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## **Teachers' Understanding of Internationalisation as an Essential Part of Nursing Education in Sweden**

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### **Abstract**

*This study presents a phenomenographic approach used to reveal the understanding 60 university teachers in the Swedish nursing program in higher education, had of internationalisation. A 28-page self-administered questionnaire, which was especially designed for this study, was distributed to universities in southern, central, and northern Sweden. Teachers' qualitatively different ways of experiencing and understanding internationalisation were based on two perspectives, the organisational didactic perspective and the educational didactic perspective, described in themes (5) and subthemes (10). The findings suggest the importance of reinforcing an understanding of internationalisation and the need for didactic theoretical awareness.*

**Key Words:** Internationalisation, Didactic, Learning, Teaching, Teacher, Student.

### **Introduction** (*shortened*)

In Sweden, as well as elsewhere in the world, internationalisation is an important issue in higher education. Like two previous studies by the same author, Wihlborg (1999; 2001 submitted), this study is concerned with how intentions to internationalise are being realised in the Swedish nurses' education program (SFS 1992:1434; SFS 1995:337; SOU 1978:50). In Sweden in recent years, nursing education has been radically reformed to fit in with a social process of internationalisation and, in a wider sense, globalisation (Jarvis, 1996; Knight, 1999). Källemark & Van der Wende (in HsV 1997:8, p. 175) and Waters (2000), discussing overall goals to internationalise higher education in Sweden, quote the Swedish government which in 1995 stressed the international dimension of higher education and urged universities to take steps in developing educational structures which are more international in character: "Higher education has a great responsibility with regard to the broadening of knowledge and understanding of societies and cultures in other regions." As general guideline for Swedish institutions of higher education, it is stated that "an internationalised education should prepare students to view the priorities of other cultures from the perspectives of those cultures"; also, that "Western cultures should be able to analyse their own value structures and habits more critically" (HsV 1997:8 S, p. 174).

In all local guidelines at university colleges of the Health Sciences, it is declared that "internationalisation" is to run as a thread through the entire nurses' education (SFS 1992:1434; SFS 1995:337; SOU 1978:50)

Knowledge of internationalisation within higher education would indicate that the learning object is recognised and focused on and made explicit in a distinct way, within the specific learning context. In other words, what are the meaning and understanding of internationalisation and are there any explicit and apprehensible description of how internationalisation come to the fore within, as in this study, the nurse education? Focus has been on various curricula in a more formal sense, for a long time, but very little has been said about the understanding (and educational content) related to knowledge of internationalisation, and furthermore, related to a didactical awareness involving aspects of what and how the learning object is made explicit within the learning context. Therefore, and as a claim of

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justification made for this study's come about, it seemed to be essential to describe internationalisation in terms of understanding and learning and teaching.

Some questions concerning student nurses' conceptions of internationalisation, have been addressed in two previous studies (Wihlborg, 1999; 2001 submitted).

This study was concerned with teachers' understanding of internationalisation. Teachers were asked what they think students ought to learn with regard to internationalisation and how they think the students will be able to learn about internationalisation.

This study's overall research questions are:

- What do teachers think of, and relate to, in terms of internationalisation in nursing education?
- What educational content do they include when they teach internationalisation?
- How do teachers teach about internationalisation and in what way do they interrelate focused aspects of internationalisation?
- How do teachers view students' learning outcomes concerning internationalisation?

### **Theoretical Position** (*shortened*)

The perspective taken is a relational one, and therefore, a non-constructivistic view in line with Dewey (1916; 1938), who argues against a traditional view on knowledge, which he claims is passive and dualistic in character, and instead takes an epistemological standpoint, which does not separate knowledge and people's lifeworld. Furthermore, in this study, it is held in agreement with Marton (1981; 1986), Marton & Booth (1997), Entwistle (1998), Trigwell *et.al.* (1999), and Svensson (1985; 1994; 1997), that knowledge develops (is conceived) in the *between* of humans and their lifeworld:

"There are not two things, and one is not held to explain the other. There is not a real world 'out there' and a subjective world 'in here'. The world is not constructed by the learner, nor is it imposed upon her; it is constituted as an internal relation between them. there is only one world, but it is a world that we experience, a world in which we live, a world that is ours. (Marton & Booth, 1997, p. 13)

