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## Building competence through cross-cultural collaboration in the aftermath of a tsunami: Experiences of Indonesian teachers

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### Summary

The aim of this study was to describe the reported experiences of Indonesian nursing teachers who participated in a two-year cross-cultural project designed to build pedagogical and professional competence after the tsunami in Aceh province in 2004.

Eleven Indonesian teachers who had participated in the competence project answered an open-ended questionnaire in November 2007. The data were analyzed by qualitative content analysis, and the main theme “an empowered nursing teacher” emerged. The teachers expressed positive experiences, as having more self confidence, feeling inspired to develop one's potentiality and feeling strength and happiness in one's work. The theme constituted four categories: “encouraged by collaboration and teamwork”, “more independent as a teacher”, “encouraged by more active students” and, “inspired to develop further competence”.

The overall result showed that the teachers in the competence developing project reported mostly positive experiences by participating in the project. However, two years is a short time to develop both pedagogical and professional competence. They expressed a desire to continue building their competence, especially in direct clinical practice.

### Keywords

- Teacher;
  - Competence;
  - Nursing education;
  - Indonesia–Norway
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## Introduction

On December 26, 2004, the Asian tsunami disaster left several hundred thousand people dead or displaced from their homes in the province of Aceh, on the northern side of the island of Sumatra, Indonesia (WHO, 2005). Given that many of those who died had worked in various health care services, the tsunami resulted in a serious shortage of health professionals (Hassmiller, 2007). Consequently, the Norwegian Red Cross (NRC) and The Indonesian Red Cross (PMI) created a project that established and supported a local nursing school, The Nursing Academy Ibnu Sina (NAIS) in Aceh province. The focus of the project was two-fold; Firstly, to address the immediate need for well trained nurses in the country (WHO, 2007), and to build new buildings to enable an increase from 150 to 300 students at the NAIS. Secondly, similarly to meet the dramatically increased need for well-educated and highly competent nurses, to strengthen the pedagogical and professional nursing competence amongst the local nursing teachers, by means of a cross-cultural training program between NAIS and Hedmark University College (HUC) Norway.

## Background

Nurses comprise an important function in the Indonesian health system. However, there is no central nurse registration and no reliable data of the nursing workforce (World Bank, 2009). The nursing education range from senior high school level, via diploma III, to bachelor level (Hennessy et al., 2006a). In general, the nursing education is influenced by the American nursing curriculum (Strengt and Cagle, 1999). Consequently, the majority of textbooks utilized at NAIS, and elsewhere in Indonesia, are of American origin. As the majority of teachers and students have difficulties reading in English, this presents a problem. In addition to inadequate language skills, there are a number of challenges for effective nurse education, e.g. scarcity of resources, the teachers' limited clinical experience and inadequate national standards for nurses' clinical competence (Hennessy et al., 2006a). Due to limited resources, there are not enough textbooks available for students. Consequently, the students primarily learn by memorizing facts that are read out aloud to them. This is not readily conducive to critical thinking and problem based learning (Berland et al., 2010). Teachers frequently lack adequate clinical practice, because they are offered teaching positions immediately upon graduating from nursing school. This further contributes to a theoretical approach to nursing education, where practical skills and theoretical knowledge are not adequately integrated by means of reflection and practical examples (Hennessy et al., 2006b). Finally, the recently revised accreditation

standards primarily focus on theoretical competencies, which implies that Indonesia still lacks clear quality standards regarding the clinical instruction of nursing students.

The WHO describes competence as “a framework of skills reflecting knowledge, attitudes, and psychosocial and psychomotor elements” (WHO, 2009, p.22). Several studies have explored what specific domains constitute competence among nursing teachers. A Nordic study by Johnsen et al. (2002) identified the following two categories: pedagogical and nursing competence. Pedagogical competence included teaching skills, evaluation skills, personality traits and the relationship to students. In a Finnish study, Salminen et al. (2009) described nursing competence as theoretical and clinical nursing knowledge, attitudes and skills. An important overarching challenge in competence building is the ability to integrate the theoretical knowledge with the practical realities of nursing (Johnsen et al., 2002). Similarly the ability to encourage students to develop and utilize critical thinking skills is an important challenge (Cody, 2002).

