirical research to inform understanding of the issues and challenges that may be specific to the discipline.

An Australian study exploring a transnational nursing programme in Singapore highlighted a lack of readiness for intercultural learning, based on findings that educators were poorly prepared to teach international students in their base university and therefore equally poorly prepared to teach overseas (Hoare, 2013). Issues related to organisational recognition of the time and resources required to support curricula development were also highlighted as challenges, resulting in negative impacts to the quality of learning and teaching in the transnational location (Hoare, 2013). In a UK study to explore the development of a transnational nursing curriculum, specific pedagogical challenges were highlighted in terms of implementing teaching and learning strategies to address cultural norms and differing student learning styles (Lee, 2020). The need to ensure that transnational education supports inclusivity by addressing cultural, environmental and social norms is also evident in a South African study by Naidoo and Sibiya (2018), who identified that nursing programmes need to be tailored to fulfil the requirements of the transnational context. Despite some of the challenges of transnational education in nursing, an Australian study by Mackay et al. (2016) highlighted benefits in terms of the positive impact on the development of educators, specifically in relation to advanced educational expertise in response to meeting the learning and teaching needs of students in the transnational location.

However, although the current evidence base provides some insight in the academic discipline of nursing, this is limited and requires further empirical investigation. This gap in knowledge provided the rationale to advance understanding in the context of nursing and underpinned the study aim to explore educators’ perceptions of their experiences of participating in transnational education in nursing.

2. Methods

2.1. Study design

The study was located within an interpretive paradigm (Hughes, 1996) and underpinned by a constructivist grounded theory methodological design (Charmaz, 2014). As the research team had existing knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation through extensive prior experience of being involved in transnational nurse education, a constructivist approach was determined to be the most appropriate. This approach acknowledged the fact that “*we are part of the world we study, the data we collect and the analyses we produce*”, therefore accepting that knowledge is constructed from past and present interactions which provide an interpretative representation of the social world, not an exact replication of it (Charmaz, 2014, p17).

2.2. Study setting

The study was undertaken at a UK university in the North of England that is involved in delivering undergraduate and postgraduate nurse education with universities in a range of transnational locations such as Malta, China, Malaysia and Singapore. The structure of programmes vary across countries, reflecting contractual agreements that are designed to meet the contextual and educational needs of the transnational partner. For example, transnational education in Malta comprises a complete undergraduate BSc nursing programme, whilst transnational education in China comprises postgraduate modules to support qualified nurses to achieve degree level status. However, regardless of programme structure, transnational educational activity is underpinned by a ‘fly-in faculty’ approach. This involves educators from the UK based host university travelling to the transnational location on a transient basis at pre-defined times to deliver short intensive teaching blocks, that usually last for a duration of one to two weeks. Although planning meetings are held prior to travel to develop educational materials and discuss the academic requirements of the specific programme, there is no other formal preparation provided. Educators involved in the delivery of transnational nurse education are existing members of faculty academic staff who have experience in delivering nurse education in the host university’s UK based nursing programmes and are allocated transnational workload activity in line with personal development objectives which identify individual interest in teaching overseas.

2.3. Sampling

Ethical approval was obtained prior to commencing the study (Submission ID:16174), addressing key ethical principles to ensure that participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, supported to provide informed consent, assured of confidentiality and aware of their ability to withdraw at any point (ESRC, 2010). An email containing detailed study information was circulated to educators in the UK based host university’s nursing faculty, inviting individuals with experience of transnational nurse education to participate in the study. Potential participants were invited to complete a brief online questionnaire (Table 1) via an online survey platform, providing baseline information to inform a preliminary theoretical sampling strategy (Charmaz, 2014).

