

EXPERIENCE REPORT

Internationalization and academic mobility in Nursing: An experience report regarding the *Move La América* Sandwich PhD program

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Academic PhD exchange via international scholarships.
2. Academic mobility drives international networks in Nursing.
3. International internships strengthen PhD students' investigative competencies.
4. Academic exchange promotes transformative cultural experiences.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To systematize an international PhD academic internship experience and reflect on its implications for academic development in Nursing. **Method:** A report experience with a reflexive qualitative approach, developed between June and July 2025 and based on field diary records analyzed by means of the *What? So what? Now what?* cycle. **Results:** The participants were two PhD students attending the Nursing Science course at *Universidad Andrés Bello* (Chile), scholarship fellows of the *Move La América* program under academic tutorship by *Universidade Federal de Paraná* (Brazil). The internship included their immersion into teaching, research and extension activities. **Conclusion:** This international internship represented a relevant training experience and a pertinent strategy to internationalize PhD training in Nursing.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing; International Educational Exchange; Health Postgraduate Programs; International Cooperation; Fellowships and Scholarships.

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization process undergone by Higher Education has promoted academic mobility (defined as people's physical or virtual movement outside their country with study, research and teaching purposes¹), thus becoming a key strategy to enrich the training of students from different levels through exchange experiences across various institutions and sociocultural contexts². In this scenario, Nursing PhD training internationalization emerges as a strategic cornerstone to strengthen investigative capabilities, foster innovation in health practices and promote global academic collaboration³.

In its 2030 policy for health personnel improvement, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) highlights academic mobility as an essential mechanism to devise resilient health systems⁴. However, except for the Brazilian case, only 7% of the Nursing faculty in Latin America has PhD degrees, which limits knowledge production and the adoption of advanced technologies⁵. Brazil has become the exception in the region thanks to its significant investments in public policies targeted at internationalization, which drive research, connection and teaching development with a global view and local sensitivity⁵⁻⁶. In 2020, Brazil devoted 1.15% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to research and development, when compared to Chile, which only invested 0.36% of its GDP during 2021⁷.

Universities understand that academic exchanges constitute a collective effort, grounded on international cooperation and on creating opportunities for varied talents⁸. In Nursing, these experiences allow consolidating international research networks and ease collaborative construction of healthcare-centered knowledge⁹.

In 2024, the Coordination Office for the Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*, CAPES) launched the *Move La América* program, targeted at drawing Latin American students to attend MSc and PhD internships in Brazil with the purpose of strengthening Graduate Programs (GPs) and dynamizing the regional academic environment¹⁰.

In this setting, the PhD students attending the Nursing Sciences PhD (*Doctorado en Ciencias de Enfermería*, DCE) program at *Universidad Andrés Bello* (UNAB), Santiago (Chile), took part during June and July 2025 in an international academic internship at the Graduate Nursing Program offered by *Universidad Federal de Paraná* (UFPR), Curitiba, Paraná (Brazil). Given the above, the purpose of this report is to systematize this international PhD academic internship experience and reflect on its implications for academic development in Nursing.

METHOD

The structure of this experience report adopts a reflexive and qualitative approach based on the *What? So what? Now what?* cycle¹¹, which allows describing, analyzing and synthesizing professional experiences in a systematic and critical way¹². This framework was used as a guide to organize the reflection around the international PhD academic mobility experience.

The report participants were two students from the Nursing Science PhD program at *Universidad Andrés Bello* (Santiago de Chile), both attending second year of the course and linked to lines of research in Health Management. They were included because they were the only beneficiaries of the *Move La América* Sandwich PhD

scholarship granted by CAPES¹³ in the Nursing PhD Program at *Universidad Federal de Paraná*, Curitiba (Brazil).

The academic internship was developed between June and July 2025, a period during which the PhD students got immersed into the academic, research and extension activities offered by the respective welcome programs. They were advised by a PhD professor from the Chilean university and by two tutors from UFPR, an expert in workers' health from the Multiprofessional Study Group on Adults' Health (*Grupo de Estudio Multiprofesional en Salud del Adulto*, GEMSA) and another specialist in health management that is a member of the Research group in health Policies, Management and Practices (*Grupo de Investigación en Políticas, Gestión y Prácticas en Salud*, GPPGPS).

The information sources considered for this reported were as follows: field diaries prepared by each PhD student throughout the internship; and photographic records that allowed complementing and contextualizing the experiences undergone.

The records were reflexively systematized by sequentially applying the *What? So what? Now what?* cycle. The main activities, situations and experiences developed during the internship were identified and described in the *What?* phase. The second phase (*So what?*) consisted in a reflexive analysis of the records, exploring their meaning in relation to PhD training, the development of investigative and intercultural competencies and international cooperation in Nursing. Finally, the lessons learned and their projections were analyzed in the *Now what?* phase, connecting them with academic, institutional and discipline-related implications for PhD internationalization and training¹².

