

**What was the experience of undergraduate
disability and developmental education students
undertaking
a short-term international
Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement?**

Margaret (Peggy) Josephine Essl

BA University of Maryland 1991

GradDipBus University of South Australia 2001

Disability and Community Inclusion Unit

College of Nursing and Health Sciences

Flinders University

Adelaide, Australia

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Supervisors:

Dr Michelle Bellon

Assoc Prof Caroline Ellison

Declaration

I certify this work does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

Date: 24/07/17

Margaret (Peggy) Josephine Essl

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Abstract

In Australia, most universities have an internationalised curriculum with international Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placements a common means to increase students' cultural competence, increase their generic employability skills and bridge the gap between theory and practice. As Australia has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world, allied health professionals need to be able to work with diverse clients, which requires advanced levels of multicultural awareness. This current study aimed to explore the experiences of Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education (BDDE) undergraduate students who undertook a three-week international WIL placement in Brunei Darussalam in 2015. In particular, it examines the students' perspectives of the value of the international WIL placement as well as the impact the experience had on their personal and professional growth.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with five students who went on the international WIL placement to Brunei Darussalam. Transcripts were imported into NVivo 10 and analysis was conducted using a thematic and iterative qualitative approach compatible with phenomenology. Three major themes exploring student experiences emerged, including 'valued experiences', 'cultural dissonance' and 'personal and professional growth'. In addition, five themes were identified illustrating student expectations, including 'difficult to define', 'culturally confronting', 'provision and funding of disability services', 'environmental factors' and 'overall placement experience'. Finally, five student recommendations were revealed, 'comprehensive pre-departure sessions', 'living environment', 'quality university supervision', 'inherent student qualities that influence/enhance the experience' and 'advice to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement'.

Indicative findings suggest the international WIL placement had a valuable and positive impact on the students, increasing their cultural competence and assisted with their personal and professional growth. Additionally, the findings provide information on what makes international WIL placements successful and what promotes optimal learning. These include the need for

international WIL placements to be thoroughly planned and well supervised and the need to ensure students have adequate living arrangements in the host country and for students to be open-minded, flexible and non-judgemental.

Chapter 1

Context and aims of the study

1.1 Introduction

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an, 'umbrella term used to describe a range of approaches that integrate theory with practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum,' (Patrick et al., 2008, p. iv). Historically, WIL involves placing a university student within a workplace where the student's development and learning outcomes are supervised and evaluated by the university with the workplace's input (Patrick et al., 2008). Presently, simulation is emerging as a viable surrogate or added feature to WIL (Smith, Ferns & Russell, 2014). WIL is known by many different names throughout the world, including: practicum; placement; internship; work experience; study abroad; student exchange; international student mobility; and learning abroad. However, in this study, the term WIL is used for consistency and, where appropriate, international WIL.

'The availability of learning abroad programs can influence university and program choice, indicating the importance students now place on international learning opportunities as part of their overall higher education experience,' (Potts, 2016, p. 6). Higher education prioritises student engagement (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2010) because of its link to student satisfaction and retention (Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), 2009). Additionally, one of the recommendations to come out of The Bradley Review (Bradley et al., 2008) was that universities should be assessed by their capacity to provide, 'students with a stimulating and rewarding higher education experience,' (p. 10). Studies have demonstrated that WIL encourages student engagement with their learning and bolsters their opinion of their university experience (Patrick et al., 2008; Graduate Employability Skills, 2007). Equally, universities are being encouraged to offer WIL programs because, 'WIL has provided universities with an opportunity to offer a better product that students will appreciate as a pay-off for their investment,' (Abeysekera, p. 7, 2006). As such, WIL programs in Australia have

become an essential component of higher education internationalisation strategies (Adams, Banks, & Olsen, 2011).

As WIL plays a key role in bridging ‘theory to practice’, student demand for it is high. Many students, ‘recognise the opportunity [that WIL] provides to develop, apply and contextualise what they are learning – give life to theory and reinforce teaching practice,’ (*National WIL Strategy*, 2015, p. 1). Many graduates attribute their ability to get a job to the practical experience they acquired while undertaking WIL (*National WIL Strategy*, 2015). A 2007 Australian report entitled *Graduate employability skills* (Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007), found that WIL is instrumental in producing graduates who are work ready. WIL assists students by building their workplace confidence (Billet, 2011) and by providing them with a clearer understanding of the nature and standard of the skills required in their industry (Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010). Some of the documented generic employability skills that WIL assists students in developing include the ability to work in teams, to problem solve, to communicate effectively and to act professionally (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011).

International WIL provides further benefits to students and the longer the duration of the program, the more likely it will increase a student’s academic, personal and cultural growth (Dwyer, 2004). Notably, even short programs can have a powerful and lasting impact on students (Dwyer, 2004). The length of time a student spends on an international WIL placement is not as important as whether a student has the experience (*National Survey of Student Engagement*, 2007). There is evidence that international WIL promotes creative thinking (Lee, Therriault, & Linderholm, 2012), helps develop intercultural competence (Salisbury & Pascarella, 2013) and helps students gain an understanding of complex global issues (Stebbleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2015). The Kilgo, Ezell and Pascarella (2014) study found that international WIL students increased their intercultural effectiveness and their openness to diversity. Other results indicate that international WIL students develop, ‘key personal characteristics such as, tolerance, (also described as open-mindedness, acceptance

of others), creativity, initiative, the ability, 'to take on responsibility,' empathy, respect, being informed and humanity,' (Crossman & Clarke, 2009, p. 608). Students believe that undertaking an international WIL placement contributes to gaining employment after graduation (Potts, 2015) and the majority of students in the Potts (2015) study attributed their international WIL placement to increasing their motivation and enthusiasm for their chosen career. Undertaking an international WIL placement is one way for university students to increase their cultural understanding, achieve work-readiness, develop graduate attributes and increase their generic employability skills (Tan, Flavell, Jordan, & Ferns, 2016). Many Australian students are electing to undertake their WIL placement overseas due to the development of skills and abilities that it promotes (Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010).

It is asserted that Australia's population is one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) in the world with 40 per cent of its population comprised of immigrants of whom 15 per cent speak a language other than English at home (*CHCDIV001: Cultural diversity in Australia*, 2017). As such, professionals are increasingly finding themselves working with clients from diverse backgrounds who require advanced levels of multicultural awareness and cultural competency. Flinders University acknowledges that graduates will be entering a globalised workforce and most likely will work in multinational teams in various locations (*Flinders University*, 2017). To ensure graduates are workforce ready, Flinders University (2017) has an internationalised curriculum which it defines as, 'a curriculum with an international orientation in content and/or form, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic and/or foreign [international] students,' (adapted from Crowther, Joris, Otten, Nilsson, Teekens, & Wächter, 2000).

Over the years, numerous research studies of students undertaking WIL placements overseas have been published. The overwhelming majority of these studies involve education, social work, nursing or health sciences students. To date, as far as it can be ascertained by the researcher in this current study, there has not been any research conducted on students

undertaking disability studies participating in disability specific international WIL placements. In large part, this may be due to the relatively small number of students enrolled in disability studies courses at university level worldwide. However, the cost associated with travelling overseas, the potential language barriers and the paucity of established relationships with international disability service organisations who are equipped to provide suitable WIL placements may also be contributing barriers.

At Flinders University, the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit offers a number of programs, including the Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education (BDDE), three double degrees in Education and Disability Studies, a Graduate Certificate in Disability Studies, a Master of Disability Policy and Practice (MDPP), a Bachelor of Psychology with a major in Disability, a Bachelor of Behavioural Science with a major in Disability, a Bachelor of Health Science with a major in Disability and a double degree in Health Science Preregistration Nursing with a major in disability. All the Flinders Bachelor programs engaging in majors or double degrees with disability have at least 80 hours of core WIL placement topic requirements. The amount of WIL placement hours each student is required to complete in the disability studies degrees is a strength of the program. For example, the BDDE curriculum includes a minimum of 535 hours of WIL that necessitates students demonstrating the development of scaffolded skills in practice beginning in second year. The Master of Disability Policy and Practice curriculum provides the option for students to take between 150 and 250 hours of WIL placements as electives. Graduates of the BDDE, double degrees in Education and Disability and the MDPP are known /can register as 'Developmental Educators'.

The professional association that represents and advocates nationally for Developmental Educators is Developmental Educators Australia Inc (DEAI) which was formed in 2009. In 2011, Developmental Educators were recognised as Allied Health Professionals by the South Australian Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (Determination 5, 2011) and in 2016 Developmental Educators were also recognised under Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). However, this government and NDIS recognition only pertains to

graduates of the programs that are recognised and/or are eligible for full membership by the DEAI. Currently, Flinders University is the only program to have sought this recognition.

Over the past several years, the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit at Flinders has seen the numbers of their international undergraduate and master students increase. This is largely due to the development of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). 'The Convention aims to enhance opportunities for people with disability to participate in all aspects of social and political life including access to employment, education, health care, information, justice, public transport and the built environment,' (*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)*, 2017). At the time of undertaking this current study, some 118 countries had acknowledged the human rights of people living with disability by ratifying the convention. However, many countries are experiencing the challenge of not having an adequately or appropriately educated work force to effectuate the desired improvements. To assist with the necessary education, the Australia Awards Scholarships program, which is funded and supported by the Australian Government Aid Programs, provides support to individuals from eligible countries to come to Australia to undertake studies specifically around inclusive disability supports and services. At Flinders University, over 80 individuals in the period 2007-2017 came from all over the world to undertake the BDDE and the Master of Disability Policy and Practice. This has led to the development of an extensive and active international and domestic alumni network within the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit.

This alumni network of supportive professionals, based mainly in South East Asia, provides a unique opportunity to develop collaborative and reciprocal ongoing activities. One of these activities has been the development of opportunities for BDDE students and those undertaking majors and double degrees, to undertake international WIL placements. This opportunity was made further accessible to students with the introduction of the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan funding in 2014 (*About the New Colombo Plan*, 2017). This funding is in line with the Australian Government's desire to encourage the understanding and fellowship

between people and nations that lead to close, productive and on-going relations in the Indo-Pacific region. It is anticipated that the networks created from these activities will become a driving force in Australia's future prosperity (*About the New Colombo Plan*, 2017). While there had been individual students who, through their existing overseas connections and relationships, engaged in international WIL placements, it was a minimal part of the BDDE until 2015, when the Australian Government and Flinders University began actively and strongly promoting and supporting international WIL.

In 2015, the Flinders University Disability and Community and Inclusion Unit, with support from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) New Colombo Scholarship Program, a signature initiative of the Australian Government to support young Australians to study and undertake internships within the Indo-Pacific region, organised and supervised three international WIL placements. The international WIL placements took place in Jakarta, Indonesia, in Singapore, and in Brunei Darussalam. These placements provided an opportunity to examine the experiences and impact of international WIL on BDDE students and influence best practice in international WIL design.

1.2 Research aims

The aim of this current study was to explore the experiences of undergraduate students studying disability and developmental education in a three-week international student mobility placement in Brunei Darussalam in 2015. Evaluating and understanding student perspectives of the value of international WIL in the disability sector and impact on their professional and personal development and on their development of competencies and personal growth is crucial for the improvement and sustainability of such opportunities for future students.

1.3 Structure of the dissertation

The following chapters are included in this dissertation:

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature on international WIL placements. The chapter describes the different terms used to describe WIL. A table is provided at Appendix 1 to provide a synopsis of the articles reviewed. The chapter concludes by highlighting the gap in knowledge that exists given the identified lack of any published literature about international WIL placement experiences of students undertaking a disability-specific program of study.

Chapter 3: Methods

Chapter 3 describes the research design, the methods, ethical considerations, and processes used for data collection and data analysis and identifies the research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

Chapter 4 presents a synopsis of the demographic background of the participants. Through extracts from the interviews, emergent themes and subthemes related to the research questions are described and illustrated.

Chapter 5: Discussion and conclusion

Chapter 5 presents a discussion on the findings linking the experiences of the participants to previous literature. Implications for practice and recommendations for further research are identified and conclusions made.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relating to international Work Integrated Learning (WIL) from various countries and disciplines. A traditional literature review was undertaken in order to provide a comprehensive and objective analysis and to identify the existing patterns and gaps in current quantitative and qualitative literature involving WIL (Rozas & Klein, 2010). The search was undertaken using the Findit@Flinders search engine to search for online journals and articles.

Many terms are used throughout the world to describe international WIL. Some of these terms are: study abroad; global immersion; international placements; international clinical placements; short-term international placements; international fieldwork placements; international mobility; overseas placements; international internship experiences; and international work integrated learning practica. Terminology varies from country to country, between disciplines, and it changes over time. Consequently, there is no common definitive definition for any of the terms. Some of the terms relate more to students spending an entire semester or longer abroad while others relate more to students spending a shorter time overseas, often only two to three weeks. Some are more likely to be used when a student is studying at a foreign university as opposed to volunteering in a foreign organisation. However, what all the terms hold common is that they relate to students participating in a practical, real-life experience in an overseas organisation for a set length of time.

2.2 Research in international WIL

Findit@Flinders searches 385 databases and the search was conducted using the following search terms: cultural immersion; global experience; international experience; international immersion; international placement; international practicum; mobility placement; and study

abroad. 27 studies relevant to the topic of international WIL were identified and are presented in Appendix 1. The research reviewed on this topic spans 2003 – 2016.