The final sample comprised two male and eight female educators who were already involved in teaching across the nursing and midwifery

Table 1
Sampling Questionnaire.

programmes at the UK based host university and who self-identified as having experience in delivering transnational nurse education across a range of international locations (Table 2). The first participant was sampled because of the diversity of their experience and perceived high level of expertise, suggestive of their potential to provide an initial rich data set to lay the foundations from which to advance further sampling decisions (Cutliffe, 2000). Thereafter, subsequent participants were theoretically sampled to develop the emerging theoretical dimensions of the research (Corbin and Strauss, 2015), until theoretical sufficiency was determined (Dey, 1999).

2.4. Data collection

Participants were individually interviewed by a member of the research team over a video conferencing platform during the period May to August 2020, adhering to COVID-19 restrictions at the time. Interviews were semi-structured and supported by a broad topic guide which evolved throughout the study in response to the emerging theory (Table 3). Interviews lasted for a duration of 30–55 min. The preliminary question adopted an open style format which invited participants to discuss their experiences of delivering transnational nurse education overseas, thereby facilitating the capture of rich data (Charmaz, 2006). Probing questions were used to invite elaboration, revisit key points or encourage participants to provide further examples of real-life experiences (Whiting, 2008). Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed by an independent transcriber and simultaneously analysed to support theoretical sampling of the next participant (Charmaz, 2014). All data were anonymised at the transcription stage and participants were allocated a code, thereafter referred to as participant 1 and so on.

Table 2
The Sample.

Participant	Professional Field	Age	Length of time as an educator	Location of transnational teaching experience	Type of experience Undergraduate (UG)/ Postgraduate (PG)	Scale of 1–10, perceived level of expertise in transnational education
P1	Mental Health Nursing	55	11	Malaysia Malta UAE	UG and PG	8
P2	Adult Nursing	48	14	China Malta	UG	6
P3	Midwifery	58	23	Malaysia	UG	7
P4	Adult Nursing	52	4	Malta	UG	6
P5	Children's Nursing	47	2	Malta	UG	3
P6	Midwifery	56	10	Zambia	UG	7
P7	Adult Nursing	53	8	Malta China USA Australia	UG and PG	2
P8	Adult Nursing	54	10	Malta China	UG	5
P9	Adult Nursing	55	26	China, South Korea	UG	6
P10	Adult Nursing	51	2	Germany	UG and PG	3

Table 3
Interview topic guide.

Primary interview question:
Can you tell me about your experiences of teaching in the overseas trans-national nurse education context? <i>(Probing questions should be used to invite elaboration on key points made, or to request participants to give real life examples from their personal teaching experiences in the transnational context to illustrate the points made.)</i>
Additional interview questions to be used as required to guide the discussion:
What has been the extent of your involvement with teaching trans-national nurse education to date?
How did you prepare to teach in the transnational context?
What support did you access/receive prior to teaching in the transnational context?
What would you consider to be the positive/negative aspects of your transnational teaching experiences?
Can you tell me about any challenges you faced?
How did you manage/deal with the challenges you have outlined?
What strategies/approaches/adaptions did you use to support your educational practice?
How do you think you have developed personally/professionally due to the experiences you encountered in the transnational context?
What strategies do you think could be implemented to support academics with teaching nurse education in a transnational context?
Can you provide any further insight into your experiences that have not already been covered?

2.5. Data analysis

Data were analysed using established grounded theory techniques. This comprised implementing initial and focused coding, constant comparison of interview transcripts to compare data with data, reviewing theoretical memos and assimilating theoretical diagrams (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014). Data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection, supporting a dynamic and iterative approach to construct the final data categories and sub-categories. Each member of the research team undertook individual data analysis, which was followed up with collaborative team analysis whereby emerging concepts were discussed and explored further. This involved coming together to share interpretations and confirm shared understanding and agreement of the emerging data categories, thereby enhancing the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

2.6. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in constructivist grounded theory research can be determined through demonstration of the principles of credibility, originality, resonance and usefulness (Charmaz, 2014). In this study,

credibility is demonstrated through adherence to established grounded theory research methods which are presented comprehensively throughout this paper for transparency; originality is demonstrated through the unique findings that emerged from the data and which are novel to nursing; resonance is demonstrated through providing a comprehensive overview of the study setting and sample to offer relevance of the findings to other similar contexts; usefulness is demonstrated through the implications for future practice and the emerging grounded theory that proposes a framework to support effective transnational education in nursing.