Limited data is available regarding the experiences of cross-cultural training programs for nursing teachers. A case study from a partnership between Canada and Bangladesh highlights the importance of the students' possibility to learn English and develop critical thinking skills (Berland et al., 2010). An aid project in the Maldives identified important prerequisites for effective nursing education; the teachers' flexibility, capacity for problem solving, critical thinking skills, team orientation and collaboration with colleagues (Conway et al., 2002). While in a UK training program Iranian health managers, stressed the importance of “learning by doing” i.e., working together with more experienced colleagues as well as colleagues who similarly participated in the training. They also emphasized learning that occurred at work-shops, meetings and conferences (Omar et al., 2009).

## Project Description

The project began in January 2006 and was concluded two years later, i.e., in December 2007. Prior to the project, Indonesian and Norwegian teachers developed the project plan collaboratively. Throughout the project both the NAIS and HUC teachers were involved in formative evaluations and their opinions were used in the ongoing planning process.

The goal of this project was to increase the quality of the nursing program at NAIS, by means of targeted training and support to nursing teachers. The project would also, importantly, provide specific support to NAIS immediately after its accreditation was changed from senior high school level to diploma III level. The change in accreditation in 2004 necessitated the development of a new curriculum with a stronger focus on nursing knowledge and additional course literature (Indonesian Educational and Cultural Minister, 1999). This required greater in-depth knowledge on behalf of the teachers. There was a specific need to adopt new pedagogical methods that stimulated the students' critical thinking.

The project focused on two key areas of competence: pedagogical and professional nursing. Different strategies to increase competence were used, in line with the description of nursing teacher competence provided by WHO (2009), Johnsen et al. (2002) and Salminen et al. (2009). We intended

to integrate theory and practice while encouraging critical thinking. A main strategy was a series of dialog-based workshops where all the teachers at NAIS were invited. Regarding pedagogical competence, topics in the workshops included the teaching process, problem-based-learning (PBL), supervision, log-book utilization, examination and evaluation methods and teaching approaches for practical training. Regarding professional nursing competence, topics in the workshops included nursing history, nursing care process, ethical frameworks, communication strategies, procedures for documentation and nursing research. Additional competence building strategies included instruction and practical experience in various pedagogical methods and counseling of teachers before and after each teaching opportunity. Furthermore, role modeling and reflection were utilized as strategies for improving teaching and supporting teachers in the practical training room. At five occasions, open seminars were organized where teachers from nursing academies in other parts of Aceh province and practical instructors from regional hospitals were invited to share their experiences.

Two qualified teachers from Hedmark University College (HUC), Norway, spent one month at NAIS over the two years project period. During this time, the HUC teachers focused on competence of relevance for in the NAIS curriculum. The project coordinator (MVG) at HUC was responsible for the content quality. She collaborated closely with the director at NAIS (SA) and the NRC Project Manager.

To handle the new and complex situation, two HUC teachers initially taught together. After an introduction period, classroom cooperation instead involved one HUC teacher and one NAIS teacher. The HUC teacher was a role model, and gave direct support in the ongoing classroom setting. During the last year two local teachers cooperated during lessons, supporting each other while applying the new teaching methods. This cooperative strategy, in the project called the "two-teacher model", helped manage the complex cross-cultural change process.

Local interpreters worked closely together with the Norwegian teachers. While the HUC teachers prepared for lessons, the interpreters provided ongoing support. They also translated in classrooms settings, workshops and during evaluation of lessons and teaching strategies. Given their knowledge of local area and culture, the interpreters offered practical assistance and mentored the HUC teachers to better understand the local culture and the Muslim religion.