The overwhelming majority of studies reviewed (21/27) involved nursing/midwifery and or allied health/health professional students undertaking international WIL (Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, & Astle, 2013; Briscoe, 2013; Browne, Fetherston, & Medigovich, 2015; Charles et al., 2014; Critchley et al., 2009; DeDee & Stewart, 2003; Diesal, Ercole, & Taliaferro, 2013; Evanson & Zust, 2006; Greatrex-White, 2008; Harrowing, Gregory, O'Sullivan, Lee, & Doolittle, 2012; Johns & Thompson, 2010; Jones, Neubrandner, & Huff, 2012; Graham, Hill, Reynolds, & Parry, 2013; Levine, 2009; Murray, 2015; Peiying, Goddard, Gribble, & Pickard, 2012; Puri, Kaddoura, & Dominick, 2013; Read, 2011; Smith & Curry, 2011; Smith-Miller, Leak, Harlan, Dieckmann, & Sherwood, 2010; Tuckett & Crompton, 2013). Three studies comprised education students (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007; Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013; Kaerney, Perkins & Maakrun, 2014). The remaining three studies involved other stakeholders or mixed undergraduate students (Crossman & Clarke, 2009; Parsons, 2010; Stebleton, Soria & Cherney, 2013).

A variety of methodological approaches were employed to explore the experiences of students who undertook international WIL placements. Most of the articles reviewed used qualitative research methods, fewer used mixed methods and two used quantitative methods. Using qualitative methodologies enabled the researchers to examine the lived experiences and perceived impact of the international WIL both over the short and long term. For example, Graham et al. (2014), Tuckett and Crompton (2013), Greatrex-White (2008), and Murray (2015), using narrative methods, provided an intimate description of the students' perspective of their lived experience in relation to their experience abroad. Others looked at the longer-term impact of the international experience on the student's personal and professional lives and sought to determine if there was a change in the students' cultural attitudes post experience (Evanson & Zust, 2006; Parsons, 2010; Maynes et al., 2013; Levine, 2009; Puri et al., 2013).

A number of studies employed a mixed-method approach allowing them to sample larger numbers of participants (Briscoe, 2013; Critchley et al., 2009; Peiying et al., 2012; Read, 2011; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). The qualitative component of these studies sought to describe how or if students undertaking international experiences changed their cultural attitudes and increased their cultural sensitivity and competency (Peiying et al., 2012; Jones, Neubrandner, & Huff, 2012; Briscoe, 2013; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). There were only two quantitative studies. Stebleton, Soria and Cherney (2013) surveyed 287,498 undergraduate students from 12 universities using 'The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU)' survey, which captures information about student engagement in pursuits, both within and outside the class, that impact student learning and positive educational outcomes, in order to examine how different kinds of international experiences may improve global competencies in students. The Diesel, Ercole and Taliaferro (2013) study was much smaller in scale and explored if short-term international experiences had a favourable impact on the attitudes, beliefs and knowledge retention of 33 nursing students using surveys at three points in time.

While there is an emerging body of peer reviewed published literature on the international student mobility experiences of students from across the world, the majority of the international student experiences reviewed are those of students travelling from developed countries to developing countries. For example, Australian students travelled to Vietnam (Graham et al., 2014), India or China (Peiying et al., 2012), Kenya (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014), and Cambodia (Tuckett & Crompton, 2013). North American (which includes US and Canada) students travelled to Ecuador (Smith & Curry, 2011; Jones et al., 2012), Guatemala (Evanson & Zust, 2006; Johns & Thompson 2009; Smith-Miller et al., 2010), Swaziland (Murray 2015), Morocco (Puri et al., 2013), Cameroon (Diesel, Ercole, & Taliaferro, 2013), Kenya (Maynes et al., 2013), Zambia (Afriyie Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, & Astle, 2013), Malawi (Harrowing et al., 2012), and to various European countries (Critchley et al., 2009). EU students travelled to the UK, the United States, Canada and Guatemala (Briscoe, 2013).

There appear to be numerous factors which lead to developing countries being the destination of choice. Students from developed countries may travel to those less developed countries based on their region and with consideration given to accessibility and cost (Browne, Fetherston, & Medigovich, 2015; Read, 2011). The literature suggests issues of social justice may also play a part in the selection of developing countries as destinations (Evanson and Zust, 2006; Maynes et al., 2013). Developing countries provide a unique and appreciable cultural contrast (Critchley et al., 2009; Smith & Curry, 2011) for students raised in developed countries and, 'travel to developing countries was significantly more effective in bringing about change than travel to developed countries,' (Parsons, 2010, p. 330).

2.3 Developing cultural competency

Although research on the impact of international WIL on students is a rather recent phenomenon, most of the studies reviewed have reported finding students increase their level of cultural competency or cultural sensitivity by undertaking an international WIL placement. For conceptual clarity, cultural sensitivity, as defined by Burchum (2002), is a fundamental element of cultural competency, which is a more extensive concept. The characteristics of cultural competence include 'cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural understanding, cultural sensitivity and cultural skill,' (Burchum, 2002, p. 5) and it can best be described as a process that constantly evolves and expands over time (Burchum, 2002). The foundation of cultural competence is built upon appreciating the effect of culture and health and being able to integrate it into providing high quality and cost effective care for patients (AACN, 2008 as cited in Johns & Thompson, 2010). Contemporary leadership literature describes global competency as encompassing, 'empathy, open-mindedness, initiative, flexibility, intercultural sensitivity, communication, extraversion, agreeableness, cooperation, openness, inquisitiveness, tolerance, and self-awareness,' (Bird, 2008, cited in Crossman & Clarke, 2009, p. 602).

The study by Peiying, Goddard, Gribble, and Pickard (2012), endorses the usefulness of international placements in the advance of cultural sensitivity in students. This is accomplished

through five main avenues: 'increased vigilance and adaptation to environment; uncertainty and anticipation; grappling with supremacy; recognising and appreciating differences; and cultural immersion and development,' (Peiying et al., 2012, p. 61).

Results from the Tuckett and Crompton (2013) international WIL study indicate the students' life perspectives were broadened by providing them with first-hand knowledge of another country with a different culture and whereby they learned about and acknowledged the importance of culturally sensitive communication. Levine (2009) reported that the international experience assisted students with appreciating diversity in their communities at home and students learned to become comfortable working with people who had a different way of doing things.

Charles et al. (2014) stated that the students' development of cultural understanding and competence comes through the discomfort they feel by being outside their comfort zone while immersed in another culture. Murray (2015) noted the students' cultural understanding and awareness is increased through the stress and cultural dissonance they experience while on an overseas study experience.

The student journals in the Jones, Neubrandner and Huff (2012) study reveal a significant change in the cultural attitudes of the students. 'Students were forced to examine their own value systems as they came face-to-face with the disparity of resources in the third world.' (p. 8) and the students learned that all humans are connected in spite of cultural differences.

In her study on nursing students studying abroad, Greatrex-White (2007) reported a twofold benefit. The students not only cultivated an awareness of the host culture but they also cultivated an awareness of their own culture and the structures and practices ingrained in it (Greatrex-White, 2007). The analysis of student diary exemplars by Greatrex-White (2008) indicated that international WIL assists students by increasing their awareness of similarities and differences in cultures, increasing their sensitivity to others and helping them to develop cultural competence. In their study of nursing students undertaking a five-week immersion

experience in India, Charles et al. (2014) found that students improved their cultural awareness by challenging their own biases and cultural beliefs while overseas.

While different studies attribute students' increase in cultural competency to somewhat different origins, the research confirms that students on international WIL placements undergo a transformative change in their thought processes regarding cultural differences when they confront their own cultural beliefs and biases when exposed cultures profoundly different from their own (Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012).

2.4 Personal and professional development

It is widely acknowledged that short-term, high quality international WIL can positively influence personal growth and professional competencies (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014). One of the students in the Kearney, Perkins, and Maakrun (2014) study commented, 'to experience another way of life, to live with families and experience part of their day to day life changed my perspective on my own life,' (p. 234). The students' confidence and professionalism grew by overcoming challenging experiences and by experiencing the daily hardships of living in the community (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014). Another student stated that the international WIL experience, 'has changed us and we each agree that what has changed is almost impossible to describe; however, the effects of the change are visible for all to see and they have all been to make us better teachers and better people,' (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014, p. 232).

When interviewing students four years after their return from an international experience, Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2013) reported that the students had an obvious sense of respect for people from different cultures and they showed this through their tone and descriptions provided in their interviews. In their study of 2,000 student teachers over a 30-year period, Stachowski and Sparks (2007), discovered that students, through building their self-confidence, increasing their ability to adapt and acquiring new teaching practices, ideas and beliefs while overseas made them open to experiencing personal and professional growth.

Maynes, Allison and Julien-Schultz (2013), noted that the, 'emotive reflections of participants shortly after ... international practica were enriched by more mature and philosophical beliefs and committed professional practices over time,' (p. 161).

Greatrex-White (2008) discovered students not only developed an awareness of the host culture but, equally as important, they developed an awareness of the deeply embedded structures and practices in their own culture. The worldviews of nursing students in the Levine (2009) study expanded greatly during an international placement because the students had to contend with social class issues as well as issues of gender bias while also confronting issues of poverty and powerlessness.

In their study of nursing students who travelled to Guatemala, Smith-Miller et al. (2010) noted that witnessing the abject poverty there had a profound impact on the students. It led some students to have, 'a new compassion for, rather than a judgment of, the families who appear to abandon their relatives in orphanages and long-term care facilities because of permanent disabilities, mental illness, or human immunodeficiency status,' (Smith-Miller et al., 2010, p. 23). Likewise, the Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2013) study found that even four years after their international WIL experience, the students', 'sense of respect for other people of vastly different life circumstances is evident in the tone, substance and examples they provided in interviews,' (p. 160).

These findings highlight the value of international WIL and the positive and transformative impact it has on students. Student teachers described major outcomes in their personal and professional growth in the Stachowski and Sparks (2007) study of over 2000 students. Some of the categories that emerged in relation to personal growth were: 'improved relationships with people; stepping out their comfort zones; increased self-awareness; increased understanding of other cultures; ... growth in confidence; [and] greater appreciation of multiple perspectives,' (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007, p. 8) and in relation to professional growth some of the categories that emerged in the students were: an awareness of their strengths and

weaknesses; an increase in their marketable skills to do undertaking the unique experience; and their capacity for working with a diverse range of colleagues (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007).

2.5 Student perceptions of international WIL placements

Students reported their international WIL experiences to be measurably positive and life changing using both qualitative and quantitative measures. One quantitative measure is the International Education Survey (IES) that uses a four-dimension scale developed by Zorn (1996): professional role; international perspective; personal development; and intellectual development. Smith and Curry (2011) used the IES to measure the long-term effects of an international experience undertaken by nursing students in Ecuador. They reported gains in all four IES dimensions. Some of the participants made the following declarations about their transformative experience: 'It was the most amazing experience that I have had in my life to date;' 'The experience was an eye-opener to the diversity outside my comfort zone of the US;' 'It definitely enhanced my effectiveness, affected my progress and contributed to my level of self-confidence;' and 'It was an enlightening experience,' (Smith & Curry, 2011, p. 20).

Another study undertaken in 2003 by DeDee and Stewart, also used the IES to examine the effect international study had on nursing alumni who had completed the same two-week international study tour within the past five years. Like Smith and Curry (2011) their findings showed a significant impact in all four IES dimensions and students commented verbally and in writing that their experience was, 'positive and considerably life changing,' (DeDee & Stewart, 2003, p. 242). These results indicate how placement experiences can be quantitatively measured. However, only measuring four possible domains limits the range of experiences reported.

Nursing students who participated in the seven-school, five-country international student exchange project studied by Critchley et al. (2009), reported the experience as, 'positive, unique, priceless, and unforgettable,' (Critchley et al., 2009, p. 73). Furthermore, the students found the experience aided their own personal and professional development while opening

their minds to cultural differences (Critchley et al., 2009, p. 73). Similarly, students in the Johns and Thompson (2010) study reported that on their return home their worldview was altered by the experience. One student advised, 'I am changed because my perception has changed,' and another related, 'I would not trade this trip and my experience for all the spring break flings,' (Johns & Thompson, 2010, p. 347).

The Kearney, Perkins, and Maakrun (2014) study looked at the effect a short-term, cross-cultural, immersion placement experience to Kenya had on Australian pre-service teachers. One student described the experience as being a significant life changing one and another commented that it, 'changed us and we each agree that what has changed is almost impossible to describe; however the effects of this change are visible for all to see and they have made us better teachers and better people,' (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014, p. 232).

2.6 Requirements necessary for successful international WIL placements

A number of the studies have found various requirements are necessary for students to have successful and positive international mobility experiences (Briscoe, 2013; Gonsalvez, 2013; Graham et al., 2014). These requirements have been identified as being well organised and clearly linked to academic content (Gonsalvez, 2013); student safety and planning (Graham et al., 2014); staff/student ratios (Graham et al., 2014); and fostering cultural safety (Briscoe 2013). Additionally, a rewarding placement will ensure local peers engage with the students and the students are well supervised and closely monitored (Gonsalvez, 2013).

Appropriate safety and contingency planning needs to include, 'international travel advice, occupational and safety standards and awareness of potential local hazards (i.e. traffic),' (Graham et al., 2014, p. 4). In order to provide a positive learning experience, due consideration needs to be given to staff/student ratios and the potential need for interpreters while ensuring processes are in place to support debrief sessions, student reflections and the resolution of any interpersonal group issues (Graham et al., 2014).

For students to develop cultural sensitivity while undertaking an overseas placement, Briscoe (2013) stresses the importance of leaders fostering a safe place for critical student reflection to occur in order to give the students the best of chance transforming their way of thinking. Similarly, in the Peiying et al. (2012) study, student guided learning journals proved essential to facilitate reflections of experiences that identified the students changing attitudes and behaviours which precede development of cultural competency. Because student journals provide a strong indicator of their thoughts and attitudes related to culture, Jones, Neubrandner, and Huff (2012) suggest, 'free flow,' student journaling should be encouraged along with holding student focus groups in order for the students to share their reflective thoughts and feelings about their experience. Afrivie-Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, and Astle (2013) conclude that expectations are what shapes student learning, engagement is what assists their learning, and critical reflection is what enriches their learning.

