Enriching the PhD Experience through International Doctoral Student Seminars

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Background

- Nursing and midwifery doctoral programs exist in varying models around the world with many attributes including fostering collaborations and encouraging peer support.
- Connecting with international peers through a web-based platform can increase peer support and collaboration.

Purpose

- Describe the development of an international doctoral student seminar and describe the lessons learned in the first year
- Support development of additional international collaborative partnerships by
  - Describing the establishment of the group
  - Identifying benefits and barriers to the process

Methods

- Initiated by two faculty members from King’s College London (United Kingdom) in 2015
- Invitations were extended to Johns Hopkins University (USA) and University of Turku (Finland) in 2015
  - Chosen through established links between the faculties
  - A steering group comprised of doctoral students from each University was established
  - Collaboration extended to include University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (USA) in 2016
- Inaugural seminar held in September 2015 and hosted by King’s College London
- Meetings continue to be held in rotation
  - Topics of the seminars jointly determined by the participating Universities
  - Host University then identifies a suitable expert on the chosen subject to facilitate the seminar
  - Each seminar is conducted via videoconferencing
  - Between seminars, students continue to network and communicate via other multimedia platforms

Results

- The group has over 25 students and faculty across 4 universities in 3 countries
- Presentations in the first year focused on:
  - How to build an international research profile
  - How to be involved with peer review process in academic journals
  - How to effectively engage in social media as a researcher
- Benefits to the students have included:
  - Being visiting scholars at each other’s university
  - Building a professional network
  - Utilizing peer support
  - Collaborating on a manuscript for submission
- Some of the challenges encountered in the first year have included:
  - Navigating international time zones and different academic schedules
  - Lacking a shared web-based conference platform across universities

Discussion

- International student collaboration allows students to create a community of support, develop leadership skills, and form an international professional network.
- Shared team leadership linked with higher success of virtual teams.
- International scholarship can be enhanced by collaborative learning through a web-based initiative.

References