## The Study

### Aim

The aim of this study was to describe the reported experiences of Indonesian nursing teachers who participated in a two-year cross-cultural project designed to build pedagogical and professional competence.

### Design

A qualitative study was conducted.

## Participants

All 17 nursing teachers who at the time worked at NAIS were invited to participate in the study. Eleven (64%) teachers responded to the questionnaire, seven female and four male. Most informants were in their late twenties or early thirties. Seven had bachelor degrees in nursing, three had diploma degrees and one had a master's degree. One informant had more than three years teaching experience at NAIS, eight had 1–3 years, and one had less than one year. Four had more than 3 years of work experience as a nurse, three had 1–3 years, and four had less than 1 year. More than half (55%) participated in project activities on more than six occasions. Approximately 90% participated in multiple components of the project. All informants had participated in different workshops.

## Data Collection

Data were collected during October and November 2007, in connection with the workshops. A Norwegian teacher, who was not part of the research group, provided information and responded to questions. The open-ended questionnaire was designed in collaboration with local workers who knew the project and the local culture. Translation of the questionnaire from English to Indonesian was done by an Indonesian interpreter who was well qualified for this job as she had worked as an interpreter through the whole project. The answers of the informant were translated from Indonesian to English by the same interpreter.

The five questions focused on the informants' experiences from participating in the project, including how they viewed their new competence, the collaboration with the Norwegian teachers, their future plans for their continual development.

## Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using thematic content analysis (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004), a stepwise process where text describing experiences is categorized. The overarching intention was to remain close to the text and preserve contextual meaning. Each questionnaire was read several times with an open mind in order to grasp the overall content and become familiar with the content. Responses to each item were subsequently assembled to view the whole picture. The text was divided into meaning units which varied from one word to a sentence. These meaning units were condensed and coded according to the content. Using abstraction, codes that had something in common were grouped into four categories that formed the manifest content of the informants' descriptions. Finally, drawing on the latent content in the text, a theme that represented the four categories was identified.

## Ethical Considerations

Research ethics principles according to Declaration of Helsinki (1964) were followed.

The teachers' participation was based on informed consent, and information about the study was given in a workshop to all the NAIS teachers, by dialog communication. It emphasized that

participation was voluntary and that informants could withdraw from the study at any time. As the teachers were given several days to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study, they had ample opportunity to ask additional questions.

The teachers answered the questionnaire anonymously.

## Findings

The analysis created one overarching theme: “an empowered nursing teacher”, which may be understood as an umbrella of positive experiences of personal growth and development. The data suggested that the empowerment for nursing teachers comprise four categories, i.e. being: (1) encouraged by collaboration and teamwork, (2) more independent as a teacher (3) encouraged by more active students, and, (4) inspired to develop further competence. The theme and examples of meaning units, codes and categories are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Examples of meaning units and codes, categories and theme.

Meaning units	Codes	Categories	Theme
<i>It can be used as a chance to share knowledge, experiences, and all new methods which we can be used in teaching process.</i>	Sharing experiences	Encouraged by collaboration and teamwork	
<i>I have done this two-teachers model in teaching, and one of the advantages I feel that we can complete each other, give support and correct each other</i>	Support and correct each other		
<i>We can see our friend's way of teaching and if we feel it is good, we can implement it in our future teaching.</i>	Model learning		
<i>I try my best to use teaching competencies ... like using speech methods, discussion, reflection, roleplay, two-teaching modell,</i>	Using new methods	More independent as a teacher	
<i>I try to find and formulate new ideas in teaching and make small change in the methods if I find the method did not work well</i>	Change the methods		An empowered nursing teacher
<i>New spirit with new experience to develop my self potentiality and I feel more self-confidence in teaching</i>	More self confidence		
<i>The student get closer to me because they always raise question, and we know that if</i>	Understand more,	Encouraged by more active	