Levine (2009) stresses the importance of ensuring that faculty staff members who travel with the students are experienced and comfortable working and living overseas in situations that are vastly different from their own. Without this, 'students only have each other, therefore lacking the coordination and leadership that can take the immersion experience to the very depths and core of living (life),' (Levine, 2009, p. 167). A strong system of student support can be nurtured by providing facilitated learning activities, by having the students learn in pairs, and by having students and instructors share common living space and meals (Afrivie-Asenso, Reimer-Kirkham, and Astle, 2013).

Stachowski and Sparks (2007) point to the importance of preparing student teachers for the overseas school setting and community which they are entering. They recommend that students be provided with a working knowledge of the host nation's educational system and with basic information about the host nation's social, economic, and cultural environment.

Furthermore, the international WIL experience should be structured and focused and students should have specific expectations and responsibilities including written reflection (Stachowski

& Sparks, 2007). Without these, there is a possibility that, 'deep meaning and important insights will be lost to superficial exposure to significant events, trends, values, and interactions in both school and community settings,' (Stachowski & Sparks, 2007, p. 10).

These findings substantiate the importance of adequate thought and preparation being the cornerstone of all successful international WIL experiences. Furthermore, as more university students undertake international WIL, it is imperative to learn what makes programs successful and what promotes optimal learning.

2.7 Issues/constraints with international placements

International WIL placements have numerous and unique challenges. They are time-consuming for students to undertake and not all higher education programs have the capacity to offer the option within their course structure (Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013). Often, the number of hours and weeks that students are required to undertake WIL makes the overseas option complex to arrange and implement (Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013). For courses that include clinical placements, the regulatory requirements create additional complexity (Read, 2011). Students are frequently concerned with their health and personal safety while travelling overseas (Read, 2011). Additionally, students are often reluctant to leave family and friends and are wary of living in a non-English speaking country if they have limited foreign language skills and limited knowledge of the culture (Read, 2011).

Cost is perhaps the most often cited barrier to participation in international WIL. For universities this includes funding issues with faculty salaries and related travel costs (Read, 2011) for those travelling with the students. For student participants this includes the direct cost of plane tickets, accommodation and living expenses while away but also includes the potential loss of income (Browne, Fetherston, & Medigovich, 2015) that students may sustain by not being able to work in their normal paid employment while overseas.

Moreover, there are also student liability issues that require consideration by the university (Read, 2011). Finally, an enormous amount of time and effort is required from university staff

to make the necessary arrangements for students to live and work overseas with additional planning and preparation required if the overseas destination has a risky or unstable political climate (Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013).

2.8 Value of international WIL placements for Australian higher education students

Australia is a multicultural country and one of most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) in the world (*CHCDIV001: Cultural diversity in Australia*, 2017). Forty per cent of Australia's population is made up of immigrants of whom 15 per cent speak a language other than English at home (*CHCDIV001: Cultural diversity in Australia*, 2017). Consequently, in order to provide safe, high quality care, it is important for allied health professionals to be able to respond appropriately to this cultural and linguistic diversity (Perry, Woodland & Brunero, 2015).

Training and educating health professionals in cultural competence is necessary in order to develop a culturally sensitive, congruent and responsive allied health workforce (Alexander, 2008). Therefore, globalisation and the increasing cultural diversity of the Australian population are posing new challenges for educators of allied health science, medical, nursing, education and other professionals. Students need exposure to being with and supporting clients from different cultures to enable them to provide optimal care to culturally diverse clients. International WIL placements afford them this opportunity.

The Levine (2009) study affirms the positive effects that occur in students when they live and learn in cultures outside their own with the effects being, 'depth of compassion, acceptance of differences, recognition of societal ills, and a willingness to take risks and promote change,' (p. 156). Additionally, by taking students out of their comfort zone, international WIL uncovers taken for granted beliefs, values and assumptions in regards to cultural diversity (Graetrex-White, 2008).

Culture does not shape the health care experiences of clients, rather, 'it is the extent to which they are stereotyped, rendered voiceless, silenced, not taken seriously, peripheralised,

homogenised, ignored, dehumanised, and ordered around,' (Meleis & Im 1999, cited in Reimer Kirkham, 2000, p. 352). Accordingly, 'Improving cultural competence in an increasingly multicultural world has become an ethical imperative,' (Smith-Miller et al., 2010, p. 18) and higher education institutions are increasingly using international WIL placements as a means of expanding cultural competence in students.

Additionally, undertaking international WIL can assist students in clarifying their future career direction. Tuckett and Crompton (2013) report that some nursing/midwifery students chose to participate in the international WIL experience because they desired to work for organisations such as Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières), Mercy Ships and Red Cross but some also identified community and rural nursing as a potential future career choice.

2.9 Gaps in international WIL research

Most of the published research is around the student experience of international WIL. What is lacking is confirmation of the student successes from the perspective of the supervisors travelling with the students, the universities supporting the WIL placements, and the international partners and communities in which the WIL took place (Browne, Fetherston, & Medigovich, 2015; Charles et al., 2014).

Some literature also questions the extent of the benefits derived from international WIL placements. The Harrowing et al. (2012) study reports only modest benefits were found and cautions that, 'a few weeks spent in another culture undoubtedly provide valuable insight into different realities, but it does not make one an expert on the lived experience of Africans, African Americans, Spanish speakers or immigrants to North America,' (p. 500). Further studies are needed to ascertain how long students retain their attitudinal and belief change and how they manifest in their future practice (Diesal, Ercole, & Taliaferro, 2013).

Notwithstanding, Levine (2009) interviewed participants three to 13 years post their international WIL placement and found that all the participants relayed stories of the continuing life-changing influences that their international WIL experience had on both their work practice

and personal lives. Examples cited by the participants of the Levine (2009) study included their, 'subsequent flexibility and ability to be creative and innovative with each client, ... knowing who they were and how it centered them in their provision of care to patients, ... [and their ability to perceive] each client as an individual with his or her own unique set of needs, each of whom deserved absolute respect and understanding,' (p. 166). Similarly, Maynes, Allison and Julien-Schultz (2013) found that even four years after the experience, students reported that aspects of their present-day lifestyles and career choices could be attributed to their international WIL experience.

Further research is required to analyse the cost versus benefit equation in order to decide the most effective ways students can gain a global outlook (Diesal, Ercole, & Taliaferro, 2013). Lastly, a comparative study with traditional local placements is warranted (Peiying, Goddard, Gribble, & Pickard, 2012).

Because there is no existing published literature about international WIL placement experiences of students undertaking a disability-specific program, this current study sought to establish if BDDE students report similar or contrasting experiences, around development of cultural understanding and personal and professional growth.

2.10 Research questions

The following research questions are addressed in the current study:

- What were the student's experiences of the international WIL placement?
- What were the student's expectations of the international WIL placement and were they met?
- What were the recommendations provided by the students for improving future international WIL placements and what advice would they give to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement?

2.11 Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature on international WIL placements. It began by describing what WIL is and the different terms used to describe it. The methodological approaches used in the studies were discussed and the importance of international WIL in higher education in Australia along with its benefits and possible drawbacks were presented. The chapter concluded with highlighting the gap in knowledge regarding the lack of any published literature about international WIL placement experiences of students undertaking a disability-specific program.

Chapter 3

Methods

3.1 Study design

This qualitative study used in-depth, face-to-face interviews in order to obtain a detailed individual narrative account regarding each participant's experience of undertaking an international Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement. Qualitative research is exploratory in nature and is oriented to developing a deep, 'understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of human lives and their social worlds,' (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002, p. 730). The complexity of the phenomenon must be studied holistically and comprehensively in order to understand it in context (Punch & Oancea, 2014) and to understand how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings and how their meaning influences their behaviour (Creswell, 2014; Finlay, 2012; Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, & Davidson, 2002).

A quantitative design was not considered to be relevant to this current study as quantitative research focuses on numbers (Neuman, 2014) by collecting and interpreting statistical information (Curtis & Drennen, 2013) and, given the small available sample, this was unlikely to uncover generalisable details regarding the benefits and challenges of international WIL for students undertaking disability-specific professional education programs. As this current study sought to describe the subjective nature of each participant's individual experience, the focus was on the words and meaning communicated by the participants, which is recognised as one of the strengths of qualitative research (Neuman, 2014).

This study was informed by the precepts of phenomenology to elucidate understanding about and make meaning of the lived experience of a number of Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education (BDDE) students who undertook an international WIL placement in Brunei Darussalam.

Phenomenology has become a major philosophy and research method used in allied health research (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). A phenomenological approach is conducive to understanding and illuminating the meaning of the lived experience (Grbich, 1999) and it was compatible with the research question in this current study in that it supported the individual and inquisitive nature of the experience of undertaking an international mobility placement.

The two main philosophical traditions of phenomenology that are used in qualitative research are the interpretive, or hermeneutic, approach and the descriptive, or eidetic, approach (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Both approaches share the epistemological foundation laid by the principal founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl a 20th century philosopher, but over time significant methodological differences have emerged between the two approaches (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015; van Manen, 2016). Each approach has its own philosophical underpinnings and assumptions that influence methodological decisions. Major dissimilarities between them exist around the researcher's focus, result and objective, and the roles that preconceptions and prior knowledge play (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Additional differences between the approaches relate to how the findings of the research are created and in how the findings are then employed to inform professional knowledge and practice (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

In the early 20th century, human phenomena were typically studied independently of the individuals experiencing the phenomenon. Over a period, phenomenology grew out of the disciplines of philosophy and psychology (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Descriptive, or eidetic, phenomenology is grounded in the works of Husserl who posited that individual subjective experiences have merit and should be researched because people's actions are influenced by what they perceive to be real (Husserl, 1982; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Furthermore, Husserl argued, because most people do not engage in self-reflection regarding their experiences, a scientific research approach is needed in order to uncover the essential components of the lived experiences of a designated group of people (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Husserl believed

that researchers must strip themselves of all previous expert knowledge, preconceptions and personal biases in order to seek the content of consciousness in a 'pure form,' (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Researchers undertaking descriptive phenomenology need to use, 'bracketing,' or, 'phenomenological epoché,' (Giorgi, 2008; Speziale & Carpenter, 2011; van Manen, 2016) to enable them to set aside personal knowledge, assumptions and ideas when listening to and reflecting on the participants' narratives. This allows the researcher to be closely connected with the phenomenon as it is, 'lived,' rather than as it is, 'envisaged,' (Merleau-Ponty 2012; van Manen 2016).

Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology is grounded in the works of another philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who was a student of Husserl (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Heidegger contested some of Husserl's assumptions around how phenomenology should conduct meaningful inquiry. Interpretive phenomenology allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of an experience (Van der Zalm & Bergum 2000; van Manen 2016). Rather than simply describing the core concepts and essences of a lived experience, Heidegger argued that meanings embedded within the experiences must be uncovered and, because these meanings are not always evident to the participants, they need to be extracted from the narratives by the researcher (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Heidegger held that the focus of phenomenological inquiry should be the relation of the individual to his 'lifeworld' a term used to express the idea that an individual's reality is shaped by the world they live in. Heidegger used another term: 'being-in-the-world,' to highlight that individuals cannot separate themselves from the world. Hermeneutics is not focused on what participants consciously know but on what they experience and what their narrative implies (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Accordingly, 'interpretive phenomenological research results in a detailed interpretation of the meanings and structures of a particular phenomenon as it is experienced first-hand,' (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015, p. 24).

An issue with some qualitative studies is that no clear statement of the philosophical foundations that guide the method is made in relation to the method chosen (Stubblefield &

Murray, 2002). Often research that is indeterminate in its purpose, structure and findings will result when a method is implemented without examining its philosophical basis (Lopez & Willis, 2004). In this current study, a phenomenological approach in the interpretive, or hermeneutic, tradition was chosen in order to illuminate each participant's subjective experience and to discover common themes in the participant's narratives (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995; Finlay, 2014).

3.2 Participant selection and recruitment

Participants were included in the current study if they:

- were Flinders University students who had participated in the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit's 2015 New Colombo Plan Mobility Program to Brunei Darussalam,
- were over 18 years old,
- were available for a face-to-face interview of approximately 60 minutes duration, and
- had sufficient English skills to respond to interview questions.

Exclusion criteria applied:

- none

Information about the study including the Letter of Introduction, Information Sheet and Consent Form (See Appendices 2-4) were emailed to all eight potential participants who met the inclusion criteria by the Principal Supervisor using the student's Flinders University email address. No direct contact with the researcher in this current study occurred at the recruitment stage. Interested participants indicated their willingness to participate by return email to the Principal Supervisor. At the time of the email, the Principal Supervisor had no affiliation or involvement with the students. Consequently, there was felt to be no conflict of interest or any other ethical issues as the students would not have felt compelled to respond to the request to participate but they could do so freely and without coercion. The Principal Supervisor then set-up a mutually convenient time for the researcher to interview the participant. The participant either emailed their signed Consent Form to the Principal Supervisor or brought it

with them to the interview and handed it to the researcher prior to interview. A total of six participants indicated their willingness to participate. However, one participant did not schedule or undertake an interview even after being sent numerous reminders by the Principal Supervisor. Five interviews in total were conducted, roughly in chronological sequence of response to request from potential participants. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with reference to the list of questions detailed in the Interview Guide (See Appendix 5).