The relational view of knowledge represents a nondualist perspective on learning (Marton & Pang, 1999). Furthermore, within this framework of the relationship between humans and their lifeworld, meaning, knowledge and understanding can vary. The knowledge etc. are influenced by the cultural context wherein the learning object exist (Bulton-Lewis *et al.* 2000; Marton, Watkins *et al.* 1997; Ninnes, 1996; Pinxten, 1991; Hatano & Miyake, 1991).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, that, to use the words of Marton & Booth (1997, p. 100), "a way of experiencing something can be described in terms of the structure or organisation of awareness at a particular moment" in relation to various phenomena".

In connection with the understanding teachers bring to bear on internationalisation, it is assumed in the present study that two kinds of contexts are of importance: first, one that corresponds to teachers' common socio-cultural experiences and their ongoing work situation; and second, one that involves teachers' relevant individual experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> (for further reading see: <http://www.ped.gu.se/biorn/phgraph>).

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## **Methods** (shortened)

### ***Survey***

A survey was carried out on 60 teachers teaching at colleges and universities in southern, central, and northern Sweden. Data was analysed, both statistically using SPSS, and qualitatively with the help of the software program HyperQual as research tools. A phenomenographic approach<sup>2</sup> was used for analysing and interpreting data in a qualitative way.

### ***Questionnaire Content and Data Collection*** (shortened)

A 28-page self-administered questionnaire was designed for the study. Data were gathered between May and August 1999, and questionnaires were distributed as described below and in line with suggestions by Czaja & Blair (1996), Fink (1995), and Bourque & Fielder (1995).

At a later stage, deep dialogue interviews involving some of the teachers were planned to be conducted in order to take the investigation one step further, therefore, the rich and the length of the questionnaire also gave the participants a possibility to open up for reflection on the issue or/and matter of internationalisation.

The questionnaire contained two parts, sections A and B, where (A), involved questions which answers were used in drawing up a "participant profile" based on background data. Section B consisted of questions which were open-ended in character and gave the participants the opportunity to respond in an unstructured/open manner. In follow-up questions, the respondents were asked to exemplify by describing concrete situations illustrating the answers given. In total 23 main questions were included in the questionnaire, and all together 184 items were included in the questionnaire involving all follow-up questions (a, b, etc.).

### ***Distribution of Questionnaires*** (shortened)

The questionnaires were administered by one coordinator at each school, who was selected by the school concerned as the person most suitable to hand the questionnaires to the participants. The author informed the coordinators that the participants were to meet certain criteria. The overall goal was to identify and include teachers who could provide data relevant to the study. The main argument for actively selecting participants was that this is assumed to be a valid way if relevant *qualitative data* are to be guaranteed (Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Kvale, 1989; Sandberg, 1997; Schofield, 1990). Therefore, as a first step, teachers who identified themselves as able to provide data concerning internationalisation in nursing education, and who taught in the Swedish nurses' education program, were included in the survey. Additional selective criteria were also made (not discussed in this paper).

### ***Participants*** (shortened)

In all, 100 teachers were asked to participate in the study. Finally, 60 teachers were included in the study. All teachers were teaching at colleges and/or universities in the basic program of nursing education at departments of the Health Sciences involving the North, Central and South of Sweden.

Common between the departments was that they all included intentions of internationalisation in their educational policy.

In all 40 of the original 100 questionnaires was not included in the study which had to do with the fact, that the administrating co-ordinators at each school asserted that "not so many teachers was occupied

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<sup>2</sup> The analysis approach was influenced by the phenomenographic approach, even if the phenomenographic interview was not the data collecting method in this study.

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with internationalisation within the educational context". Another reason was that because of the great amount of questions in the survey, the investigator was choosing to exclude those (in all 10) questionnaires which did not held a high qualitative response level and richness, in order to attain valid data so that a qualitative approach in analysing could be achieved of (not elaborated further in this paper).

### *Analysis of Data (shortened)*

The two sections of the questionnaire, A and B, were analysed differently, according to the nature of the questions, in A statistically, and in B, qualitatively.

