



Analysis of and reflection on bachelor thesis in nursing students: A descriptive study in Spain

Judith Roca^{a,*}, Silvia Gros^a, Olga Canet^b

^a University of Lleida, Department of Nursing, 2 Montserrat Roig, St., 25198 Lleida, Spain

^b Faculty of Health Sciences Blanquerna, University Ramon Llull, Degree of Nursing, 326-332 Padilla, St., 08025 Barcelona, Spain



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Bachelor thesis
Nursing student
Nursing education

ABSTRACT

Introduction: The bachelor thesis, a final year subject to obtain a nursing degree, presents an ideal opportunity for the development and assessment of professional competencies. Thus, it is necessary to specify that the structure of the bachelor thesis works as an element of review and reflection from both a pedagogical and professional perspective.

Objective: To analyse the main elements of the bachelor thesis in the nursing degree 2015–16 in Spain.

Methodology: A transversal descriptive study was conducted using a quantitative documentary analysis via study guides or grade reports. The variables were the main academic elements of the bachelor thesis subject (credits, competencies, learning outcomes, contents, methodologies, training activities and assessment). A probabilistic sample of 66 institutions was studied using descriptive statistics with statistical measures of central tendency and measures of variability.

Results: The results showed a maximum range of 12 and a minimum of 6 European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The definition and number of competencies to be developed varied and the learning outcomes were formulated in only 40.9% of the guides consulted. The most widely used teaching methodologies and training activities were academic supervision (87.9%) and autonomous work (80.3%). Regarding types of work, basic investigation (34.8%), care plans (33.3%) and literature review (30.3%) ranked highest. No specific descriptors could be linked to the contents. Finally, two main assessment tools were found: process and product. The rubric is presented as a main element of the assessment.

Discussion and Conclusions: The bachelor thesis is conceived as autonomous, personal and original academic work. But no homogeneity was observed in the key development elements such as competencies, teaching strategies, or type of bachelor thesis. Therefore, the findings from the analysis and the bibliographic review are presented as recommendations as regards the outcome, structure and/or teaching elements linked to the bachelor thesis.

1. Introduction

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has led to myriad legislative and educational changes, presenting both a huge challenge but also an opportunity for improved nursing education (Collins and Hewer, 2014). Thus, from 2009 study plans in Spain saw the introduction of the bachelor thesis (BT) in all university degree programmes. Until this time, the BT was only included in some technical and technological degree studies. In this context, designing, developing and evaluating the BT is one of the great challenges faced by Higher Education (HE) (Rekalde, 2011).

The BT, which comes in the final stages of the degree programme, is an ideal opportunity for both the development and assessment of

professional competencies. Unlike other degree course requirements, the BT has no predefined content area and involves new assessment and review criteria, making it a subject worthy of study (Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009).

Given that the first BTs in Spain were not written until the 2012–13 academic year, this subject has been little explored in national and international research and papers. Thus, it is essential to specify the current structure of the BT as a subject. The aim of the present paper was to focus on the nursing degree in order to analyse the constituent teaching elements of this subject to ascertain in depth its current situation in Spain. This would allow for a framework document for possible curricular reviews and adaptations and, given the relevance of the BT, it could also provide a basis from which to undertake more in-

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: judithrl@infermeria.udl.cat (J. Roca), sgros@infermeria.udl.cat (S. Gros), olgacv@blanquerna.url.edu (O. Canet).

depth studies from other perspectives, especially the international perspective.

2. Previous Literature

Spanish legislation ([Real Decreto 43/2015, 2015](#)), establishing the ordination of official university studies, states that the BT is a mandatory subject that the student shall write and defend during the last stages of the course curriculum. The BT accounts for between 6 and a maximum of 12.5% European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) of the total credits of the degree. The European credit, ECTS, is the academic unit that represents the amount of work done by the student. In this unit of measurement theoretical and practical lessons are integrated, including hours of work and study; the minimum number of hours being 25 and the maximum being 30 ([Royal Decree 1125/2003, 2003](#)). The nursing degree in Spain is a four-year-full-time programme with an academic load of 240 ECTS.

The aim of the BT is to demonstrate that the student has acquired the knowledge taught in the degree ([Meneses, 2011](#)), therefore, it is necessary to adapt and reassess the contents of training programmes, with a view to focusing them on the students' profession and learning ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)). As a final subject, its integrative nature makes it possible to assess the students' acquired global competencies ([Canet et al., 2016](#)). The generic and specific competencies to be developed in Spanish university students are set out in the current legislation ([Orden CIN/2134/2008, 2008](#) and [Real Decreto 1027/2011, 2011](#)). While the concept of competency has been widely recognized in Spain, the concept of learning outcomes, identified as what a student will know and be able to do by the end of the degree, is gradually being introduced ([ANECA, 2013](#)).