3.3 Ethical considerations

The following steps were employed to ensure confidentiality and integrity of participants:

- To mitigate potential conflicts of interest between the researcher (who, at the time of the research investigation, was coordinating WIL placements for the Flinders University Disability and Community Inclusion Unit) and the participants, a student group with whom the researcher had no involvement in organising or supervising the placement was selected for this current study. The researcher was not involved in the running of the Brunei WIL placement or in the selection or evaluation of students who participated in that placement, which is under consideration in the current research. The researcher did not teach any of the topics the students undertook when the interviews took place. However, the possibility of a conflict of interest was disclosed to the participants (see Information Sheet and Consent Form, Appendices 3 and 4).
- To mitigate potential conflicts of interest between the Principal Supervisor, a lecturer in the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit who was teaching a first-semester topic, in which some of the potential participants were enrolled, and the participants, it was decided to postpone the Principal Supervisor's contact with potential participants until after the meeting of Exam Board at which final grades were agreed and finalised. This approach was felt to greatly lessen the chance of any real or perceived conflict of

interest occurring. However, the possibility of a conflict of interest was disclosed to the participants (see Information Sheet and Consent Form, Appendices 3 and 4).

- The minimal but potential chance of a conflict of interest between the Co-supervisor, Head of the Flinders University Disability and Community Inclusion Unit, who had no teaching or direct contact with potential participants during data collection period, and the participants was disclosed to the participants (see Information Sheet and Consent Form, Appendices 3 and 4).
- Permission to conduct the research was sought from the Heads of the relevant schools at Flinders University and letters were obtained from the Heads granting the researcher permission to contact the students.
- Informed consent was obtained from each participant (see Appendix 4).
- Participants were provided with the details of the study, including their right to decline to respond to any or all questions or ask for the interview to cease at any time without any explanation or consequence.
- The interview recordings were transcribed by a professional transcription individual. The professional transcriber signed a confidentiality agreement. The audio files were posted to the transcriber in a traceable, overnight express post envelope marked, 'Confidential.' Once transcribed, all audio files were deleted.
- The information regarding participants was treated with strictest confidence and all were de-identified through the transcriptions.
- Because the number of participants in this current study was relatively small and all participants were from an identifiable source, participants were informed that their anonymity could not be guaranteed (see Information Sheet and Consent Form, Appendices 4 and 5).
- Prior to data analysis being undertaken, participants were emailed copies of transcriptions of the interview in which they participated by the researcher and given the opportunity to amend or withdraw any of the data. A second signature from each

participant was obtained on their Consent Form after they viewed the transcriptions of the interview in which they participated, in order to confirm the individual participant's consent for the use of their transcription data in the current research investigation (see Information Sheet and Consent Form, Appendices 4 and 5).

- Research data were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office at the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit at Flinders University. Names and other identifying information were removed from the data and replaced with codes. Files connecting participant's names and codes were stored separately from the data. Computer files were password protected and stored on the secure Flinders University drive. Five years after publication of the dissertation, all transcripts will be shredded and computer files deleted.
- Participants, in case they felt distressed or upset during the interview, were provided with information detailing the free services available to them, including Lifeline and Flinders University Health, Counselling & Disability Services pamphlets along with being given Lifeline's 24-hour telephone support number.
- On completion of the interview, participants were reminded to contact the research team if they had any questions or concerns.

Ethics approval was obtained from Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Ethics Approval Number 7234, see Appendix 6).

A Modification of Ethics Approval was sought for a change of supervisor. Modification (No. 1) Approval Notice was obtained from Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix 7).

3.4 Data collection

Data were collected via semi-structured interviews which were roughly 45-60 minutes in duration. The student researcher interviewed all participants face-to-face in an office in the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit on site at Flinders University, except for one interview

which was undertaken, at the participant's request, via video call, due to scheduling difficulties. The questions that were used in the actual interviews with each participant in this current study were tested in a pilot interview with the Principal Supervisor. Questions and follow-up queries used to draw out comments are detailed in the Interview Guide (see Appendix 5). Prior to data analysis being undertaken, participants were emailed copies of their interview transcriptions by the student researcher and were given the opportunity to amend or withdraw any of the data from their transcripts.

3.5 Data analysis

Transcripts were imported into NVivo 10. Analysis was done using a thematic and iterative qualitative approach compatible with phenomenology. Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyse and describe patterns or themes that occur in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) looking for and identifying common threads that appear with individual interviews and across interview sets (DeSantis & Ugarriza, 2000). The iterative cycle of analysis is a field based approach where, after data is collected, it is transcribed, reflected on and interpreted for the sake of illuminating the phenomenon being studied (Grbich, 1999; Sarantakos, 2013). Reflexive iteration is a process where the researcher visits and revisits the data and correlates them with emerging understanding in order to gradually arrive at a more refined and focused understanding (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). 'The role of iteration in qualitative data analysis, not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a reflexive process, is key to sparking insight and developing meaning,' (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009, p. 76).

An approach informed by the tenets of phenomenology was used in this current study in order to make meaning of the lived experience of the interviewed students (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). The student researcher followed the processes of thematic analysis: 'familiarising with data, generating initial codes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report,' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). Performing the preliminary data analysis allowed the student researcher to become immersed in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2014) and thereby acquire a deeper understanding of its principles and meanings (Grbich, 1999). Nodes were

created in NVivo by the student researcher to highlight key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Each transcript was independently analysed by a supervisor in order to identify, discuss and reach consensus on the final themes and subthemes.

3.6 Rigour in qualitative research

The trustworthiness of a research study is paramount to evaluating its value (Lincoln & Guba, 1984). In qualitative research, due to the method selected and the point of view of the researcher, different researchers studying the same phenomenon are likely to produce different findings (de Laine, 1997; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Neuman, 2003). The rigour in this current study is derived from the works of Lincoln and Guba who proposed the following criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1984).

Credibility involves demonstrating that the results of the study are credible or believable from the participant's viewpoint. Since the aim of qualitative research is to understand and describe the phenomena as seen through the participant's eyes, it is only the participants who can truly judge the legitimacy of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1984). In order to promote confidence that the phenomena has been described accurately, researchers can employ various techniques to gauge the trustworthiness of their findings (Shenton, 2004). In this current study, to ensure the honesty of the participants, the student researcher used only willing participants who were advised there were no right or wrong answers and that they had the right to refuse to answer any question and/or withdraw from the study at any time (Shenton, 2004). Frequent debriefing sessions between the student researcher and her supervisors were held to develop ideas and interpretations and to acknowledge biases (Shenton, 2004). Thick description of the phenomenon was provided to detail the actual situation and context to enable the findings to, 'ring true,' (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba consider, 'member checks,' to be the most important element in strengthening a study's credibility. Accordingly, in this current study, the transcript of the relevant individual interview was emailed to the relevant participant to check

for accuracy of the content of the transcript from the point of view of that participant (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings could have meaning to another group or could be transferred to other contexts or settings (Byrne, 2001; Merriam, 2009). 'The qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by doing a thorough job of describing the research context and the assumptions that were central to the research,' (*Qualitative Validity*, 2017). In providing rich description of the research findings, the researcher sought to achieve transferability by supplying sufficient information for assessing the analysis of data (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010) and thereby allowing the reader to relate the findings to other contexts and settings (Shenton, 2004).

Dependability occurs when the steps and processes of the study are documented in detail, 'thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work, if not necessarily to gain the same results,' (Shenton, 2004, p. 71). Dependability can be achieved by describing the study's purpose, detailing the participant selection process, describing how data collection took place, noting how the data were analysed, advising how the findings were interpreted and documenting which techniques were used to determine the integrity of the data (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). All stages in the current research process have been clearly outlined in the study and the results were peer reviewed by both of the researcher's supervisors.

Confirmability is the qualitative researcher's equivalent concern to objectivity (Shenton, 2004). In order to evidence that the findings are the result of participants' experiences and ideas as opposed to the personality and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004), the researcher, 'must be reflective, maintaining a sense of awareness and openness to the study and unfolding results,' (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011, p. 4). A key component of achieving confirmability is for the researcher to disclose his or her own biases (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Consequently, the researcher declares that she has been actively involved in both organising and supervising students on international WIL placements as part of her work

role over the past several years. The researcher values and has a strong commitment toward international WIL. In addition to disclosing her biases, the researcher input a large number of direct participant quotations in the results section, Chapter 4, to contribute to the confirmability of the conclusions.

3.8 Summary

This chapter provided details of the methodological approach undertaken in this current study. It includes the method of data collection, thematic analysis, ethical concerns and study rigour. The results are detailed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from interviews with five students describing their experiences of a three-week Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement at a disability services organisation in Brunei Darussalam in 2015. Each research question is addressed and the key themes detailed. All names were changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The researcher has identified the participant to whom each quote pertains. The participants' quotations have been placed in italicised font and indented paragraphs throughout Chapter 4.

4.2 Participant information

In total, eight potential participants met the inclusion criteria for this current study. Six were Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education (BDDE) students and the other two were Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education/Bachelor of Education students. Six students indicated their willingness to participate, however one potential participant did not return contact or undertake an interview. Five interviews were conducted roughly in the chronological sequence of response to the invitation to participate. Although there were a limited number of participants, in a qualitative study of this nature, the richness of the data is more important than the number of participants. The participant sample included:

- Four females, one male
- All enrolled in the BDDE at Flinders University
- Age range 19 -21 years
- Four with previous overseas travel, one with no previous overseas travel

Participant demographic information is summarised in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Participant demographics

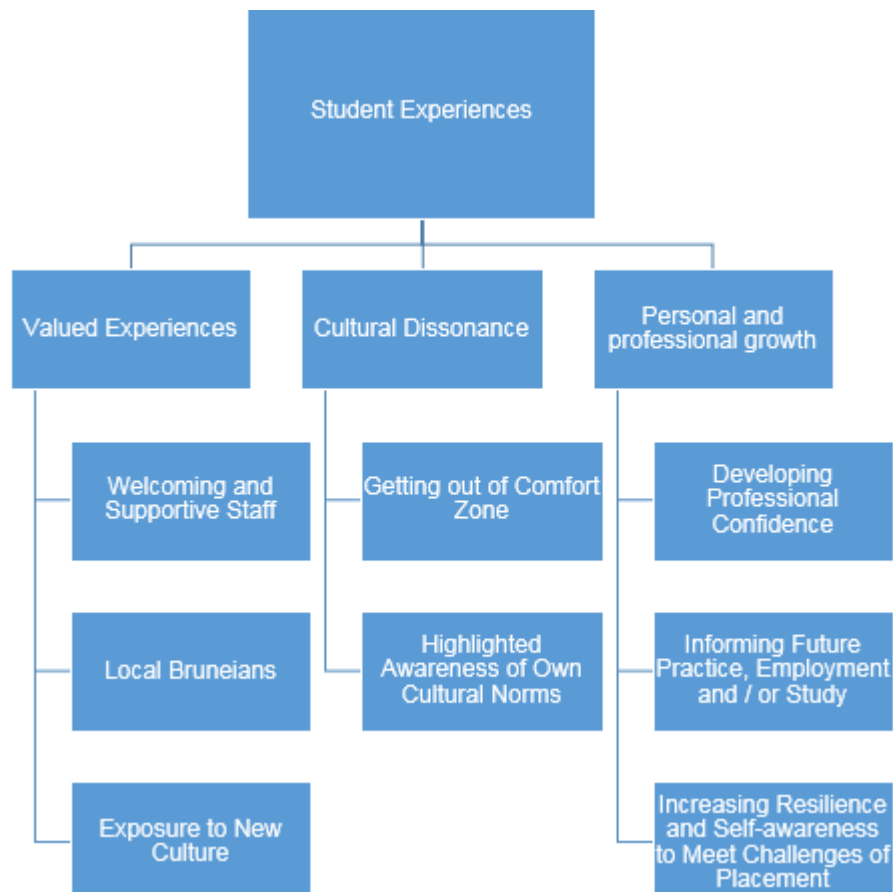
Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Degree	Travelled o/seas previously?
Amelia	F	19	BDDE	Yes
Bella	F	21	BDDE	No
Chris	M	21	BDDE	Yes
Dani	F	19	BDDE	Yes
Ella	F	19	BDDE	Yes

4.3 Research question 1:

What were students’ experiences of the international WIL placement?

Thematic analysis of the transcripts revealed three themes in respect to the participants’ experiences of the international WIL placement: (1) Valued experiences; (2) Cultural dissonance and (3) Personal and professional growth. Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the primary themes and their subthemes.

Figure 4.1 Student experiences: Overview of primary themes and subthemes



Theme 1: Valued experiences

The theme of valued experiences includes the subthemes: (1) Welcoming and supportive staff; (2) Local Bruneians; (3) Exposure to a new culture.

Subtheme 1: Welcoming and supportive staff

All participants described positive experiences with the staff from the disability services placement site. Participants appreciated the centre staff's ability to speak English, their friendly and open approach, their passion, encouragement to ask questions, the trust, and the opportunities they gave students on WIL placement to participate, learn and lead activities.

Everyone [in the centre] was really welcoming ... [and they] made you feel like you were at home. (Amelia)

No-one was uptight and it wasn't, 'you do this, this way and this way, not the other way,' ... one of the teachers let me run a speech therapy session, which I'd never had any experience doing. ... He said, 'You watch me. I'll give you the cards and you do it. I'm sure you'll do fine.' You know, that trust? ... If you made a mistake it was okay. I loved that attitude to everything. (Bella)

Chris described how the staff and the CEO of the centre warmly welcomed all the students on their arrival at the airport.

We were welcomed straightaway by the whole ... Brunei crew. ... It was quite a friendly and warm welcoming. ... It was quite beautiful and something that I'd never seen before; ... [the] combination of new environments and a nice welcoming atmosphere. ... [The staff were] very generous ... passionate and interested in ... [the] perspective of the students. (Chris)

Chris also showed particular admiration for the drive and the passion of the CEO of centre.

[The CEO was] ... very passionate, very driven and determined and just did what he needed to do and whatever it takes to support the development of people with autism. ... That was something that I really loved and it really kind of blew me away ... and I've never forgotten about it. ... If everyone had that level of drive and passion then it'd be awesome, wouldn't it? (Chris)

Subtheme 2: Local Bruneians

The participants all commented on how friendly and welcoming they found the local Bruneians.