The aim was to draw up an overall participant profile with the help of statistical data, based on data from section A. A phenomenographically inspired approach<sup>3</sup> was used in the analysis of data from section B's open-ended questions. The computer program HyperQual was used as a helping tool for generating themes pertinent to the research object (Kelle, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Padilla, 1993; Tesch, 1990).

The analysis of section B involved several phases. First, the answers were read through to gain an overall picture. The answers were then read several times to gain an understanding of what the teachers meant by internationalisation, and in order to identify themes in the data. This stage involved analysing each of the 60 questionnaires, coding the answers, and identifying dominant themes. Codes for the understanding of internationalisation were clustered in themes. The next step was to reflect on the themes in an attempt to let subthemes emerge. This stage involved finding similarities and differences between the themes. Essential aspects in the data were identified. How these aspects were related to each other, then, came to form the overall meaning of each theme. Finally, the themes were juxtaposed according to their characteristics, and described as perspectives.

## **Results**

### *Participant profile (shortened)*

Of the respondents, 55 were female and five male, and all were born between 1930 and 1969, the majority, 53, were born between 1940 and 1960.

In summary, the average participant can be described as follows: a Swedish female teacher aged between 50 and 60 years (53 of the 60 teachers included were between 40 and 60 years of age), registered nurse since 1960–1969, who has been working as a teacher in higher education for approximately 9–13 years (range 5–13 years). Participants taught in different departments of the Health Sciences in southern, central, and northern Sweden. All of the participants (n=57, no answer=3) were Swedish citizens. Out of the 60 respondents included, 40 had some working experience from abroad, usually less than 1 month in duration. The length and type of working, studying, and living experiences from abroad varied among the participants. The most common working experience abroad was linked to teacher exchange programs between educational institutions. Language courses were the number two reason for living abroad. The most frequently represented countries, in relation to teachers' experiences of teaching in higher education abroad, were the United Kingdom (18), Australia (7), the United States (5), Finland (5) Denmark (3) Lithuania (3) Spain (2) Israel (2) and Norway (2)<sup>4</sup>.

When asked whether they were experiencing that intentions of internationalising were being advocated, supported, and stressed as a general goal in the nursing program, 40 teachers answered

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<sup>3</sup> further elucidation see Marton (1981, 1986, 2000) and Johansson et al. (1985) and Trigwell (1997).

<sup>4</sup>In all 40 teachers had working experiences form abroad, however, some had experiences form more that one country.

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“yes”, 14 answered “no”, one stated that she did not know, and five did not respond (n=60). However, when teachers were asked whether they experienced that intentions to internationalise were being advocated in a focused way, and were being stressed, supported, and problematised in a *sufficient* way in the program, the majority (40) answered that they did not experience this to be the case. In addition to the latter question, it is interesting to note that as many as 35 teachers did not have any concrete suggestion to make when asked whether they wanted to add something they experienced as important in connection to internationalisation (n=57, no answer=3). Nine teachers answered that they did not miss anything at all in connection to what they understood by internationalisation in the nursing program; six teachers answered that they did not know; and one responded that she could not answer due to lack of experience (n=56, no answer=4). In all 26 teachers answered yes, when asked whether they experienced that they were teaching about internationalisation and 30 that they did not (n=56, no answer=4).

It was said that many teachers are very “focused on the Swedish way and on doing everything according to Swedish norms, and this must change”; also, that “we need to introduce more literature on other languages besides Swedish literature”; and “we ought to look at things from a global perspective; more knowledge about transcultural nursing should be provided”.

The view that intentions to internationalise the program are not being supported, stressed, and advocated in an *sufficient* way in the program is supported by the results of the two previous studies, Wihlborg (1999; 2001 submitted) where students reported that, as they experienced it, intentions to internationalise were not being made explicit in any distinct way in nursing education programs.

In conclusion, the majority (40) of the teachers involved in the survey stated that intentions of internationalising the program were extremely important, and that they themselves were eager to consolidate and develop teaching and learning in connection to educational content which dealt with issues, matters, and topics concerned with internationalisation, even though as many as 40 also held that internationalisation was not focused, stressed and problematised within the educational context, in a sufficient way, and furthermore, 35 did not give any concrete suggestions of what and how internationalisation in the Swedish nurse education, could become more explicit.