Meaning units	Codes	Categories	Theme
<i>they have question means that they understand about more than before</i>		students	
<i>.... some students getting more active than before</i>	More active, more questions	Inspired to	
<i>Learn more about guiding our students, it can be in laboratory or in hospital</i>	Pedagogical competence,	develop further competence	
<i>"Following seminar/workshop about health promotion and nursing knowledge" and "about nursing knowledge and real more up-to-date journal about nursing"</i>	Nursing competence,		
<i>Eagerness to study English and be better in it</i>	English language	Higher the formal	
<i>Study at a higher level</i>	competence		

Table options

- View in workspaceDownload as CSV"Encouraged by Collaboration and Teamwork"

The collaboration between local and Norwegian teachers was structured around the two-teacher model. Half-way through the project, informants started to use the "two-teacher model" within the local group of teachers at their own initiatives. They expressed that the Norwegian teachers served as role models for their collaborations with local colleagues.

"We can see our friends' way of teaching and if we feel it is good, we can implement it in our future teaching"

The informants believed that the "two-teacher model" empowered them to address and manage their ongoing curricular transitions. It provided a forum to verbalize and share experiences and to provide constructive feedback.

"I have done this two-teacher model in teaching, and I feel one of the advantages is that we can complement each other, give support to each other and to correct each other"

Having learned strategies for collaboration, informants formed teams amongst themselves to share responsibility and better serve the educational needs of the students. In particular, they encouraged strategic collaborations among teachers who respectively had more practical nursing experience and more theoretical expertise.



The informants described that learning collaboration primarily taught them to assume responsibility as a member of a teaching team. As a consequence, they were able to inspire and empower each other. Previously, teamwork had not been teaching strategy at NAIS.

“This two-teacher model can lead us to develop our sense of responsibility as a team member”

Some participants expressed an ambivalence regarding cooperating with their colleagues in classroom settings. They were used to have control and authority in front of the students. While teaching together with a more assertive teacher, less assertive teachers, experienced difficulties gaining the attention of students.

#### “More Independent as a Teacher”

Informants expressed that the project made them more flexible utilizing a variety pedagogical methods, such as, speech methods; discussion, reflection and role play. This made them more self-confident and independent, which increased their ability to apply and adapt pedagogical methods to the local context. They expressed that the ongoing dialog deepened their professional knowledge and made them more reflective. This was empowering.

“By knowing deeper about the subject I teach, I try to find and formulate new ideas in teaching. I make small changes in the methods I utilize if I find the method did not work well in my class”

The informants expressed that both the individual supervision and the positive feedback from teachers and students contributed to increased self-confidence independence. They energized as teachers, more successful in their teaching roles and more able to independently create effective learning situations.

“There are many new skills I received from this collaboration with the Norwegian teachers, and I try to implement them in classroom, field-practice, and the training room. But as a teacher I should prepare myself first about the new knowledge and the new methods so I can use them properly in teaching and guiding my students to think critically”

#### “Encouraged by More Active Students”

Positive feed-back from students was also empowering. The informants expressed that students raised more questions, were more active, especially when openly framed pedagogical methods were utilized. As a consequence, the informants could observe that their own empowerment directly benefitted the students, who in turn expanded and deepened their knowledge. This process was inspiring to both teachers and students.

“The students get closer to me because they always raise questions, and we know that if they have questions it means that they understand more than before”

The increased dialog in the classrooms contributed to that the informants realized that the students wanted to improve their professional nursing. Even though the informants were inspired to support their professional development, most had only limited experience from hands-on nursing. In part, they managed to overcome this challenge by strategic collaborations with local teachers who had more clinical expertise. The Norwegian teachers also supervised the local teachers when they worked hands-on with students in the practical training room. These strategies encouraged both a systematic improvement of practical skills and a focus on positive interactions with and attitudes towards patients.