I kind of didn't have any perception on what they [the locals] would be like, ... but they were so loving and welcoming. (Dani)

They're quite lovely and friendly people and ... they're quite open and they're very loving people. When you meet someone you don't feel uncomfortable. (Ella)

Chris articulated that he found the locals to be more welcoming than he anticipated.

Because [Brunei Darussalam is] not that big tourist destination ... [the locals] weren't focused on making money out of tourists; they more just welcome you into the community and you were just integrated into the society ... (Chris)

Subtheme 3: Exposure to a new culture

All five participants indicated that their attitude toward other cultures had been impacted on as a result of their international WIL placement. Chris and Ella communicated that their perception of Muslim people was altered from their direct exposure to living and working in a Muslim country. Ella also commented that her exposure to Muslims helped her to see how similar Muslims were to non-Muslims and how this insight helped her to acknowledge that she held an incorrect stereotype of Muslims prior to placement.

I was always pretty open and pretty non-judgmental anyway ... [but the WIL placement] definitely boosted it ... ever since Brunei some of my mates have gone, 'all these

Muslims,' and put negative kind of stereotypes on it and I've said, 'Hey Muslims are beautiful people; it's just the extremists,' so it kind of impacted my perception there, how you kind of emphasise the need to be non-judgmental. (Chris)

Like media ... portray Muslims as being like quite reserved and ... make them sound as like they're ... some weird creature or something but, no, they're like every single other person. They have desires in their lives. They can be funny when they want to be. They have their personal jokes, like that type of thing, so I think culturally they broke my like stereotype that I didn't even know I had of Muslims, you know what I mean? [Now I am] a lot more open to different cultures. (Ella)

Dani and Bella explained how the international WIL placement had opened their eyes to how another country provides disability services. For Bella, the experience also ignited a desire to travel to more countries and see how they provide disability services.

Yeah, it's changed it [my attitude toward other cultures in] a positive way. I used to think some of the cultures have such a negative perception of disability but now it's not so much that ... now ... I'll accept it and I want to understand and I want to learn more from it. (Dani)

[The experience has] ... made me want to travel more and work more just to experience the different cultures. I would love to see even how a different western country views disability and how centres in America or Canada, how they operate differently. (Bella)

Amelia reflected she had learned to be open and respect another culture even when it involved something that made her personally feel uncomfortable such as being stared at because of the colour of her skin.

Like with the whole staring thing ... you've kind of just got to get used to [it and think], well, maybe that's just how their culture is and [you've] just got to respect [it]. (Amelia)

Theme 2: Cultural dissonance

The theme of cultural dissonance includes two subthemes; (1) Getting out of comfort zone and (2) Highlighted awareness of own cultural norms.

Subtheme 1: Getting out of comfort zone

Four participants pointed out that at times they felt outside their comfort zone when walking around Brunei Darussalam because the locals stared at or wanted their photos taken with the students due to the colour of their skin.

If anything ... you almost felt famous because you're white; that's pretty much it. Like we'd go to the shop and some people would want photos with us because we were white. (Ella)

Because I'm tall and white it almost felt like [I was] a sideshow or something walking through the mall. (Chris)

Chris commented on how much and how quickly he learned things while away because he was forced to step outside of his comfort zone.

I think it's important to get out of your comfort zone because that's the most effective way to adequately learn and develop personally and professionally in the shortest period of time. ... I said ... 'I learnt that much in three weeks that it felt like I was away for three months or had studied for three months.' It was just so compact. (Chris)

Dani disclosed that at times she felt uncomfortable and unsure when the locals were speaking amongst themselves in their own language.

When they were talking in their language. You were like, 'Oh did I do something wrong?' Like you kind of didn't know. (Dani)

Ella described how she felt uncomfortable and unable to relate to the locals when a staff member at the centre explained how many Bruneians typically feel about dogs.

I remember one of the teachers explaining to us how dogs there are seen as pests and how some people go out of their way to hit them with their cars. That's when I felt like, 'Oh I don't relate to that. I don't feel like I'm even going to understand that,' but I think only little culture shocks like that made you feel like, 'Oh I'm in a completely different place here.' (Ella)

Subtheme 2: Highlighted awareness of own cultural norms

Differences in expectations regarding social interactions between males and females in Brunei led Bella to be quite nervous and unsure of herself. However, the uncomfortable experience also allowed her to learn from the situation.

I was quite nervous meeting [the father of the young boy I was working with, because] we were told that sometimes if ... [males] don't shake your hand don't be offended ... but I, in a nervous state, just put my hand out and shook his hand but he was okay with that ... I know that could've been a big no-no in some situations so that was something I was mindful of afterwards, thinking, 'Just keep your cool. Keep calm. Don't nervously put out your hand and jump to it.' (Bella)

Ella advised she believed the social constructs surrounding people inviting others into their homes were different in Brunei Darussalam than they were in Australia.

[In Brunei] If someone says, 'Come over for tea or a coffee and something to eat,' they mean that and ... I think ... if you don't go through with that it might be a little bit disrespectful to their culture. ... It's a very different way of thinking in Brunei compared to Australia. It's very friendly. I'm not saying that Australia's not friendly, just like the social constructs are a lot different. (Ella)

The students noticed that it was just some of the little things that made them aware they were in a foreign country. Bella described two of these.

The kids would have to leave their shoes in a little box when you walked into the Centre. (Bella)

I wanted sushi with avocado, that's it, and [the staff in the restaurant] ... could not understand, 'just avocado.' They thought I wanted something else with it and I was pointing to the picture and then they picked up an avocado and I said, 'Yes, just avocado,' and that seemed bizarre to them. (Bella)

Theme 3: Personal and professional growth

The theme of personal and professional growth includes three subthemes; (1) Developing professional confidence; (2) Informing future practice, employment and/or study and (3) Increasing resilience and self-awareness to meet the challenges of the placement.

Subtheme 1: Developing professional confidence

Four participants commented that undertaking the placement helped to develop their professional confidence by allowing them to work with families, by giving them the opportunity to receive feedback from staff and supervisors and by providing them with access to a different culture.

Being able to get feedback from ... the staff and supervisors saying, 'you're doing good,' ... [boosted your] confidence ... It's good to get experience and feedback. (Amelia)

[Working with families] ... contributes to my professional development ... because I find that that's where you learn all the little nicks and knacks of what goes on behind the scenes. (Bella)

I think that placement made me a lot more confident in who I am as a person ... [and] ... it made me realise that the things that I'm learning I can do. (Ella)

Two participants explained how the placement not only reinforced what they learned in class but how helpful it was for them to be able to witness theory being put into practice.

[The centre] had a strong emphasis on task analysis and how that can ... help people achieve a desired task ... Even though we were learning that in class it's different to actually practice that with a group of people. (Ella)

I saw how positive and how amazing speech therapy can be if you're doing it right. (Bella)

Chris articulated how the placement helped to boost his motivation levels and also his communication skills.

[The placement] ... highlighted the need [for me] to stay determined, to stay passionate, to stay enthusiastic ... [and it provided] a bit more motivation [for me] to get out in the disability field and ... make a difference or support some development. (Chris)

Because there was a level of responsibility ... during the placement [it helped to build my] confidence ... [and my] communication [skills] as well because you've got to [be able to] communicate to your [fellow] students, the supervisors, [and] the ... students at [the centre]. (Chris)

Subtheme 2: Informing future practice, employment and/or study

The international WIL placement played an important role in confirming participants' career direction, and identifying areas of focus for future study and job opportunities back in Australia and internationally.

I think we all got to experience how we would like our futures in the disability sector to be and I think without being able to go over there we wouldn't have had that

experience. ... [The placement] ... actually proved to me that ... [disability] was the field I wanted to be in. (Dani)

Participants relayed a desire to apply their new found knowledge and skills back in Australia.

Working with staff [at the centre] that know so much [about Autism allows you to] ... feed off their knowledge and ... learn new skills that you can bring back [to Australia]. (Amelia)

[Experiencing the overseas placement] ... makes you want to go visit all the different disability places and then take the best of the best and come back put them together and put that in place in Australia. (Chris)

[After I returned, I spoke with the deputy principal at the school I work in and told her about all the] amazing things that I'd learnt and straightaway I was improvising and making visuals [based on what I learned in Brunei]. (Chris)

For some, the experience fuelled the desire to explore other countries and/or other ways of providing services. Three of the participants emphasised how they would like to extend their knowledge and learn more about the provision of disability services internationally.

I remember when I was over there I told everyone that this is the best service I've ever seen. ... They just all had that kind of love and a passion and they had the different practices that really emphasised the use of visuals and that hands-on type stuff. ... It makes you curious to see if that level of effective and adequate disability provision is replicated or emulated in different cultures as well or, if not, what parts are, what parts aren't? (Chris)

I would jump on any [opportunity] ... to go overseas and work in a disability centre or work with special needs anywhere because I think we have so much to learn from other countries and ... how different cultures accept [disability]. I think by having an

overseas experience it allows you to understand things 100 times more than like what textbooks say. (Dani)

Subtheme 3: Increasing resilience and self-awareness to meet challenges of placement

All of the participants discussed the need to be resilient because they were part of a group who did not know each other well prior to spending three weeks together. Amelia and Ella commented on the amount of tension created at times because they were together continuously without an opportunity to escape. Bella, in particular, struggled to handle the dynamics of the group because it was predominantly comprised of females.

I'm not used to so many girls. ... That was a big, big struggle for me, the difference in characters, I guess, and that was quite an emotional process for me as well. (Bella)

Dani explained that undertaking the placement made her reflect on her strengths and weaknesses and also on the necessity of having a strong support group.

[The placement] ... made me more aware of my strengths and my weaknesses [and] ... it also made me aware that often I ... need my support group. ... [I realised] you're never fully independent without your support group... (Dani)

Bella reflected about a time at the centre when she was worried because she felt that she did not have the same level of connectedness with one student as she did with another. A staff member reassured Bella that this was normal and to be expected.

You're not going to become best friends ... with every student you work with or client, ... and I loved that honesty that sometimes you won't get that connection but not to be disappointed; it's just what's going to happen. (Bella)

Chris recounted the need for the students to be flexible, adaptable and to, 'go with the flow,' because plans during the placement were often changed without much warning.

You can either perceive ... [the constant changes] in a way that it was a burden or you can perceive that in a way that it was like a fun rollercoaster. ... Everyone's so energetic and happy and passionate that you just get on with it. (Chris)

Dani explained she had previously travelled overseas with a group as part of a high school trip and therefore she believed she was quite prepared for group travel. Nonetheless, she underestimated the level of drama and tension that would evolve within the group over the three weeks.

I think everyone by the end of it [had enough of always] being together ... there was a lot of tension ... [and] ... there was that little bit of added drama to it that I wasn't expecting. (Dani)

Dani reflected on a way she believes students in future groups can ease any escalating tensions within the group.

Just [try to] be accepting of ... differences in the group ... and differences of opinion [and] ... [try not to force your] opinion on others. (Dani)

Chris indicated that having single room accommodation helped him deal with the circumstance of having to spend so much time together as a group.

We each had our own room which was good because you kind of need a bit of a debrief, personal debrief, you know, after a long extended [period of spending time together]. ... and [the placement] ... was quite intense as well. You just wanted to just be by yourself and relax ... (Chris)

Another challenge faced by the participants was the difficulty of keeping up with other university work while being overseas. This was due to a multitude of factors including not having a homework area, contending with unreliable Wi-Fi and being exhausted after spending a full day out on placement.

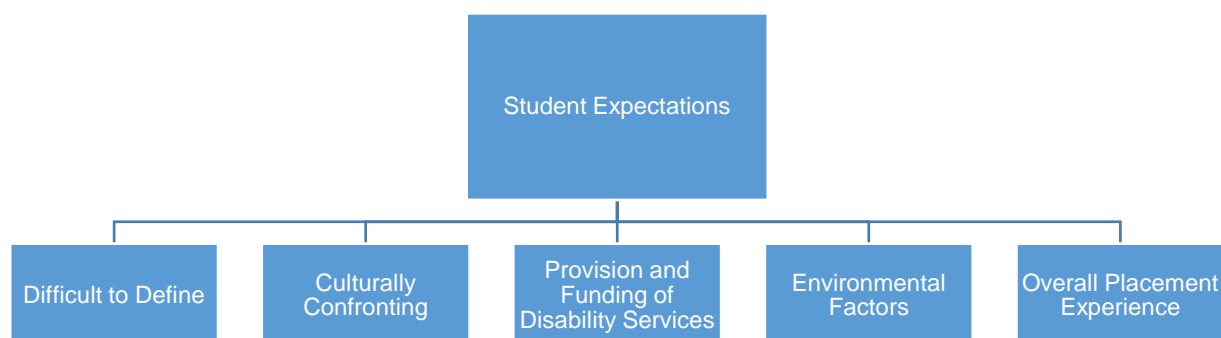
[Keeping up with other university work while on placement] was very challenging because often we'd have a whole day of running around after kids [and after we got back to our accommodation, I would think], 'Oh, I've got to do uni now,' ... and I think it got a little bit too much at times. (Dani)

4.4 Research question 2: What were the student's expectations of the international WIL placement and were they met?

Thematic analysis of the transcripts revealed five themes in respect to the participants' expectations and if they were met: (1) Difficult to define; (2) Culturally confronting; (3) Provision and funding of disability services; (4) Environmental factors; (5) Overall placement experience.

Figure 4.2 (below) provides an overview of the themes.

Figure 4.2 Student expectations: Overview of themes



Theme 1: Difficult to define

At the beginning of their interview, each participant found it difficult to explicitly express what their expectations were of their international WIL placement in Brunei Darussalam. This may have been due to the fact that they lacked general information about the country of Brunei

Darussalam, the centre they were going to and what it would be like to visit and work in a Muslim country.