### ***Teachers’ Understanding of Internationalisation (Shortened)***

The respondents’ understanding of internationalisation is described in themes (5) and subthemes (10), and has here been divided into two perspectives. Various themes, in all five (A–E), were identified in the analysis and grouped either under (1) an organisational didactic perspective, or under (2) an educational didactic perspective. The themes represent teachers’ various interpretations and different understanding of internationalisation, which are linked to the teachers’ views of learning, and approaches to teaching, of internationalisation.

### ***An Organisational Didactic Perspective – Themes A, B, and C***

Within this perspective, three themes (A, B, and C) were constituted through data, which focus on, and are concerned with, what and how teachers (i) interpreted intentions of internationalising, and (ii) taught internationalisation (*i.e.* which teaching methods they used).

Overarching goals concerned with internationalisation were identified and discussed in a formalistic, idealistic, and visionary way with a focus, in theme A, on compatibility and comparability (A1), competitiveness (A2), and equality (A3) of nursing education in Sweden seen in relation to other countries’ nursing education programs. The approach was formalistic insofar as exchange rules, university accreditation, and educational content were compared. It was idealistic in the sense that exchange between countries was presupposed to lead to internationalisation in good terms. And it was visionary since teachers described what was to come in the future, rather than what was actually happening at the present in terms of internationalisation within the ongoing educational program.

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In theme B, internationalisation was reduced to, and discussed in terms of, formalities of teacher exchange programs and the current educational content in the context of studying and teaching abroad (B1), and teachers' general needs for a continuation of development in relation to their work as a teachers (B2). The exchange programs were held by many teachers to, at the present, be the most focused part of what is meant by internationalisation in nursing education.

In theme C, internationalisation was discussed in relation to student exchange programs in terms of formalities and student exchange program rules and educational content in programs abroad (C1), and using students' experiences as a resource in learning and teaching (C2).

In this regard, underlying presuppositions at work are that *internationalisation per se is good*; furthermore, that *teacher and student exchange programs are part of internationalisation* or lead to internationalisation, and that *teacher and student exchange programs per se constitute*, or lead to, internationalisation.

All three themes rest on an understanding of internationalisation that assumes internationalisation can be learned through educational content concerned with formalities, and through observing the educational content taught in nursing programs abroad. The teaching methods used when teaching this type of internationalisation content suggest that the content in focus could be mediated from teachers to students, and students to students, as information or story telling.

The following quotations<sup>5</sup> by respondents illustrate the understanding of internationalisation within the themes constituting an organisational didactic perspective:

*"[There should be a move towards] equality in international nursing education, mainly within the European Union."* (theme A1)

*"The foundation of Swedish nurses' education is to become and remain competitive through support of research development."* (theme A2)

*"An international approach, when developing nursing education, in all countries/cultures is desirable."* (theme A3)

*"Teachers will increase their knowledge about other cultures if they are able to visit another school abroad."* (theme B1)

*"Teachers are in need of further training to be able to take a standpoint from an international perspective."* (theme B2)

*"If Swedish student nurses are given the opportunity to visit another university outside Sweden, this will increase their knowledge about international conditions related to health care phenomena in general."* (theme C1)

*"Students [participating in the ongoing nursing program; author's remark] from different cultural backgrounds are to be seen as resource, and should be involved in teaching."* (theme C2).

### ***An Educational Didactic Perspective – Themes D and E***

Within this perspective, two themes, D and E, were identified. Both deal with teachers' interpretations of intentions of internationalising nursing programs in connection with (i) current learning/educational content; (ii) teachers' approaches to learning of internationalisation; (iii) teaching methods; and (iv) teachers' visions of the students' learning outcome.

The understanding teachers have of internationalisation is above all else based on, and derived from, the teachers' own personal experiences of other countries and cultures (D). The nature and quality of the experiences are of vital importance to the teachers' decisions on content to be incorporated in the teaching of internationalisation.