2.7. Findings

Data analysis supported identification of three key categories- *Prepare, Perform, Progress*- which are presented sequentially and supported by examples of verbatim participant quotes from the data.

2.8. Prepare

This category highlighted the importance of preparing to engage in the delivery of transnational education, particularly in relation to understanding the context of healthcare and education, being supported and collaborating with transnational partners.

2.9. Understanding the context of healthcare and education

Developing an understanding of the context of healthcare and education was highlighted to be of the utmost importance to support effective transnational education:

“my experience is that I felt a bit stupid...I wasn't prepared...our technology and procedures...it was like Greek to them...if I had gone again, I would have been better prepared...understand their context better” (P6)

Understanding was often gained through informal mechanisms, such as accessing contextual information from websites and newspapers:

“when I first went...I looked at the culture...I went on a couple of websites, looked at the newspapers” (P2)

Other examples of informal strategies to enhance understanding of the transnational context involved reading relevant policy documents:

“you need to understand what it's like to live there and work there and be, educated there... understand health policies and their health and social care sector” (P1)

Engaging in more formal mechanisms to facilitate contextual understanding were also identified. This included liaising with relevant stakeholders in the transnational location and undertaking visits to relevant healthcare facilities:

“engage with people [staff in the transnational location... seeing hospitals and seeing care homes...that helps an awful lot to help you to contextualise what you're teaching” (P7)

2.10. Being supported

Having access to appropriate support was seen as vital to preparing adequately for transnational activity. This was primarily accessed informally through peers who had previous experience of teaching in transnational locations:

“discussions with people that have been there before, just to give you that local intel” (P10)

More structured support was often provided in the form of prepared documents containing essential information to help educators in the transnational location:

“we produced... a guide... about where to get your breakfast, where the toilets are, how do you get into the campus, which door to go in” (P2)

In addition, access to formal coaching in the transnational location was considered particularly beneficial:

“I think coaching whilst you are there is sometimes probably going to be a bit more useful than a lot of rhetoric before you go.... I couldn't imagine the physical environment before I went” (P1)

Being accompanied overseas by other educators with previous experience of teaching in the transnational location was identified as a positive supportive mechanism:

“the three people I went with... they were so experienced and had been there, they were really supportive, so I felt like...I wasn't floundering around on my own” (P8)

This was considered a vital means of support for less experienced educators who had limited teaching experience both in the UK and transnational context:

“somebody who hasn't had a lot of teaching experience or who's never taught internationally before... they actually should go with somebody who's experienced...they know the ropes” (P6)

2.11. Collaborating with transnational partners

Adequate preparation for transnational education was thought to be dependent on collaboration, thus supporting the development of effective working relationships with transnational partners:

“it's about teamwork...I had met with the staff, so I had got to understand what they do and how they do things” (P2)

Working in partnership with the transnational team from the outset was crucial, especially in terms of ensuring that desired outcomes for all stakeholders were achieved:

“right at the beginning of the project... it's about, what is it that we actually want to find out? ...discussing in depth what we're going to be doing” (P7)

Collaboration was essential to inform the development of learning and teaching materials, facilitating effective contextualisation of relevant issues to the transnational location:

“we did actually send a lot of the teaching materials over to the staff to get their okay ... so we did a lot of collaborative work that way” (P8)

2.12. Perform

This category identified that recognising the influence of language and culture, adapting to the environment and implementing effective and responsive educational pedagogies were key to the successful development and delivery of transnational education in nursing.