To further equip local teachers with strategies to mentor students during patient encounters, the HUC teachers provided seminars on clinical instruction. To integrate theory and practice, the informants instructed the students to reflect on their practical experiences in a logbook.

“I see that by keeping a logbook, my students are more able to remember what should and what should not be done to the patients. And when I evaluate the students, I realize that they can answer my questions much better compared to when we did not use it”

The informants themselves used a logbook for their professional development as teachers. Ongoing reflection on logbook content served as a platform for critical thinking amongst both informants and students. This occurred both individually and in direct teaching situations and empowered teachers as well as students to focus on personal improvement.

#### “Inspired to Develop Further Competence”

Due to their limited practical experience, the informants were throughout the project increasingly interested in methods for guiding students in clinical settings.

“Learn more about teaching methods and about guiding our students, it can be in laboratory or in hospital”

The informants were motivated to develop formal and informal competencies and expressed plans for improving their qualifications and skills. They wanted to increase their competence, e.g., studying English and reading English textbooks. They expressed a desire to participate in workshops and seminars.

“I want to follow any trainings and workshops about teaching and nursing”

To further expand their pedagogical and professional competence, the informants recognized they needed support from the organization they worked in. More empowered, they were eager to further improve the quality of the nursing program for the benefit of students and teachers.

"I just want to give the best and my best to NAIS students and this is why I hope NAIS can also provide a chance for the teachers to develop themselves to their potential as high quality teachers"

## Discussion

In this study, the teachers' experiences converged in the main theme "an empowered nursing teacher", which may be understood as an umbrella of positive experiences of personal growth and development. As empowered teacher they gained energy to develop their personal potential which gave them an inner feeling of strength and happiness. They were optimistic about the future and felt strong while giving each other constructive feedback during teaching collaborations. This inspired the development of individuals as well as teams. To describe empowerment, four categories were created; being encouraged by collaboration and teamwork, being more independent as a teacher, being encouraged by more active students, and, being inspired to develop further competences. These findings are congruent with Short and Greer's (2002) description of an empowered teacher, and also supported by Kuokkanen and Leino-Kilpi (2001), who studied the qualities of empowered nurses in Finland. Interestingly, Kuokkanen and Leino-Kilpi (2001), emphasize that empowerment develops in relationships where people show mutual respect. Even though the NAIS teachers' primarily mentioned the individual aspects of empowerment process, they also described their relationships with colleagues as mutually supportive. They viewed the capitalization on each teacher's individual strengths in the teaching situation as something positive. They complemented each other when using the "two-teacher model". In the present study, the local teachers also collaborated with experienced nursing teachers from Norway, by means of individual supervision before and after direct teaching situations. The supervision provided possibilities to discern and understand both commonalities and differences between professional nursing competence as expressed in Indonesia and Norway. Regarding an education program between Australia and Maldives, Conway et al. (2002) highlighted the need for mutual understanding and reciprocal learning. Building dynamic and reciprocal power relationships may be challenging in cross-cultural cooperation between developed and less developed countries. The Norwegian teachers particularly were mindful of ethical dilemmas when teaching western pedagogical methods and nursing practice. In all their actions, they took special care to meet and treat the NAIS teachers with respect and humility.

In this study, the local teachers felt empowered when they received respect and positive feedback from the Norwegian teachers during supervision. This may be because the feedback was consistently focused on the local teachers' strengths. In a report from a nursing teacher cross-cultural competence program between Malawi and Norway (Martinez et al., 2008), supervision is put forward as an effective tool for competence development. In the present study, the NAIS teachers felt inspired by the HUC teachers' way of expressing their teacher role and viewed them as role models. This was also the case in other cross-cultural studies, both in Bangladesh (Berland et al., 2010) and in Latvia (Sandin and Walldal, 2002). However, the NAIS teachers still wanted to form their own individual

teacher identity in reference to their own cultural context. This may indicate that the NAIS teachers were empowered to take control over their own situation. Kuokkanen and Leino-Kilpi (2000) have stressed that feelings of self-esteem and autonomy are important factors for empowerment. In this study, almost all NAIS teachers expressed increased self-confidence, as they became more independent and flexible in their teaching.