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<sup>5</sup> The illustrations are composed by the author since data in the surveys was not always put forward in whole sentences.

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Internationalisation was, then, considered in terms of overall as well as specific socio-cultural differences and similarities between other countries' health care systems, particularly with regard to nursing issues, put in relation to Swedish conditions. Finally, internationalisation was considered in terms of facts (E1), and living conditions at large (E2) in relation to demands on nurses' abilities and performance based on assumptions related to humanistic and democratic values.

Within the educational context, the teachers' visions of "students' learning outcomes" could be described as follows: the knowledge and abilities, which the students are supposed to develop through the educational content and teaching provided, concerned with internationalisation and in connection to the students' future profession as nurses, are more or less assumed to be developed within a *democratic and humanistic framework*, the underlying presupposition being that *internationalisation per se is democratic and humanistic*. Teachers believed (rather than knew) that the current educational content related to internationalisation is interpreted by students from a democratic and humanistic perspective. Furthermore, teachers had a vision that students are developing abilities of a *democratic and humanistic nature*, which are assumed to be incorporated in, and internalised with, the students' personalities. Finally, the teachers' visions included the notion that such internalised abilities are, naturally, transferred to practice.

The teaching approach adopted implied that internationalisation can be taught and learned based on teachers' own personal experiences, with an implicit presupposition of humanistic and democratic values.

The following quotations<sup>6</sup> by respondents illustrate the overall understanding of internationalisation within the themes constituting an educational didactic perspective:

*"My own experience has been the source for the choices I have made, concerning what I have focused on in my teaching, for instance my stay in Ethiopia ... and its cultural differences and similarities in caring and nursing, which are interesting ..."* (theme D)

*"It is my own experience from abroad which helps me a lot in my teaching ... take, for instance, female genital mutilation ..."* (theme D)

*"... I try to start at a national [Swedish] level and then give an international perspective, for instance about sickness ... and how we [in the Swedish care system; author's note] can meet and treat people from other ethnic backgrounds."* (theme D)

*"Information and facts about EU countries will increase internationalisation ... it is important to illuminate how the world 'hangs together' when it comes to economics/finances, the environment, and other collaboration between countries ..."* (themes E1/E2)

*"It is important with subjects like epidemiology to learn about different international legal and economic conditions ... and to teach about gerontological phenomena, diet, ethical differences, care taking, death, and so on ... and discuss various care phenomena in relation to law and justice, economy, and cultures ..."* (themes E1/E2)

*"We need to increase our understanding of immigrants and their views on health and illness ... and differences in general in order to understand cultural variations."* (theme E2)

*"All humans have the right to live under equal conditions, and should therefore be treated in an equal way ... nursing must be grounded in a cultural equality, that all humans have the same rights."* (theme E2)

*"It is important, as a nurse, to act on the idea that the world is us... that we are the world. We are all more alike than different, and a nurse should think about that ..."* (theme E2).

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<sup>6</sup> The illustrations are composed by the author since data in the surveys was not always put forward in whole sentences.



## **Conclusion** (*shortened*)

This study's findings about teachers' understanding of internationalisation show that the teachers viewed internationalisation in nursing education from two different perspectives, an organisational didactic and an educational didactic perspective.

According to Jarvis (1996), higher education in Sweden is changing in order for Swedes to participate in the process of globalisation: "higher education is already responding to these global forces [*i.e.* globalisation]" (p.28). Jarvis suggests that nursing education in Sweden is facing a challenge, especially in the following aspects: "the future shape of the university; different modes of educational delivery; nurse education as a commodity in the global market; the continuing education of nurses; nursing research; and new providers of nurse education" (Jarvis, 1996, p. 28). In the present study, the teachers expressed concern for the formal comparison of nursing education in an international environment or on the global market. In an organisational didactic perspective, thoughts of internationalisation were expressed in terms of formalities with regard to how the Swedish nursing education would best be able to face changes in order to fit in with the European and/or global community.

The content generally focused on was related to teachers' experiences, not to the experiences of the students. In interpreting intentions of internationalising within the program, the teachers consequently leaned on their own life experiences and conveyed these experiences in the form of "story telling", of something real in the sense that it had actually been experienced by teachers and therefore could be presented as a "true story", but on the other hand, the stories were not being problematised and therefore not questioned (*i.e.*, critical analysed).