2.13. Recognising the influence of language and culture

Language was identified as an influencing factor with immense potential to have an impact on educators' experiences of teaching in the transnational location:

“the language is probably the biggest impact on teaching abroad” (P5)

Possessing advanced communication skills and being able to adapt and apply these to the transnational location were of high importance. However, even when prepared to recognise language and cultural differences, educators reported challenges in terms of ensuring they were communicating effectively whilst teaching overseas:

"I was very conscious that I didn't know how good or what their level of English or written comprehension, listening English was, so that was quite difficult, quite anxiety-provoking... you just make this massive assumption that whatever you say is being understood, has been received... maybe it's not" (P8)

Cultural differences were also thought to be significant, with the potential for challenges to arise if educators were not adequately prepared to teach for the transnational context:

"being culturally aware about what was deemed appropriate behaviour and what to do in circumstances... so that you're not causing offence in any way" (P9).

Whilst acknowledging the potential influence of language and culture on transnational education, some of the strategies implemented to address these issues were outlined, with educators always striving to ensure that students were given the best educational experience possible in the transnational location:

"you do have to slow your voice down, be very clear... you can't use colloquialisms ...checking all the time that the students understand what you're talking about and that they've received the message... when you're talking about terminations, deaths, unwanted pregnancies, conditions like HIV, I've found you have to be very mindful... as well as the language, you've got the cultural issues" (P2).

2.14. Adapting to the environment

Working overseas in the transnational location was regarded as a worthwhile experience. However, there were some challenges to overcome in terms of functioning in a warmer climate, which educators were often only accustomed to experiencing whilst on holiday abroad:

"sometimes, you know, you're talking 30–40 degrees and you've got to look, you know, like a lecturer. You can't turn up in your string vest and hot pants, type thing. So, there's that environment, heat...you've got to adapt" (P2).

Other issues related to the classroom environment in the transnational location, where facilities and resources were sometimes not of the standard educators were used to in the UK higher education context:

"plugs hanging off the wall, the sockets hanging off the wall...humidity in the classrooms...the air conditioning breaking down every day...situations that are... outside your comfort zone" (P3).

Other environmental issues involved having translators in the transnational classroom, in a role to primarily support effective communication rather than support the teaching experience:

"you went into a classroom and you were on your own with a group of students and obviously there was one of the lecturers there who, if any interpretation was needed... but they were just kind of observing; they didn't have anything to do with the actual teaching, which I found quite difficult" (P8).

2.15. Implementing effective and responsive educational pedagogies

Student learning styles were noted to differ in the transnational location:

"I think the biggest thing that hits me, teaching abroad, is the different learning styles" (P4).

Differing learning styles had the potential to have an impact on planned teaching sessions in the transnational location, with educators having to adapt to fulfil the needs of the student group:

"our sessions were planned...in a similar way that we planned here, but actually that just didn't fit

their style of learning...so what we did, we had to adapt...it was a very different style...getting the

pitch right can be difficult...you learn to be a bit more open and receptive to different ways" (P3)

Flexibility, adaptability and the ability to reflect in and on, action was key to implementing an appropriate pedagogical response to address unpredictable, emerging challenges as they arose in the transnational location:

"things can change quite rapidly in the class... it's making sure that your materials are flexible in their delivery; that they can be swapped around and that they can be delivered in a different way... if they don't get this, can I come from a different angle...it really is having three aces up your sleeve" (P9)

The ability to implement effective and responsive educational pedagogies was thought to be underpinned by individual levels of teaching expertise. This suggested that less experienced educators may struggle without appropriate support to manage the additional complexities of the transnational experience:

"you know, you always kind of pull back on your years of experience and managing classrooms and actually... reading a room. To think: well actually, I've got a group of students here; I'm losing half of them, I need to change tack" (P8)

2.16. Progress

This category recognised the benefits for individual development that involvement in transnational education could bring, whilst also identifying that there was a need to acknowledge the value that transnational activity could offer at organisational level.