Well initially I'd never heard of Brunei before [but when I learned it was in] ... South East Asia ... my expectation was it would be similar to my other Asian experiences but also something new because of ... [the] Brunei culture. (Chris)

I obviously got on Google and searched, 'Brunei,' but there's not a lot on Brunei and there were no pictures. We didn't see anything of what the centres were going to be like. (Bella)

Theme 2: Culturally confronting

One participant, who stated she was expecting the experience to be culturally confronting especially for the women in the group because Brunei is a Muslim country, found that this was not the case.

'I know it's a Muslim country. I know there are going to be laws ... like things we can't do,' ... I thought people were going to be staring us down because we're not wearing a burka and ... men were going to be really rude to us women and not wanting to work with us but, no, it was nothing like that at all. (Dani)

Theme 3: Provision and funding of disability services

Three of the participants discussed how the provision of disability services at the centres was not what they were expecting and was quite different from how similar services were provided in Australia. The most striking difference they noted was in the amount of physical contact the staff were allowed to provide to their students but they also discussed how the centre was funded, how the staff has trust in the students and how much attention is provided to the students.

Chris, who was working in a school in Australia for students with intellectual disabilities at the time of the study, commented that the centre in Brunei was set up in a similar fashion to the

one in which he works. However, he explained that the centre in Brunei had a much more of an, 'emphasis on hands-on.'

[This hands-on approach allowed me to] be like a human, I suppose, and if someone needed a hug or wanted to be picked up or something you could do it and in Australia we have those policies and procedures in place so you can't do that. (Chris)

I remember saying to [my fellow students], 'It sometimes feels wrong to be able to just openly cuddle or pick them up and walk around with them,' but they loved that. (Bella)

Two participants described the benefits of staff having a hands-on approach with the students. Chris explained the negative effects of Australia's, 'no hands policy,' was highlighted for him after witnessing firsthand the benefits of its use in Brunei Darussalam.

[On returning to Australia, I wished that] ... the things in the past didn't happen [in Australia] and we didn't have to have these kind of safety precautions [no hands policy] in place because between the students that I see here in Australia and the students I seen in Brunei, the Bruneians seemed a lot more engaged, a lot more happy and they kind of [sought] some of those relationship situations. (Chris)

Additionally, Chris described particular situations in which he believed the, 'hands-on,' policy worked especially well and how after he got used to the difference, he embraced it.

[The hands-on approach can work well for] someone with autism with sensory needs and sometimes that's how you can attune to another individual and connect with someone, especially with someone who's non-verbal or something like that. That was good, you know? It was difficult at first to get used to it because it's different from what I'm used to but it was great. (Chris)

One participant, who believes trust between staff and students is very important, reported the staff have trust in the students at the Centre.

In the adult centre [a boy] was trusted to ride his bike around the Centre and the gates are open that lead onto the road for the trucks to come in and out. ... [The staff advised], 'He's fine. He doesn't try and race away'. That was really unexpected too. There's a lot of trust put in the students, which I do love; I find that really important.
(Bella)

Two of the participants recalled they were pleasantly surprised with the amount of individual attention each student received.

I thought [the centre would be similar to] ... how the schools are all run here [in Australia, but] ... it was very different. It was all one-on-one work ... even though there was five kids in the classroom each kid got that one-on-one support. (Dani)

Dani described how she expected the centre would be funded based on her perception that Brunei Darussalam was a very rich country and her assumption the funding of schools in Brunei would be similar to how schools were funded in Australia.

I think I was expecting it to be very rich in a way ... [and] that the government [would give] ... them so much money and they'd have all this equipment and they have never had to fundraise, they just get it all ... [However,] they don't get funding and it is purely families that put all their money into ... [the Centre so it] can keep going. (Dani)

She further explained the negative effect the funding situation sometimes had on staff but added she was pleasantly surprised by how dedicated the staff were.

[Staff in the centres are] ... not there because they have to be; they choose to be there. ... We were told that there were some weeks they didn't get paid because [the centre] didn't have enough funding so you know they're not doing it for anything else but the love of it and I loved that as well. (Dani)

Theme 4: Environmental factors

The participants described what their expectations were around various environmental factors. Their discussions included the food, the weather, the language, the pace of the placement and the local infrastructure in Brunei Darussalam.

Three participants had travelled to Asian countries previously and they were expecting a similar cuisine to other Asian countries in regards to taste, quality and variety.

I was expecting more [food] options. ... It was cheap but it wasn't ... what I expected. ... They did have Western food; it just wasn't good. (Amelia)

Three of the participants also commented on how sweet the majority of the food was and how a lot of the food was processed or deep fried. This was not what they were expecting and Dani also commented that she found the food to be, 'confusing', as it was a mixture of Asian and Indian.

There was a lot of sweet things, a lot of deep fried things as well, so that was kind of something I didn't anticipate. (Chris)

Bella, who is a vegetarian, found the lack of variety in the food and especially the lack of vegetarian options to be, 'a shock to the system,' and wished that she had been, 'warned a bit more about that,' prior to departure.

In their pre-departure sessions, the participants were warned that it would be quite hot and humid in Brunei Darussalam. Consequently, while they were expecting heat, it still proved to be challenging because, as Dani points out, they had to remain covered.

I was prepared for hot, humid weather but obviously not prepared enough. Not thinking enough about [being] ... covered up and how it's going to affect me ... (Dani)

One participant remarked that she actually enjoyed the weather because she liked the humid weather.

All five participants mentioned that they did not have any major issues in communicating with locals. This was because most people in Brunei Darussalam spoke some English and they were also able to use body language to communicate.

[In the centre] everyone spoke English so [there were] no language barriers. (Amelia)

It was so easy to speak through hands and gestures. (Bella)

Additionally, the students almost always had a staff member from the centre with them even when they were out sightseeing. The staff member was able to translate and provide guidance to the students.

I think that there was never an issue for us [not being able to speak the local language] because we had people [staff from the centre] we were comfortable with to translate for us and ... to explain something if we couldn't explain it ... I never found it an issue because we had our safety nets. (Dani)

Three participants described how they struggled to keep up the pace of being continuously on the go.

[We spent] ... our first few days [on] an intensive course [which was] tiring but amazing. ... I was told [by my university supervisors] when I got back ... that, 'You're on placement 24/7.' ... [So] it felt like never switching off ... you always felt the need to watch what you were doing, be careful of what you say and who you say it to. (Bella)

[The centre] was quite draining ... because of all that energy ... you really had to boost your batteries ... and match that kind of level of enthusiasm and energy to kind of keep up; ... the pace was challenging. (Chris)

Because Brunei Darussalam is not a common tourist destination, it does not have an infrastructure of taxis and this impacted negatively on the students' ability to independently travel throughout the city to sightsee and to acquire a variety of food.

I was expecting to be able to go and see like every little bit of the country that I could on my days off and ... to hop in a taxi and go around and see it [but] it just wasn't like that. ... [There were not] any taxis around to find. (Dani)

If transport was better we would have gone [to the American/Australian shopping centre] more often. It was just limited transport so food was a bit of an issue. (Bella)

Theme 5: Overall placement experience and did it meet expectations?

All five participants in the current study were overwhelmingly positive about their experience. They used words such as, 'great,' 'amazing,' and, 'incredible,' to describe the overall WIL placement experience.

Three participants expressed that they felt that undertaking the experience far outweighed the financial cost associated with the WIL placement.

I would take the [Australian Government Study Assist HELP] ... debt 10 times over. (Bella)

It's worth every cent it cost. (Dani)

The participants commented on how grateful they were to be given the chance to work with remarkable people in Brunei while learning about their culture. Moreover, they expressed their gratitude for being given the opportunity to undertake an international WIL placement.

We got to work with amazing kids and we got to be in a [Muslim] country where [we got to] see a beautiful side ... of a culture that is so taken for granted and so misunderstood. ... It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and you learn so much from it. (Dani)

Chris, Bella and Dani explained how the placement experience impacted them personally.

[The placement] ... was just amazing. ... I feel like my perspective on everything would be so different [if I had not participated in this international WIL placement]. (Chris)

I went in with nothing and came back with so much. ... It's just incredible. (Bella)

I think that the experience ... allows you to see the good [in a Muslim country] and ... it really does open your eyes to see an amazing country. ... I loved the placement 100 per cent (Dani)

In discussing whether their expectations of the placement were met or not, two participants volunteered that the centre in which they were placed exceeded their expectations.

I really enjoyed my time. I want to go back. ... I didn't expect to enjoy it that much. (Amelia)

It was a different expectation [because we were able to be hands-on with the children] but better than what I imagined. (Bella)

One participant remarked that the country of Brunei Darussalam met her expectations.

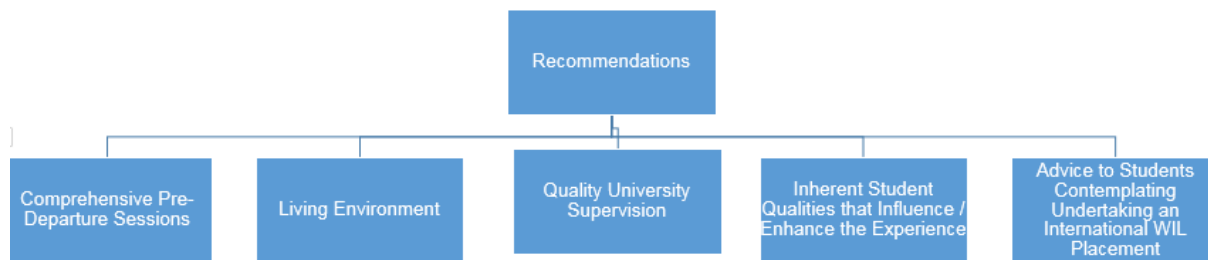
[Brunei] ... was painted as a picture that it would be a beautiful place ... which it ended up being ... so that was nice, to have those expectations met. (Ella)

4.5 Research question 3:

What were the recommendations provided by the students for improving future international WIL placements and what advice would they give to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement?

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed five themes in respect to the participants' recommendations for improving future international WIL placements and advice to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement: (1) Comprehensive pre-departure sessions; (2) Living environment; (3) Quality university supervisor; (4) Inherent student qualities that influence/enhance the experience; (5) Advice to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of the themes.

Figure 4.3 Student recommendations: Overview of themes



Theme 1: Comprehensive pre-departure sessions

Four participants provided their opinion on the importance of the pre-departure information sessions they attended on a regular basis in the weeks leading up to their departure. They learned what to expect, how to dress and how to act in order to be respectful of the Bruneian culture and religion.

Chris stated that the sessions as well as the family dinners held prior to departure were beneficial because they allowed the students and families to get to know each other.

[The sessions helped] ... to build rapport between us all beforehand [as we did not know each other well] and we had family dinners as well. We brought our families in [as a group to meet each other because] some families were worried, some were anxious and [the dinners helped to make some of the family members] ... feel a bit better. (Chris)

Theme 2: Living environment

All five participants weighed in on what they liked and disliked about the, 'student hall,' type of accommodation they stayed in. They recommended single rooms close to each other, good air-conditioning, good Wi-Fi and a central location.

We each had our own room which was good because you kind of need a bit of a debrief, personal debrief, you know. ... You just wanted to just be by yourself and relax. (Chris)

Because our rooms were so close a lot of our doors were open and you'd walk in and see what everyone else was doing. (Bella)

Internet access is important, especially because [university] assignments [were] ... due whilst we were away. ... [but the internet kept going out in our accommodation and it was very frustrating]. (Ella)

Theme 3: Quality university supervision

Each participant stressed the importance of having quality university supervision on the international WIL placement. Bella, Chris and Ella and Dani discussed the attributes they believe a quality supervisor needs to have.

[Supervisors should have] a literal open door policy ... [and they need to have an] ... openness ... [and be] approachable ... [and be] ... honest. ... [Additionally, supervisors need to establish] a professional relationship, [with placement students] like ... working alongside of each other ... [not] a teacher/student relationship. (Bella)

[Supervisors should] definitely [have good] communication skills [and provide] ... non-crisis intervention. [They should] ... know [the students and their] ... behaviours ... [in order to be able] ... to pop in and say [to a student], 'Hey, you look a little bit tired. You look a little bit stressed; do you want to talk about something?' [The university supervisor needs to] be enthusiastic and approachable. (Chris)

[University supervisors should accept that each of the placement] ... students are all different [and they all] ... have different needs ... [and] a supervisor needs to know like when they need to step in for the university and [when] they need to step in for personal support. (Dani)

Bella recommended that the supervisors needed to be hands-on with the students in the Centre every day and she explained why she believes this is important.

I know all of us were saying we feel like we're doing something wrong when the little ones hug us and you hug them back, but if we had [our supervisor] ... there with us ... they could say, 'Do it; it's fine'. ... That's what you were waiting for; ... someone to do it first so you went, 'We're good. We can do that'. That would've helped so much.
(Bella)

Bella also expressed her conviction that student evaluations need to be done by the supervisors or teachers who were hands-on with the students in the centre every day otherwise the evaluations are merely a, 'personal evaluation,' rather than a, 'work evaluation.'

[Whoever does the evaluations needs to] be there 100 per cent. Watch us. Be able to say the names of the students you worked with and the teachers that you worked alongside so it feels a little more real when you hear the feedback. (Bella)

Amelia added that the supervisors should also respect and acknowledge the fact that the students are adults in an adult learning environment and, as such, the students should be given more responsibility to decide what they do or do not do.

Because [the international WIL placement was] ... adult learning [and] you're an adult ... I think [supervisors need to let you] ... do your thing and ... [be more lenient regarding] ... what you can and cannot do. (Amelia)

One participant stated they did not always feel supported by their Australian university supervisors to embrace and learn from their mistakes in an international context, describing feeling, 'judged or talked down to.'