In summary: it was indicated that various understandings of internationalisation were more or less formed/shaped through the teachers individual understandings and related to teachers individual teaching performances, and therefore mediated and transformed to the learners. The learning and teaching approaches of internationalisation were not understood in accordance any aware didactic theoretical approach, rather, what content at focus, was depending on the accessibility related to teachers experiences, and therefore of great variation and rather random in question, and in most cases excluding the students experiences, since the stories told were of personal character and not questioned (*i.e.* not problematised as learning cases).

Teachers' experiences should not be judged to be of no interest; *on the contrary*, they are an essential part of the whole and must be included if variations in interpretations and in the understanding of internationalisation are to be presented. However, what was absent was the students' interpretations and understanding. Both teachers' and students' perceptions of the learning context are of importance, according to the phenomenographic view on learning (Marton & Hounsell *et al.* 1997; Trigwell *et al.* 1999; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999). The view of learning and knowledge as starting point for making internationalisation visible in an educational context, favours a mutual awareness of the object of learning involving "teachers' and students' perceptions of internationalisation", which includes variations in how internationalisation is understood and experienced.

Internationalisation in teaching was built on teachers' unique experiences, which they connected to ideals and visions of what would increase students' ability to meet, treat, care for, and nurse people from various cultural backgrounds on equal, democratic humanistic terms. One conclusion is that apart from formal information about teacher and student exchange programs, there is some severe uncertainty about what is meant by internationalisation and how internationalisation should be incorporated in the learning context in a teacher-student interactive model with emphasis on students' understanding of internationalisation.

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### ***Teachers' Approaches to Learning about Internationalisation – Impact on the Students' Ways of Learning about Internationalisation***

Martin (1999), Marton & Booth (1997), and Prosser & Trigwell (1999) discuss the difference between a surface approach and a deep approach to learning/teaching. The surface approach is “tied to what is given in a specific learning situation, text or problem. The focus is on providing an answer in terms of the specific instance.” The deep approach, by contrast, “goes beyond the given and looks to see the larger issues represented by a particular problem” (Martin, 1999, p. 27).

Within the phenomenographic tradition a deep and surface approach to learning, is related to a holistic and an atomistic approach on knowledge (Marton & Booth, 1997). Assuming that individuals are experiencing aspects of the learning object, and that those aspects of the experienced world which are related to the object, are more or less related to each other. As pointed out by Svensson (1985, 1997)<sup>7</sup> this mean that the distinction between a holistic and an atomistic approach is, that a holistic approach exist if the learner delimit parts and organise these as a whole according to an internal relation between parts, such relation between parts are organised according to some principle, whereupon a deep-level understanding of the experienced phenomenon is achieved. An atomistic approach exist if one delimit a part or parts without relating these parts in coherence with other parts to the same whole (i.e., parts are enumerated but not organised as a whole), whereupon a surface level understanding of the experienced phenomenon is achieved. As claimed in this study, it is an holistic approach which is the most essential quality in active knowledge formation (the authors turnover).

In the present study, some interpretations of internationalisation were more developed, had a higher degree of complexity, and were more holistic in character than others. The view of a holistic, as opposed to an atomistic, approach to learning which in this study is advocated as an important part of making internationalisation more explicit in nursing education is in line with Svensson's description (1994; 1997). If the understanding of internationalisation would be taught according to a holistic approach (*i.e.* one which is organised/interrelated as a whole) it would, in this study, in its fullest sense, involve an understanding of internationalisation interrelating all the themes and interpretations. This would call for a didactic theory in order to eliminate the risk of teaching and learning about internationalisation in an atomistic way.

Teachers' ways of thinking of, and understanding, internationalisation vary. If, for instance, teachers were only to focus on the themes described in the section on an organisational didactic perspective, then socio-cultural knowledge and the socio-cultural understanding of internationalisation would be more or less excluded from education. This study's findings implied an atomistic rather than a holistic approach, since those aspects of internationalisation that were in focus and the way they were structured and related to each other and then concretised in the learning context were not made explicit in any (didactic/al) conscious way, nor seen as a whole by the teachers.