2.17. Recognising the benefits for individual development

The positive impact of transnational education on advancing individual development was evident, with experiences supporting the educator's ability to view things from a different perspective:

"you get new values and perspectives of the world we are living in" (P6)

In particular, transnational experience enabled reflection on practice to support positive adjustments to improve and enrich individual levels of educational expertise:

"I learned so much from other people, I felt it really enriched me in terms of teaching" (P7)

Undoubtedly, experiences often pushed educators beyond their usual limits. However, it was clear that these experiences could facilitate a renewed sense of accomplishment, supporting professional growth and development:

"it pushes your boundaries...it challenges...if you can embrace it...it's made me grow...it's made me develop or re-engage with skills that I hadn't utilised for quite some time... and that's wonderful" (P9)

Even when educators reported they would not choose to be involved in future transnational education activity, they still identified a sense of personal growth that could enhance their future practice:

"I don't think I would go again...I found it quite difficult and I didn't find it a particularly enjoyable experience... [but] you learn about yourself ... everybody should always challenge themselves" (P8)

2.18. Valuing the benefits for the organisation

Perceptions that transnational was often not appreciated at organisational level were apparent, particularly in terms of the time and resources needed to prepare materials and become familiar with differing healthcare and educational contexts:

“you’re never really given the full time for it...it’s very stressful before you go or during the time you’re there... extra work, you never feel as though your time’s compensated for it” (P3)

Being allocated appropriate time in individual workload allocations was therefore identified as essential:

“there has to be the time within the workload to do it...it’s not a holiday” (P4)

Recognition of the value of transnational education to the progression of the organisation was evident, especially in terms of facilitating opportunities to collaborate in developing further teaching and research activity:

“research opportunities... it develops your practice of your actual midwifery or nursing practices as well as your educational practice” (P3)

The wider opportunities that transnational education could bring to the higher education sector were also recognised, especially in terms of developing further collaborative ventures:

“this is a potential for...international relations to be developed further... a grown-up attitude to international work and global work is what you require and I think it’s things like: taking care of your staff. Because it’s your staff going out there and it’s your staff who are probably going to make those things happen for the university” (P9)

However, the need to invest at organisational level was perceived to be vital in facilitating future opportunities:

“this is not just franchise and teaching but actually, a whole new academic relationship, where we need to spend and invest some time and money in really developing that relationship as well” (P7)

3. Discussion

The study presents a rich insight into educators’ perceptions of their experiences of participating in transnational education, that can inform future practice for nursing across the international higher education sector. The findings outline the complexity of transnational education in nursing, supporting similar research findings from other academic disciplines (Maxwell-Stuart and Huisman, 2018). However, this study advances the current evidence informing nursing, providing unique insight through the perceptions of a group of educators with experience in developing and delivering nurse education programmes in a range of transnational locations. The findings outline a range of key areas that require due consideration, to support the effective implementation of transnational education in nursing for future practice.

Preparation is vital to the successful implementation of transnational nursing programmes. Commensurate with research from other academic disciplines, preparedness in terms of being able to function effectively in the transnational context was noted to be of high importance (Gribble and Ziguas, 2003; Dunn and Wallace, 2006; Liu and Willis, 2021). However, this study advances understanding of preparedness further, highlighting that transnational education in nursing requires engagement with specific preparatory activities. For example, in the academic discipline of nursing, there is a clear need for educators to understand the context of health care within the transnational location, to ensure that nursing programmes are relevant, contemporary and reflect differing healthcare provision and systems of practice. Developing contextual awareness can be achieved by collaborating with transnational partners, through involving them in curricula development to ensure that learning and teaching resources are appropriate to the transnational context. Although there is acknowledgement across the wider academic context that transnational curricula cannot simply adopt a “cut and paste” philosophy (Liu and Willis, 2021, p.12), this study builds on that assertion to clarify that it is critical to establish effective transnational working partnerships at the very outset of

curricula development to ensure high quality and effective transnational education in nursing.