The BT is based on a medium of instruction known as the project method, defined as a way a person (or group of individuals) applies acquired knowledge or skills to achieve a purpose that generally responds to a tangible object or product as a final outcome ([Cortés, 2005](#)). The BT is usually an individual work, although some research shows a highly positive appraisal of co-authorship ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#); [Lundgren and Robertsson, 2013](#)). The BT is centred around three axes: literature review, description of the research methodology, and discussion of findings and presentation of conclusions and/or recommendations ([Feather et al., 2013](#)). These axes come in four phases: proposal (informed choice of topic), design, development of the BT and, finally, assessment ([Canet et al., 2016](#)).

In order to foster the student's personal, academic and professional growth, the BT must be focused on either research, intervention or innovation in a specific professional field ([ANECA, 2009](#)). The nursing BT, in particular, is defined as a professionally-orientated thesis that integrates and consolidates the knowledge acquired by the student during the degree ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)). There has been some criticism regarding the attempts to unify the BT into a single type, since this would inevitably limit the research scope of some of topics, and would thus rob them of part of their value ([Sánchez et al., 2015](#)). Regardless of the type of BT, the student must be able to demonstrate a mastery of the acquired skills by developing a scientific or professional report and delivering an oral presentation on it in public ([Meneses et al., 2012](#)). The student is usually allowed to choose the topic they wish to develop ([Meneses, 2011](#)). Freedom of choice of topic appears to further instil interest and commitment in the student ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#); [Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)).

The BT plays a crucial role in the development and acquisition of generic competencies because it allows for the transfer of knowledge to the nursing profession ([Lundgren and Robertsson, 2013](#)). This view is corroborated by the students, who view the BT as substantive preparation for their future profession and as a way to work autonomously ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#); [Lundgren and Robertsson, 2013](#)). This, in turn, entails the deployment of skills in information search and management, a critical point of view and self-criticism, clinical

reasoning, initiative and a decision-making capacity ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)), which all promote the development of deep versus superficial thinking ([Roca et al., 2016a](#)). Due to their relevance, the competencies developed in the BT must have first been taught in the learning process, not only in the BT ([Rullan et al., 2010](#)).

In addition, academic supervising during the development of the BT is essential to encourage empowerment and new perspectives of self-regulation and self-determination for the students' training and professional practice ([Lobato and Ilvento, 2013](#)). Academic supervision is defined as accompanying, supporting and guiding the student during the process of developing and learning both professional and personal competencies ([Lobato and Guerra, 2014](#)). Supervision entails establishing communication between supervisor and student on questions such as the scientific domain and stimulating positive attitudes towards the search for, and pleasure of scientific knowledge ([García, 2008](#)). Academic supervising, therefore, is a way to organise and achieve learning processes. The fact that academic supervision of the BT tends to be more open and generalist ([Ferrer et al., 2013](#)) than postgraduate supervising gives rise to confusion among academic supervisors ([Baker et al., 2014](#); [Feather et al., 2013](#)). Moreover, this may create further uncertainty, since these supervisors are not always experts in the subject matter they have been assigned to supervise ([Canet and Violant, 2014](#)).

The academic supervisor advises and facilitates resources during the development of the BT. As such, unlike the lecturers on the thesis committee, who can only assess specific competencies at a given moment, the supervisor has an overall picture of both the process and the finished work ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#)). However, supervisors complain of having insufficient time to prepare and carry out the supervision as well as achieving sufficient student involvement ([Fuertes and Balaguer, 2012](#)). From the students' perspective, the scientific dialogue between them and their supervisor generates a high degree of confidence and is a source of inspiration ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#)). The rapport between student and supervisor, which promotes a climate of mutual trust, is viewed as an essential condition to achieve a significant learning outcome for the student ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)).

Assessment should be on-going across the entire learning process of the BT; as such it is necessary to relate the assessment process to said process ([Mateo et al., 2009](#)). The assessment of the BT must be based on the evaluation and development of competencies as well as on the recognition of the student's on-site and distance coursework. A range of evaluative techniques should be used with the active participation of the students ([Ibarra and Rodríguez, 2010](#)). The BT is crucial as a process and a product ([Rekalde, 2011](#)), which both demand the establishment of qualificative criteria. Since evaluation of competency is based on performance, there is a need for indicators, particularly descriptors that foster an objective and accurate assessment. Therefore, it is essential to have tools to evaluate competencies, as much for the complexity of their evaluation as for the participation of different lecturers (supervisors and members of the thesis committee) in the different processes ([Canet et al., 2016](#)). Specific tools need to be adapted to each course in the form of rubrics ([Rullan et al., 2010](#)). The BT is assessed mainly by the academic supervisor and the thesis committee. The supervisor decides whether the work fulfils minimum quality criteria, and submits a report to the thesis committee so that the student can proceed to the defence ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)). The thesis committee assesses both the thesis and its defence (delivery, ability to respond and reasoning) ([Rodríguez et al., 2015](#)).

It is also important to note that the BT involves a higher proportion of autonomous work than that of any of the other subjects. This perception, shared by students and lecturers alike ([Feather et al., 2013](#)), causes anxiety in the student carrying out the BT ([Lundgren and Halvarsson, 2009](#)). Another cause for anxiety is the knowledge that student must acquire the credits of BT in order to graduate ([Canet et al., 2016](#)).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6846662>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6846662>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)