### ***A lack of a Conscious Understanding of Internationalisation is Affecting both Teachers and Students***

The findings of the present study suggest that intentions of internationalisation in the nurses' education in Sweden are not adequately defined or discussed in a more explicit way, or from a didactic and educational perspective corresponding to a deep approach to learning and teaching.

All 60 respondents appeared to agree that internationalisation is important and ought to be supported, encouraged, and advocated in higher education in different ways (and on different levels). One question is how intentions of internationalising the program can become more explicit in a teaching and learning context by drawing from the experiences teachers and students have gained from their

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<sup>7</sup> drawing from Broadbents (1973) and Pasks (1972).

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visits abroad through exchange programs, and also from the experience of students and teachers from abroad, who visit Sweden.

It is suggested by the author that, rather than assuming that an understanding of internationalisation will occur in one way or another or arise automatically through the attended exchange programs, the different interpretations of the concept should be elaborated much more thoughtfully, both from an organisational didactic perspective (including the formal aspects of, and learning from, student and teacher exchange programs/as such) and from an educational didactic perspective (which is more closely linked to the learning context, in the shape of specific tasks and follow-up assignments).

In this paper, it has been emphasised that what would combine these various interpretations of internationalisation is a holistic view on internationalisation, supported by a didactic theoretical awareness (Marton, 1994; Marton *et al.* 1993; Marton & Säljö, 1997; Trigwell *et al.* 1998; Trigwell & Prosser, 1996).

Teaching (and learning) of internationalisation in nurses' education could take a *starting point* in the awareness of internationalisation, which would correspond to a phenomenographic view of learning (Marton, 1986; Marton & Booth, 1997). It is suggested that it would be possible to illuminate and picture variations in teachers' and students' understanding, and ways of thinking about internationalisation, through the use of *aware cases, and not as present, randomly ones*.

By incorporating and problematising variations in thinking, internationalisation would become explicit within the learning context. A higher order of learning would become possible, involving various learning outcomes and suggested solutions put forward through discussions on a relevant educational content (depending on what aspects of internationalisation are in focus). The solutions could then be scrutinised by students and teachers within the learning context.

### ***Pedagogical Implications and Further Research***

In their responses to the questionnaire, teachers mentioned that some students had expressed a feeling of *personal growth* related to learning about internationalisation. However, teachers also said that they found it very difficult to evaluate what was meant by students' personal growth in the learning context. In a previous study (Wihlborg, 2001 submitted), it was indicated that internationalisation linked to experiences of a socio-cultural nature encouraged and promoted individual growth in some sense. Whether, and how, personal growth is related to students' learning about internationalisation calls for further investigation.

The findings reported here suggest that there exists a *potential for change* concerning the approach to learning about internationalisation, including various interpretations of internationalisation. What prevents such a change from taking place seems to be related to how the nurses' education as a whole (*i.e.* the entire program) was structured, mainly that it includes a great number of parts, or courses, more or less sharply delimited content areas. In other words, the nurses' education is not seen as a whole, and this has an impact on teachers' and students' perceptions of the educational content (and context). This problem ought to be discussed at an organisational level in order to establish how the program's structure has an impact on the educational content.

It would be possibly that, as a first step, practising teachers in nursing in Sweden could include all of the themes identified in the present study, and represent these as a whole. This would give some idea about the complexity of the phenomenon that is what is meant by internationalisation in the learning context. As a second step, this will open up the possibility of using *cases of internationalisation* based on understanding related to internationalisation described within the various themes. By continuously (*i.e.* throughout the program) including aspects of internationalisation (grounded in a

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phenomenographic didactical awareness) in relation to the content focused on, it may be possible to achieve a deepening and broadening of understanding of internationalisation.

The use of cases could be linked to the idea of doing simulation, though the use of software programs, (i.e. ICT/Information & Communications Technology, and simulation programs). Such simulation would include various aspects of internationalisation related to the case and exclude others for being less important, and as such, showing various outcome possibilities related to the case in focus. This is an idea, however, which has to be further developed.

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