Despite the requirement for appropriate preparedness, the findings highlighted that this was often lacking and only accessible through informal routes such as drawing on the proficiency of peers with previous experience. In line with the findings from other studies (Nawaz, 2017), having access to more formal, structured preparation is vital to support educators to prepare adequately. However, a unique finding from this study identified the need for educators to feel a sense of being supported. This involved experiencing peer support and coaching, both pre-departure and in the transnational location. Despite the diverse range of professional and life experience that participant’s possessed, the need for support was notable, particularly before and during early experiences of participating in transnational education overseas. As a result, educators reported that less experienced staff should be accompanied to the transnational location by more experienced peers who could provide ongoing support throughout the experience. This reflects a clear correlation with the practice of nursing, specifically in terms of ongoing requirements that require UK registrants to recognise their limitations and demonstrate practice that meets professional standards in relation to the principles of ‘prioritise people’, ‘practice effectively’, ‘preserve safety’, ‘promote professionalism and trust’ (NMC, 2018). Another novel finding from this study outlined the need for educators to prepare for adaption to the transnational environment. This included having an awareness of how best to function effectively in a warmer climate, whilst simultaneously managing the challenges arising when there was limited access to supplementary educational resources such as the internet, laptops and projectors.

In keeping with the findings from previous research (Naidoo and Sibiyi, 2018), challenges in overcoming language and cultural barriers were identified. To address this, educators required adequate preparation in advance of the transnational activity to familiarise themselves with strategies to manage these potential challenges. However, this study also supported the notion that preparation was fundamental to facilitating educators’ ability to perform effectively in addressing the pedagogical needs of students in the transnational location. This required educators to primarily understand the educational context, supporting them to implement appropriate strategies to fulfil differing learning styles. Commensurate with the findings of Lee (2020), thinking creatively to implement responsive educational pedagogies was essential to supporting effective performance in the transnational location. However, this study went further to identify that the ability to adapt teaching strategies in response to student learning needs, in real time as teaching sessions were being delivered, was a critical skill that was underpinned by advanced levels of educational expertise. This further supported the notion that less experienced educators should be accompanied to the overseas transnational location by experienced educators who could support them to perform effectively when faced with unexpected challenges in the transnational location.

Adequate preparation to facilitate effective performance was subsequently seen to support progression at individual and organisational level. Participating in transnational education in nursing was thought to challenge academic boundaries, thereby facilitating personal growth and development opportunities (Lee, 2020; Quartirolu et al., 2021) through ongoing reflexivity on academic performance (Schon, 1992). This was regarded as a positive catalyst to achieving a sense of accomplishment, especially in terms of appreciating alternative perspectives and building further on educators’ educational expertise. Advantages were also acknowledged in terms of establishing effective networks and partnerships which could seed future opportunities for collaborative teaching and research activities (Gao and Liu, 2020). However, this study uniquely identified the need for transnational education to be acknowledged at organisational level as an endeavour that requires educators to be supported with appropriate time and resources. Despite the positive opportunities that transnational education in nursing has the potential to create, the findings suggest that only when educators are

given the time to prepare adequately and appropriate support to perform effectively, that progression at individual and organisational level can ensue sustainably.

The findings provide rich insight into educators’ experiences, informing an emerging grounded theory that proposes a framework to facilitate effective transnational education in nursing (Fig. 1). The framework is underpinned by a fundamental requirement to ensure that collaborative working relationships are established between educators, students, host organisations and transnational partners. In the first instance, educators need to be provided with the time and opportunity to prepare adequately for transnational education. Preparation involves developing an understanding of the context of healthcare and education, providing opportunities to access appropriate support and implementing collaborative working relationships with the transnational partner. Effective preparation for transnational education subsequently informs effective performance in the transnational location, which involves recognising the potential impact of language and cultural influences, developing approaches to adapt to the transnational environment and implementing responsive educational pedagogies in real-time to meet student learning needs. Effective preparation and performance can ultimately nurture progress at individual and organisational level. This involves recognising the value of transnational education in terms of enhancing academic educational expertise and the potential to create opportunities for further transnational partnerships in teaching and research that can benefit all stakeholders.