In relation to how the activities performed were planned, they were worked on in a joint manner with each of the UFPR tutoring professors, based on the objectives set by the PhD students regarding their research projects and the training possibilities offered by the UFPR program.

The writing procedures for this experience report observed the ethical provisions set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki.

RESULTS

This international academic mobility experience was developed at the Graduate Nursing Program offered by *Universidad Federal de Paraná* in Curitiba (Brazil) and was characterized by the PhD students' comprehensive academic immersion in teaching, research and extension activities, in line with the training goals of their respective PhD projects and without ceasing to meet the schedule of activities foreseen in the program in Chile. The frequency of the activities performed is detailed in Table 1.

The first results axis was linked to the participants' academic immersion into teaching and advanced training, which included taking part in exam boards evaluating undergraduate and graduate Nursing students, in an Assistance to multiple victims (AMUVIH) simulated activity developed by Nursing students, and in lectures in their respective research groups. These instances allowed the PhD students to learn different teaching and learning strategies, as well as to strengthen their understanding about how graduate programs work in an international context.

Table 1. Frequency of the activities developed in the PhD internship. Santiago, RM, Chile, 2025

Area/Activities	Number of activities	Relative percentage in relation to the academic total
TEACHING		
DCE Chile classes (online, winter school, tests)	14	28%
Participation in UFPR chairs (as an assistant)	3	6%
Academic lecture/Presentation in groups (GEMSA, GPPGPS, multiprofessional residency program)	4	8%
Participation in exam boards (undergraduate and graduate levels)	3	6%
Clinical simulation (AMUVIH and practical class)	2	4%
Teaching subtotal	26	52%
RESEARCH		
Formal academic tutoring	2	4%
Participation in research groups (GPPGPS, GEMSA)	3	6%
Creation and refinement of academic products (articles, chapters, reviews)	12	24%
Participation in scientific events/webinars	2	4%
Research subtotal	19	38%
EXTENSION		
Technical visits to health services (PHC, hospital, quality and safety)	6	12%
The Saúde nas Ilhas project (rural area)	2	4%
Participation in professional events (Sind/PR, workers' mental health)	2	4%
Academic institutional visits (UNIOESTE, UFPR Litoral)	2	4%
Extension subtotal	12	24%
Total academic activities	57	100%

Source: The authors (2025).

The second axis corresponded to the development of investigative and intercultural competencies through integration to the GEMSA and GPPGPS research groups, participation in seminars, webinars and scientific events, and joint preparation of academic products such as scientific articles and book chapters. These experiences favored exchanging theoretical and methodological points of view, as well as strengthening skills associated with collaborative work, scientific communication and critical reflection in multicultural contexts.

The third axis was related to connecting with the university environment and extension, highlighting participation in health promotion community activities (both in urban and rural contexts), including actions developed at health units and in communities from the municipality of Guaraqueçaba, in the scope of the *Saúde nas Ilhas* extension project. These experiences allowed understanding the social role played by universities and Nursing in various contexts, reinforcing a comprehensive view regarding health care and management.

Altogether, the three axes analyzed evidence that this international academic mobility instance was not implemented as a fragmented experience in independent

dimensions but as an integrated training process where teaching, research and extension were synergistically articulated (Chart 1). Consequently, this experience represented a situated learning instance that transcended instrumental acquisition of competencies, consolidating itself as a structured reflexive process to strengthen the training, institutional and disciplinary scopes in Nursing.

Chart 1. Field diary excerpts and lessons learned from the international academic mobility experience. Santiago, RM, Chile, 2025

Results axes	Field diary excerpts	Reflexive learning	Projection when returning to the source program
Academic immersion into teaching and advanced training	...Participating in exam boards and in clinical simulation activities allowed me to witness a training model where evaluation is conceived as a pedagogical and dialogical space, rather than as a mere grading event. (Field diary, Student A, week 4)	Enhanced understanding about evaluation as a training strategy in graduate studies, integrating critical feedback and situated learning.	Proposal of evaluation strategies in graduate disciplines that strengthen the constructive training approach in PhD seminars in Chile.
Development of investigative and intercultural competencies	Something we do not see in our academic context is joint work between research groups and undergraduate/graduate students and researchers with different backgrounds and from different contexts. It leads to understanding scientific production as a collective process... (Field diary, Student B, week 7)	Development of competencies for collaborative research, intercultural scientific communication and critical reflection on theoretical and methodological frameworks.	Driving international co-authorship, strengthening research networks and promoting early internationalization experiences at the PhD level.
Connecting with the university environment and extension	...In Guaraqueçaba you can see how university extension articulates teaching, research and social commitment, situating Nursing care in complex territorial realities. (Field diary, Student A, week 5)	Revaluing the social role played by Nursing and universities in various community contexts, from a comprehensive care perspective.	Incorporating critical and territorialized extension approaches into training activities and source program connection projects.