The teachers were also empowered by the students, as the students became more active and demonstrated a deeper understanding of nursing. As a strategy to strengthen the students' critical thinking the local teachers began to utilize PBL as a teaching strategy. It was primarily the positive feedback from students that motivated the local teachers to acquire more skills in PBL. Gibson (1991) emphasizes that motivation is an essential factor for empowerment, which is also described in a competence development program for Iranian nurses (Khomeiran et al., 2006).

The NAIS teachers described few experiences related to their nursing professional development. This may be due to the short duration of the project, possibly inadequate for developing both pedagogical and professional nursing competence. Several workshops focused on nursing knowledge where local teachers conveyed a similar theoretical understanding of professional nursing as the Norwegian teachers. This is similar to findings from a cross-cultural project between Australia and the Maldives, where Conway et al. (2002) concluded nursing is a global profession with a common knowledge base despite large geographical and cultural differences. It is possible, however, that the practice application of the nursing theory may differ more across cultures (Berland et al., 2010). Nursing expertise requires the application of theoretical knowledge into daily practice. To accomplish this, the integration of theory and practice is an essential component in the nursing teacher skill repertoire (Johnsen et al., 2002). Although the Norwegian teachers throughout the project provided guidance in applying nursing theory during specific practical interventions, the experiences while attempting these practical applications were generally not represented in the informants' responses. Maybe the Norwegian teachers had inadequate insight into the cultural context, which potentially could inhibit the practical application of nursing theory among local nursing teachers. Another reason may be that the transition from memorizing knowledge to applying knowledge in direct practice represents a time consuming and gradual process longer than the duration of this study.

The local teachers expressed many plans for their continued development, particularly in relation to their nursing expertise. Being oriented to the future and seeing possibilities in personal situations are important features of an empowered individual (Kuokkanen et al., 2002). Even though many of the local teachers had little practice using English language and only limited access to international nursing databases, they were highly motivated to develop their critical thinking, e.g., by studying nursing research and scientific articles. With the assistance from NRC, the teachers completed English courses and the school received computers and a new library. Still, the teachers had a limited availability of textbooks. Scarcity of textbooks is an obstacle to teaching critical thinking skills ([Kapborg, 2000] and [Sandin and Walldal, 2002]). Availability of textbooks represents a problem area with regard to the WHO (2009) global strategy to strengthen nursing education and nurses ability to

think critically. Furthermore, the teachers were motivated to develop educational tools to enhance the teaching process in direct clinical practice. Hennessy et al. (2006a) bring attention to that the standards for nursing practice is inadequately described and clarified for the students at various levels of nursing training. This circumstance brings practical difficulties for nursing schools that strive to raise the standard of the practical training from high school level to the diploma III level. Whereas the teachers in this study conveyed some of the challenges associated with lacking experiences from practical training in clinical nursing, their primary concern was to raise their formal qualifications to a higher academic level. Participation in this study provided skills for personal development and academically strengthened the whole NAIS teaching organization. Through continued teamwork and workshops, the local teachers planned to inspire each other to further build their educational and professional nursing competences. Gibson (1991) point out that in order to succeed in building capacity, the development of an empowered organization is of paramount importance. An empowered organization is characterized by employees assuming and benefitting from responsibility, independence and opportunities for cooperation. The support of organizational strategies that enable a sustainable personal empowerment process was identified as the basis of an evaluation of a competency program between Indonesia and Australia (Cannon and Hore, 1997). In their evaluation, the authors argued that a competence project needed to last for at least five years to achieve lasting changes in the development of skills. Consequently, it was necessary to follow up skills through training of new employees, repeated evaluations of projects and organizational development. Furthermore, the authors observed that an important obstacle to personal development was that most nursing teachers in Indonesia held two jobs in order to financially survive. In spite of such obstacles, the informants in this present study expressed a clear desire for further development of personal competences and clinical expertise. A follow-up study to gain knowledge of the teacher's longer-term development of such skills would be of importance.