3.1. Limitations

The overall findings build on the evidence base to advance understanding of transnational education further, outlining a range of unique and novel issues that appear distinctive to nursing. The study does have some limitations in terms of the characteristics of the participant sample and the context where the study was conducted. For example, participants were all over 47 years of age, worked as educators in the same university in the North of England and were of white British heritage, potentially influencing perceptions of their experiences of transnational education. Additionally, data relating to the number of times participants had participated in transnational education as an indicator of their

level of prior experience, was not collected specifically. However, as a grounded theory study seeking to gain rich insight into the significant concepts emerging from participant perceptions of their unique and individual experiences of transnational education per se, the findings do provide original insight within the context of nursing to inform future academic practice. Although the study may not be generalisable to the wider population, given the proliferation of nursing focused transnational education across the international sector, the findings are likely to have resonance with other nurse educators and have transferability to other similar academic and higher education contexts.

4. Conclusion

Although transnational education in nursing can be a complex and challenging activity, it has the potential to generate a range of positive and worthwhile benefits. However, the establishment of collaborative relationships between all stakeholders is fundamental to supporting effective transnational activity within the academic discipline of nursing. These collaborative relationships can subsequently facilitate the implementation of strategies which support educators to prepare appropriately and perform effectively in the transnational context. As a result, positive outcomes can ensue as individuals advance their educational expertise and organisations create opportunities to establish future collaborative ventures for sustainable teaching and research across the international higher education sector.

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Author Contributions

the conception and design of the study, or acquisition of data, or analysis and interpretation of data; (2) drafting the article or revising You will be asked to confirm this on submission critically for important intellectual content; and (3) final approval of the version to be

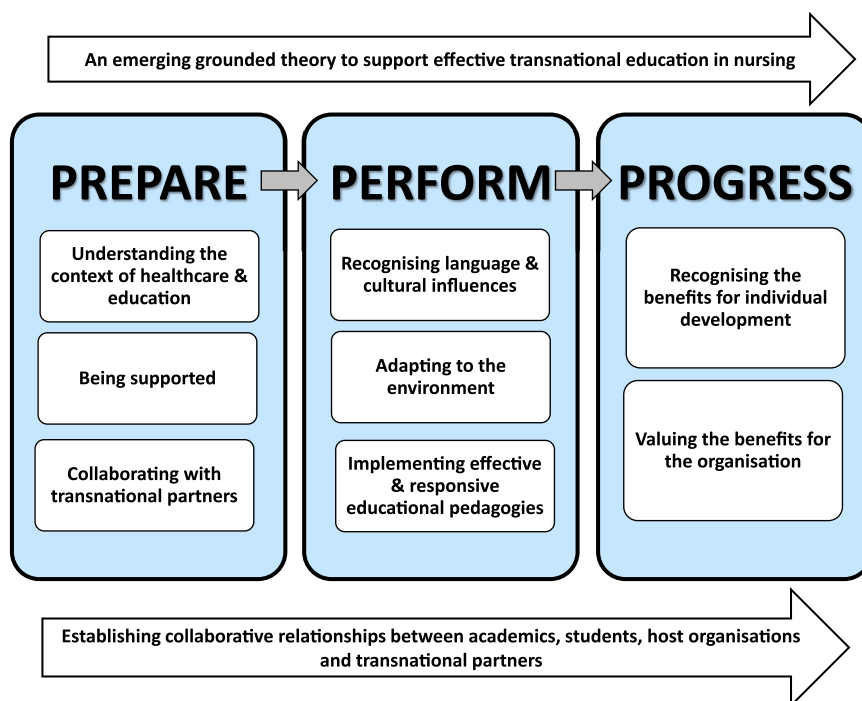


Fig. 1. Emerging grounded theory to support effective transnational education in nursing.

submitted. (CS, JA, TC, DM, AM).

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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