Source: The authors (2025).

DISCUSSION

The international academic mobility experience described in this report evidences its potential to enhance PhD training in Nursing, particularly in terms of developing investigative and intercultural competencies and of promoting academic collaboration. These findings are consistent with the guidelines set forth by the PAHO, which acknowledges international academic exchange as a mechanism that contributes to equality in health, as it improves education quality and strengthens health systems⁴.

Likewise, the experience is in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (specifically SDG 4), as it promotes good-quality, inclusive and egalitarian education¹⁴, as well as with the regional efforts targeted at internationalizing advanced Nursing training. The PhD students' immersion into academic activities not only favored knowledge exchange but also the collaborative construction of situated learning pertinent to Latin American countries.

The internship developed in the scope of the *Move La América* program contributed to integration across Latin American institutions, as it strengthened international cooperation programs and favored the consolidation of academic research networks. These instances improve collaboration and joint scientific production levels, conferring greater international visibility to the Nursing knowledge produced¹³.

However, Higher Education internationalization in the region faces persistent structural challenges, particularly in relation to funding, to sustainability of mobility programs and to intra- and inter-institutional inequalities. Despite all the progress reported, Latin American countries still lag behind other regions¹⁵. As it restricts access to these training experiences, limited availability of State and organizational resources tends to produce social inequalities¹⁶.

In addition, the literature points out differentiated risks associated with internationalization. Whereas *brain drain* is noticed in nations such as Argentina, Brazil and Mexico, the main risk is connected with greater inequalities across institutions from the same country in contexts such as the Colombian and Chilean ones¹⁷. The weakness of the public policies targeted at internationalization is added to the above, evidenced in regional comparative assessments¹⁵. Although the National Certification Commission belonging to the Ministry of Education has incorporated internationalization as a relevant criterion to certify Higher Education institutions and MSc/PhD programs in Chile, challenges persist for their effective and sustainable implementation¹⁸.

In this context, academic mobility experiences such as the one herein analyzed gain special relevance for constituting concrete contributions to knowledge internationalization and to consolidating scientific networks in Nursing. The academic monitoring provided by the tutors and the opening of the welcome program eased the PhD students' integration in teaching, research and extension activities.

Language and differences in the academic calendars were identified among the main barriers. Although Portuguese and Spanish do present similarities, linguistic and cultural singularities hindered communication at a first moment. Likewise, the scheduling of the academic calendars hindered performing some activities. Nevertheless, these difficulties were addressed by means of adaptation and flexibility strategies adopted by the teams involved.

In synthesis, despite the brief nature of the internship, the experience exerted a significant impact on strengthening investigative, professional and interpersonal competencies and allowed reinforcing collaboration networks targeted at articulating and projecting lines of research in Health Management.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This international PhD internship allowed for the PhD students' structured immersion into teaching, research and extension activities, in addition to producing diverse learning linked to graduate training evaluation, to intergenerational collaborative research and to

articulation between universities and territories by means of university extension. These findings evidence that, even in a brief mobility period, planned integration to research groups and active tutorship monitoring favor the development of investigative and intercultural competencies and the consolidation of sustainable academic connections.

In terms of scientific contributions, this report offers a reflexive systematization of a brief PhD mobility experience in the Latin American context, evidencing that its training impact did not exclusively depend on permanence time but on quality of the academic immersion process and on an effective articulation across teaching, research and extension. It also identified tensions related to simultaneity with the source program and to linguistic and academic calendar differences, aspects that are still scarcely discussed in the regional literature on Graduate Nursing internationalization.

In the social and disciplinary scopes, the experience contributed to qualifying PhD Nursing training, to strengthening applied research in Health Management and to expanding regional academic collaboration, with a potential effect on training advanced human capital capable of influencing health practices and policies. As this report is limited to two participants, its contextual and reflexive nature does not allow generalizing the findings. Nevertheless, it is recommended for graduate internationalization policies to promote mobility instances where academic planning is shared between the source and target institutions, with systematic tutorship monitoring and explicit connections with strategic lines of research, as conditions to maximize their training, institutional and scientific impacts.

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Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work - **Yañez-Flores KA, Dubo Araya PA, Miranda FMA, Peres AM, Reynaldos-Grandón KL**. Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content - **Yañez-Flores KA, Dubo Araya PA, Miranda FMA, Peres AM, Reynaldos-Grandón KL**. Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved - **Yañez-Flores KA, Dubo Araya PA, Miranda FMA, Peres AM, Reynaldos-Grandón KL**. All authors approved the final version of the text.

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The authors declare that all data are fully available within the article.

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