### Methodological Considerations

The aim of this study was to acquire knowledge of the NAIS teachers' experiences from participating in a cross-cultural competence development project. Cross-cultural research requires cultural competence, in the form of cultural awareness, sensitivity and knowledge (Papadopoulos and Lees, 2002). To ensure the trustworthiness of cross-cultural research, Im et al. (2004) emphasize the importance of anchoring the entire research process in the specific cultural context. Graneheim and Lundman (2004) view trustworthiness in qualitative research according to three concepts; credibility, dependability and transferability. Credibility implies confidence in the accuracy of the data, given the scope of the study. In this study, the contrasting gender, age, level of education, and work experience among informants, contributed to increased credibility. With the open-ended questionnaire format, the informants were free to use their own words, which assured a level of independence from the researchers who in many cultures are viewed as authority figures (Suh et al., 2009). Voluntary participation is a crucial ethical principle (Declaration of Helsinki, 1964). In this study seventeen

teachers were invited to participate and eleven chose to do so. This can be interpreted as if they truly felt no undue pressure and were consequently free to choose.

While informants were asked about perceived benefits from participation, they were concurrently asked to describe experiences that had been challenging. This should strengthen the credibility of findings. The questionnaire format was selected due to limited time and availability of translators. The researchers lost the possibility to probe specific questions and to clear up potential misunderstandings. To reduce this limitation, group meetings were organized where informants' confirmed or rejected the researcher's common sense understanding of the findings ( [Burns and Grove, 2004] and [Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009]). Given the local collective culture and strong group loyalty, the individual opinions may still have been subdued in favor of loyalty with the group (Suh et al., 2009). To enhance credibility in cross-cultural research, accurate translation is important ( [Im et al., 2004] and [Suh et al., 2009]). Kapborg and Berterö (2002) maintain that credibility is strengthened when the interpreter is a part of the specific culture. Furthermore, Twinn (1997) emphasizes that using only one interpreter strengthens the research project. This study consistently used one and the same Indonesian interpreter who was well acquainted with the project and well embedded in the culture.

When an open-ended questionnaire format is utilized in qualitative research, content analysis is the recommended analytic method (Burns and Grove, 2004). During the entire analysis, the authors maintained an open and critical dialog until a consensus was reached regarding categories and theme. This contributed to trustworthiness of findings (Graneheim and Lundman, 2004). The study results are well aligned with results from formative evaluations carried out throughout the project period. This supports the dependability of findings, i.e., the stability of the data over time.

The description of the cultural context, the informant characteristics and the inclusion of relevant quotes, safeguards the transferability of findings. This study is linked with an aid project in the aftermath of the tsunami in 2004 which included new buildings, equipment and improved possibilities for development of the teachers at NAIS. Consequently, it might be difficult to express critical or differing opinions, especially in Indonesian cultural where respect and hospitality are core virtues (Shields and Hartati, 2003).

## Conclusion

An overall result of this study was that the Indonesian teachers expressed mainly positive experiences regarding their participation in the project and felt more empowered and independent as nursing teachers. It is reasonable to think that the topics in the workshops and the cooperation between the teachers have contributed to the development of skills, knowledge and attitudes to learning and the learning process. The new teaching methods improved the cooperation and communication between the students and the teachers, which the teachers experienced as encouraging.

The majority of NAIS teachers wanted to continue their competence development, which suggests that the quality of the program may be continuing to improve. This should be followed-up with subsequent studies.

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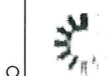
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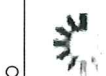
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