Theme 4: Inherent student qualities that influence/enhance the experience

Each participant provided insight into what they believed is the most beneficial mindset for future students to have in order to get the most value out of an international WIL placement.

They underscored the importance of being open-minded; not making comparisons with Australia; being adaptable in order to embrace every opportunity that presents itself; and being able to reflect on their own values, beliefs and perspectives in relation to culture and disability practice while overseas.

Go open minded ... and just put yourself forward for every experience. (Dani)

I finally found out how different culture can affect the dynamics of families with disability and it was amazing. (Bella)

You've got to be flexible ... open and ... non-judgmental. ... The more you embrace a culture or an overseas experience the more you get out of it. ... [If] ... you open up your mind, it opens up your insight. (Chris)

Be open, absolutely, open to anything. Don't act like you know it all or [make] ... comparisons because ... there's no better or worse; it's just different. (Bella)

Theme 5: Advice to students contemplating undertaking an international WIL placement

All five participants in the current study said that they would unreservedly recommend going on an international WIL placement to students contemplating participating in such a placement. In fact, Bella found the experience so rewarding that she believes that going on an international WIL placement should be mandatory for all BDDE students.

I think ... the [WIL placement to Brunei was] an amazing thing. I would promote it 110 per cent. ... I think that's an amazing option for us to have. ... I feel like travelling and working in a centre for people with disability should be compulsory [for BDDE students]; I honestly think it should be. I wish it was. It's just incredible. (Bella)

The participants in this current study found the experience to be particularly beneficial because it opened their eyes to a new and different culture.

You get to learn [about] a new culture and the way that [the Bruneians] perceive and deal with disability. (Ella)

I definitely would [recommend the placement experience to other students] and I already have. ... It opens up your insight. So, definitely, yeah, I would support it 100 per cent. ... If I didn't do it, ... I feel like my perspective on everything would be so different, so I am so grateful for the experience ... and it is something [the impact of which is] going to continue throughout the rest of my life. (Chris)

4.6 Summary

This chapter presented the emerging themes identified in this current study. The participants' experiences and perspectives were presented. Discussion of these themes will occur in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5

Discussion and conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The participants in this study shared their experiences, expectations and attitudes of their disability-specific international Work Integrated Learning (WIL) placement in Brunei Darussalam. Results indicate that students perceived that the international WIL placement had a positive impact on their cultural competence, professional and personal learning, and growth. In this chapter, discussion will focus on how the Bachelor of Disability and Developmental Education (BDDE) students' international WIL experiences relate to the literature examining the international WIL experiences of other allied health and education students. The limitations of this study will be discussed and suggestions made for future research. Also, based on these indicative findings, recommendations for university course administrators considering implementing international WIL placements and recommendations to students who are considering undertaking a similar experience will be presented.

5.2 Student experiences: Growth and value

All five participants in this current study described having an overwhelmingly positive and valuable learning experience while on WIL placement in Brunei. Further, they indicated that the placement helped break down their previously held stereotypes of Muslim culture and impacted positively on their attitude toward other cultures. The participants' direct exposure to living and working in a Muslim country, in addition to having very positive, friendly and affirming interactions with the staff in the disability services centre in which they were placed, helped to alter their personal perceptions. These results concur with the findings of numerous other studies such as Charles et al. (2014); Greatrex-White (2008); Jones, Neubrandner and Huff (2012); Maynes, Allison, and Julien-Schultz (2013); and Tuckett and Crompton (2013) which highlight that students, through international WIL placements, learn that, despite cultural differences, everyone is, 'connected as human beings,' (Greatrex-White, 2008, p. 8).

Consequently, it can be inferred and asserted that international WIL placements help increase the cultural competence of students who participate in such placements.

While in Brunei, the participants in this study reported at times feeling outside of their comfort zone. Four of the participants found this to be the case when the locals stared at them and/or wanted their photos taken with the 'white' students. Another participant found it uncomfortable when locals spoke amongst themselves in their own language rather than in English, promoting a sense of exclusion from the conversation. The gathered perception of how some Bruneians feel about and treat dogs was described as a culture shock to another student. At times the participants also struggled with the local food, the pace of the placement activities and with the hot and humid weather. Four of the reviewed research studies discuss how it is necessary for students to experience the discomfort of being outside their comfort zone in order for them to achieve positive growth and awareness in their cultural understanding (Murray, 2015; Charles et al., 2014; Smith-Miller, Leak, Harlan, Dieckmann & Sherwood, 2010; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). One participant in this current study confirmed this belief when he commented that he learned so much and so quickly while overseas because of the fact that he was forced to reflect on his personally and professionally held beliefs and values and this was challenging and something he had been able to avoid doing while living as a white Anglo Celtic middle class male in Australia.

Some of the cultural norms of daily life in Brunei highlighted the awareness of the participants' own cultural norms and led to further personal growth. One participant found the differences in expectations regarding male and female social interactions in Brunei led her to be reticent. However, she reported that she was able to adjust, adapt and learn from the experience. Three of the participants found the most striking difference in cultural norms to be the amount of physical contact the centre staff were permitted to give their students. As this, 'hands-on,' approach was in direct contrast to the approach the students were used to in Australia, it initially made them apprehensive. However, once the students adjusted to the local practice, they were able to accept it and acknowledge some of its benefits. These findings concur with

other studies that show students develop an awareness of the host culture and simultaneously develop an awareness of the structures and practices embedded in their own culture as they were exposed to others who were different to them and begin to become comfortable working with others who do things in a different way (Charles et al., 2014; Greatrex-White, 2007; Levine, 2009; Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012).

The professional confidence of the participants in the current study appeared to increase over the placement. Influencing factors included exposing the participants to a different culture, routines and social mores in a safe, structured and supported context. It also gave the students on placement the opportunity to work with families in a culturally different disability services setting and to receive feedback from their Flinders University supervisors. The participants confirmed the WIL placement played an important role in validating their future career direction and in helping them to identify areas for future study. Two participants found it particularly helpful to be able to see first-hand how theory was put into practice. For another, the WIL placement helped boost their communication skills and motivation levels to be able to demonstrate professional confidence without being arrogant. These results are broadly consistent with the Kearney, Perkins, and Maakrun (2014) study which found that students' confidence and professionalism grow by overcoming challenging experiences. In addition, the Stachowski and Sparks (2007) also found that students, while overseas, are more open to experiencing personal and professional growth, to building their self-confidence, and to adapting and acquiring new practices, ideas and beliefs.

5.3 Were student expectations of their international WIL placement realised?

Various themes were identified from participant responses relating to pre-placement student expectations and to their actual lived placement experience. The participants did not clearly identify or describe the expectations they held of the international WIL placement prior to travel. This is an area which has not been explicitly examined in other WIL literature. Because the student researcher could not find any existing published literature on the international WIL placement experiences of disability studies students undertaking a disability-specific program,

it is not surprising that there are not any published findings regarding student expectations around the provision and funding of disability services in a host country.

Themes of cultural confrontation and dissonance are echoed in a number of previous studies. Findings by Evanson and Zust (2006); Graham, Hill, Reynolds, and Parry (2014); Peiying, Goddard, Gribble, and Pickard (2012); Tuckett and Crompton (2013); Jones, Neubrandner, and Huff (2012); Greatrex-White (2007); Levine (2009); and Charles et al. (2014) all discuss the discomfort students felt to some degree when they were totally immersed in the new culture during their international WIL experience. While the participants in this current study did experience cultural dissonance, as previously described, the one participant who reported expecting the experience would be culturally confronting, especially for the women in the group, found this was not the case. As Brunei is a Muslim county, she expected there would be a lot of laws restricting what the students could and could not do and she was expecting males to be somewhat rude particularly to the female students. However, she was pleasantly surprised to report that the culture in Brunei was not like she was expecting at all.

The participants in this current study described what their expectations were around various environmental factors including the weather and the food in Brunei Darussalam. Similarly, findings across a number of studies describe the host environment as being a challenge for the students. In this current study, the participants were warned prior to travel that Brunei Darussalam would be hot and humid but one student did not realise how being covered up in a culturally respectful manner would impact on her comfort level in the heat. In the Graham, Hill, Reynolds, and Parry (2014) study, the students were also expecting hot and humid weather on their placement in Vietnam but they found the freezing temperatures in the rural clinics to be challenging. The weather, the food and the accommodation were all environmental factors that the students in the Charles et al. (2014) study identified as being concerns.

Three participants in this current study who had travelled to Asian countries previously were expecting the food in Brunei Darussalam to be similar in taste, quality and variety to other Asian cuisines. Three participants also commented that their experience was that the bulk of the food in Brunei was processed or deep fried and therefore not what they were expecting. Additionally, the lack of vegetarian options and the lack of variety in the local food were concerning to the students. Likewise, Tuckett and Crompton (2013) state that the students in their study were challenged by the living conditions and the traditional local food in Cambodia. Some students in the Smith-Miller et al. (2010) study found not having familiar foods around to be distressing.

A novel finding in this current study, and one that has not been discussed in previous research, is the detail the participants provided around what they considered to be suitable accommodation. The participants endorsed having single rooms as they advised that they needed their own space at the end of long days being together in order to unwind. They liked and recommended having all the single rooms located near each other in order to help facilitate making plans quickly and easily with other students. They also believed having good air-conditioning in their accommodation was beneficial. Particularly because they were not acclimatised to the hot and humid weather and they did not have air-conditioning during the day at the placement centre, they looked forward to knowing they would get a good night's sleep in an air-conditioned room at the end of the day.

The participants in this current study also stated it was beneficial to have a reliable Wi-Fi connection available in their accommodation while on placement. This was not only because they wanted to keep in touch with family and friends but, more importantly, because they all had other university topics they needed to keep up with and assignments to complete while they were away. Having the accommodation in a central location was essential for the group, chiefly because of the inherent issues with lack of public transportation. They were provided with transportation to and from their placement agency but at night and on the weekends it

was nice they were able to walk to the local mall and local restaurants as this provided them with some independence.

The participants unanimously agreed that their expectations of their overall disability international WIL placement experience were met. The centre exceeded the expectations of two of the participants. One because she was able to be, 'hands-on,' with the students and the other because she did not expect to enjoy it as much as she did and, therefore, would like to go back. The participants described having a positive and rewarding experience that was, '... worth every cent it cost,' (Dani). They were very grateful that they were given the, 'once in a lifetime opportunity,' (Dani) to undertake an international WIL placement because it was an, 'amazing,' and, 'incredible,' learning experience and because they were able to learn a lot in such a short amount of time.

Students in the Smith and Curry (2011), DeDee and Stewart (2003) and Critchley et al. (2009) studies report similar outcomes when describing their participants' international WIL experiences. Their students state their experience was transformative, unforgettable and life changing.

In this current study, three participants expressed how much the placement in Brunei impacted them personally by, 'opening their eyes,' and changing their, 'perspective on everything'. Four participants stated the placement increased their confidence and contributed to their professional development, while all five participants advised they learned a lot about another culture that was different to their own. Similar findings are reflected in other studies. For example, the 2011 study by Smith and Curry and the 2011 study by DeDee and Stewart both used the International Education Survey (IES) developed by Zorn (1996) to measure their participants' growth during an international WIL placement. Both studies reported gains in their participants' professional role, international perspective, personal development and intellectual development.

5.4 Recommendations by the students for future international WIL placements

One of the aims of this current study was to evaluate and understand the participants' perspectives of the value of their international WIL placement in order to improve upcoming international WIL placements. As such, the participants were specifically asked for their recommendations in order to help improve future international WIL placements. They were also asked for the advice they would provide to students who were considering undertaking a similar experience. The participants' highly recommended comprehensive pre-departure sessions be held prior to travel. Four participants articulated the pre-departure sessions were very important because they learned what to expect, how to dress appropriately and how to act respectfully toward Muslims in the sessions. Another participant advised the sessions were beneficial because a few of them included dinners with the participants' family members. The family dinners not only allowed the participants the opportunity to get to know each other better but also allowed their family members to ask questions of the university supervisors and therefore helped to ease some of their families' concerns.

A number of other studies have detailed the requirements that are seen to be necessary in order for students to have successful and positive international WIL placements (Briscoe, 2013; Gonsalvez, 2013; Graham et al., 2014). These requirements include being well organised (Gonsalvez, 2013), fostering cultural safety (Briscoe, 2013) and student safety and planning (Graham et al., 2014) and concur with the findings in this current study. Additionally, Stachowski and Sparks (2007) discuss the importance of preparing students for the overseas placement agency and community setting which they are traveling to.

All five participants in this current study emphasised the importance of having quality university supervision for the students while on placement. The attributes the participants believe university supervisors need to have include being: approachable; honest; a good communicator; good at providing one-on-one personal support; and being on site with the students on a daily basis in order to model appropriate practice and in order to provide a well-informed and suitable evaluation of their placement performance. One participant in the

current study stated they did not always feel supported by their supervisors to embrace and learn from mistakes and, at times, felt, 'judged or talked down to'. Another participant recommended that supervisors respect that university students are adults in an adult learning environment and therefore should be given more responsibility to make their own decisions about what they want to do or not do. While the results of this current study provide more in-depth detail regarding the attributes that the participants' believed a quality university supervisor should have, the findings echo other published research that shows due consideration needs to be given to staff/student ratios (Graham et al., 2014), faculty staff who accompany the students need to foster a safe place for student reflection (Briscoe, 2013) and need to be comfortable working and living in the host country (Levine, 2009).

When asked what they believed would be the most beneficial mindset for future students to have when undertaking a similar international WIL placement, the participants highlighted the importance of being open-minded and flexible, not making comparisons with their home country and fully embracing each and every opportunity. All five participants stated they would enthusiastically recommend undertaking an international WIL placement to other students. Largely, this was because they found the experience to be 'amazing.' Furthermore, the experience provided them with insight into a new and different culture and into how Bruneians perceive and deal with disability. In the same way, the Critchley et al., (2009) study found that international WIL experiences open participants' minds to cultural differences and increase their cultural competence (Smith-Miller, Leak, Harlan, Dieckmann & Sherwood, 2010) by compelling students to reflect on their previously held beliefs, values and assumptions regarding cultural diversity (Graetrex-White, 2008). These recommendations can not only assist the Flinders University Disability and Community Inclusion Unit plan and improve future international WIL placements but also assist other university course administrators who may be considering implementing international WIL placements.

5.5 Preliminary implications for future practice

As Australia is a multicultural country and one of most culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) in the world, it is imperative that allied health professionals who are preparing for practice in Australia are trained and educated to become culturally competent in order to provide culturally sensitive, congruent and responsive healthcare (Alexander, 2008). Universities are now recognising that international WIL placements give students the necessary exposure to being with and supporting clients from different cultures which helps them provide optimal care to culturally diverse clients. Furthermore, starting in 2014, the Australian Government began to promote international WIL by introducing New Colombo Plan funding (*About the New Colombo Plan*, 2017). The Government is supporting international WIL placements for students in the Indo-Pacific region because it believes the networks created from the placements will help drive Australia's future prosperity (*About the New Colombo Plan*, 2017). Additionally, many Australian students want to undertake an international WIL placement because of the skills and abilities it promotes (Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010). Consequently, the experiences of the participants in this current study can shed light on what makes international WIL placements successful and what promotes optimal learning. Their experiences highlight the need for international WIL placements to be thoroughly planned and well supervised. There is also a need to ensure that students have adequate living arrangements in the host country and for students to be open-minded, flexible and non-judgemental. These factors will give students the best opportunity to become culturally competent and grow both personally and professionally during an international WIL placement. A summary of implications for future practice arising from this current study is presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Preliminary implications for future practice

Student Recommendations	Recommendation 1	Recommendation 2	Recommendation 3
Interview vetting of students to confirm desirable student attributes	Desirable attributes should include being open minded and flexible	Students should be adaptable and keen to embrace each and every opportunity as it presents itself	Students should be non-judgemental and open to reflecting on their own values, beliefs and perspectives in relation to culture and disability practice
Pre-departure group sessions	Hold comprehensive pre-departure sessions in which the students are provided with detailed information on what to expect, what to pack and how to act in a culturally appropriate manner	Hold dinners with the students' families to help alleviate any of their concerns and afford students the opportunity to get to know each other better	Sessions should emphasise the positives of the experience in order to get the students enthusiastic and set them up for success
Quality university supervisor	Personal attributes should include being: approachable; honest; a good communicator; and good at providing one-on-one personal support	University supervisors need to be on site with the students on a daily basis in order to model appropriate practice and to provide a well-informed and suitable evaluation of their placement performance	University supervisors need to respect that university students are adults in an adult learning environment and therefore students need to be given responsibility to make their own decisions in regards to what they do or do not do
Accommodation	Single rooms to allow students their own space but located near each other to enable students to easily make plans with other students	Air-conditioning if travelling to a hot and humid climate to allow for a good night's sleep. Centrally located if public transportation is an issue	Reliable Wi-Fi connection if students have other university topics they need to keep up with and assignments to complete while they are overseas

**** Caution needs to be taken when generalising these findings due to the limited number of participants in the study.***

5.6 Strengths and limitations of the current study

The current study gained strength from the fact that the interviews were conducted with participants roughly a year post return from the international WIL placement. Consequently, the participants were able to readily recall details of their experiences and express their

feelings with a high level of detail, yet there had been time for them to reflect on their experiences. They were the first group of disability-specific studies students who were given the opportunity to detail their experiences of an international WIL placement in a disability service setting. As such, participants volunteered information freely and willingly in an effort to have their experiences understood. The standards for rigorous data analysis across all four criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, were met.

Nonetheless, there were limitations to this current study. A limited and somewhat homogenous convenience sample group was used and all participants went to the same placement agency in the same country. The majority of participants were white Caucasians of a similar age, attending university and from a middle socio-economic class. There was only one male participant and only one non-Caucasian participant. Consequently, the similarity of participants in age, ethnicity, gender, education and socio-economic status may be a limitation of this current study. The lack of diversity in the makeup of student participants could have influenced their impressions. Moreover, it is possible that students who apply for international WIL placements are more adventurous and eager to learn about cultural differences than those students who do not apply. Additionally, it would have been beneficial to gather data from the university supervisors as well as the staff at the placement centre. In spite of these limitations, describing the experience of disability studies students undertaking an international WIL placement still has significance. Their lived experience needs to be understood so that other similar international WIL placements can be strengthened and designed to maximise the development of participating students' cultural competence. Additionally, this study has provided rich descriptive information about students undertaking an international WIL disability placement, which serves to bridge a significant gap in the current literature.

5.7 Recommendations for future research

In order to build on the preliminary findings of this current study, a broader sample of participants from diverse backgrounds including age, socioeconomic status, disability and gender would be beneficial. Longitudinal research on the positive long-term impacts on students is warranted. Further research could also examine what motivates students to want to undertake an international WIL placement and investigate if students who have travelled overseas previously are more likely to express their interest in going. It would be valuable to research the viewpoints of the student supervisors and also of the staff in the placement centres. As this research studied participants who were accompanied and supported by university supervisors, it would be prudent to research the experiences of students who undertake a university planned but unaccompanied international WIL placement. Additionally, further research could examine if an international WIL placement positively affects the student's likelihood of obtaining a job post-graduation.

5.8 Conclusion

The participants in this study described their experiences of undertaking a disability-specific international WIL placement in Brunei Darussalam. The participants related the experience was positive and valuable and the findings indicated students believed the experience increased their cultural competence. The participants' personal and professional growth was aided by being, 'outside their comfort zone', by being exposed to a different set of cultural norms and by overcoming challenging experiences. The participants provided their opinions on the local food, the weather and their accommodation. They also communicated that the disability services centre and international WIL placement experience exceeded their expectations. They reported the experience was 'amazing' and it provided them with insight into a different culture and how that culture works with disability. Furthermore, they provided recommendations to future students and also to other university course administrators who may be considering implementing international WIL placements. Their recommendations include: holding comprehensive pre-departure sessions; having quality university supervision;

and ensuring, through an interview personality vetting process, that the students who are chosen to undertake an international WIL placement are open-minded, flexible and non-judgemental. With international WIL placements increasing in number, it is vital to undertake research that aims to identify what makes such placements successful and what promotes optimal learning for the participating students.

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Appendix 1 – Table, in chronological order, of WIL studies reviewed

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
DeDee, L., & Stewart, S.	2003	The Effect of Student Participation in International Study	38 Nursing alumni students who undertook the two-week international placement during the previous five years	USA / to mainly Brussels, Paris and London	To describe how their international study experience influenced their personal and professional life.	Qualitative: a descriptive and retrospective, correlational design. International Education Survey (IES).	A large impact on alumni was found in 4 IES categories: *personal development, *professional nurse role, *international perspective and *intellectual development. The highest impact was found in the areas of *international and *transcultural knowledge, *interaction with people from others cultures and *revaluating their outlook on life in the USA. Statements made by the students reflected their experience was positive and life changing. It also gave them the experience of being a minority.	Not included
Evanson, T.A., & Zust, B.L.	2006	Bittersweet Knowledge: The Long-Term Effects of an International Experience	6 former nursing students (5 female, 1 male) who, 2 years prior, had participated in the Evanson and Zust (2004) study.	USA / to Guatemala	To define the long-term effects an international nursing placement had on the students' personal and professional lives.	Qualitative: a descriptive qualitative study using individual written narratives and a focus group.	The main theme that emerged from the data was that of * 'Bittersweet knowledge'. Three supporting themes also emerged: * 'Coming to understand', * 'Unsettled Feelings' and * 'Advocating for Change.'	A study comparing the long-term effectiveness of international placements in developed and developing countries is needed and should include a larger group of nursing participants.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Stachowski, L.L., & Sparks, T.	2007	Thirty Years and 2,000 Student Teachers Later: An Overseas Student Teaching Project That is Popular, Successful, and Replicable	2000 education students.	USA / to Australia, China, Costa Rica, England, India, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Russia, Scotland, Spain, or Wales	To describe the impact of international experiences for preservice teachers?	Mixed methods. The collection of data was done via student teachers' on-location reports, comprehensive evaluations undertaken by the student teachers and host country teachers, follow-up surveys mailed to former participants one year post trip.	Students *gained a larger and more well-rounded perspective of the world, *their eyes were opened others' beliefs, *they stepped outside their comfort zone and *grew personally and professionally.	Suggestions for overseas program developers: Participants must be prepared, require instate student teaching experience prior to the overseas placement, should be an individual experience to enable the student to stand on his/her own feet, the overseas placement needs to have structure and focus and planners should make use of existing programs.
Greatrex-White, S.	2008	Uncovering study abroad: Foreignness and its relevance to nurse education and cultural competence	26 Nursing students.	England / to various.	To describe how study abroad is manifest in the experience of nursing students.	Qualitative via analysis of student diaries.	6 general themes emerged *leaving behind, *escape, *foreigner, *self-discovery, *learning and *risk. Focus of the study is on the 'foreigner' and its associations. Findings support earlier studies that found study abroad develops cultural competence. Study abroad allowed the students to develop an awareness of the host culture and a mindfulness of their own culture.	Study abroad deserves greater attention as it capable developing culturally competent nurses. There are many participant views of study abroad that need to be told.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Critchley, K., Richardson, E., Aarts, C., Campbell, B., Hemmingway, A., & Koskinen, L., Mitchell, M. P., Nordstrom, P.	2009	Student Experiences With an International Public Health Exchange Project Consider how their participation in the project may have changed them.	35 Nursing students.	Canada / to Europe	To assess the learning gained and challenges of being together from participating in the project.	Mixed methods using a modified government survey tool pre and post exchange, students were required to comment during exchange, faculty held direct talks with students during the exchange.	Favourable overall view of the experience. Students found *experience to be unforgettable and one that provided them with unexpected experiences. Developed both *personally and professionally through personal challenges.	It would be worthwhile to repeat the Zorn study with the participants from this research.
Crossman, J., & Clarke, M.	2009	International experience and graduate employability: stakeholder perceptions on the connection	45 employers, academics and students.	N/A	To determine if companies, teachers and students believe there are clear associations between international placement involvement and graduate employability.	Qualitative study using interviews and semi-structured questionnaire.	*experiential learning *the ability to establish networks, *acquisition of a foreign language, and the *expansion of their abilities associated to cultural issues, *ways of thinking and personal temperament.	A comparison study of students with and without an international experience is needed to ascertain if the international experience provided students with a unique skill set or merely enhanced their skill set.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Levine, M.	2009	Transforming Experiences: Nursing Education and International Immersion Programs	10 Bachelor of Nursing students - each had undertaken one of the author's international placements, which lasted between 6-9 weeks.	USA / to various	To capture the perspectives of American nurses who, as students, participated in international immersion programs.	Qualitative using in-depth interviews that were conducted from 3 to 13 years post experience.	A number of common themes were developed from the interviews. The 3 categories of themes: * 'Having blind trust', * 'valuing others', and * 'transforming experiences.' The research found diametrically opposed concepts called <i>dialectics</i> . The three were the, *'haves and have nots,' being both an, *'insider and outsider,' and, *'a world shrinking, a world expanding.' Change was produced in the participants through exposure and awareness.	Additional testing of themes uncovered in the research would be beneficial.
Johns, A., & Thompson, C.	2010	Developing Cultural Sensitivity Through Study Abroad	Nursing students	USA / to Guatemala	To develop nursing students' cultural sensitivity through undertaking a study abroad program and to report the benefits of such experiences.	Qualitative using student journals and pre and post trip debriefings.	The students reflected that their placement was *life changing, it *changed their understanding of the health care structure, *their understanding of the association between health and poverty and *their consciousness of their own cultural norms.	Additional research to ascertain the long-term influence of the participants' growth in cultural sensitivity.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Parsons, R. L.	2010	The Effects of an Internationalized University Experience on Domestic Students in the United States and Australia	Freshman and seniors from 3 universities (Griffith University in Queensland, Buffalo State in New York and Kennesaw State University in Georgia) completed some or all of a survey for 1,302 responses.	Various	To ascertain if students obtain the expected and desired benefits from university international placements that advocates claim they do.	Qualitative using a survey with six measurement scales and background questionnaire.	Study abroad *brought about change in all areas except general international knowledge and charitable involvement.	The data can be used by universities to outline their own objectives for internationalisation and assist them in targeting inputs to achieve desired outcomes.
Smith-Miller, C., Leak, A., Harlan, C., Dieckmann, J., & Sherwood, G.	2010	"Leaving the Comfort of the Familiar": Fostering Workplace Cultural Awareness Through Short-Term Global Experiences	15 Nursing and allied health students (baccalaureate and masters).	USA / to Guatemala	To assist the growth in the cultural competence of nursing students and then transfer it into the clinical setting	Qualitative using student reflection papers.	Short-term global immersion experiences inform nursing students' cultural awareness, learning, and future practice. It *adds to their personal development and *increases their awareness of multicultural care.	Cultural learning should not end when students enter the workforce. Staff can aid the development of cultural competency by organizing and supporting discussions around films, literature and academic articles etc.
Read, C.Y.	2011	Semester Abroad Opportunities in Baccalaureate Nursing Programs	382 administrators of baccalaureate nursing programs in USA.	N/A	To discover how many baccalaureate-nursing programs in USA offer semester abroad programs.	Mixed methods using a survey.	Despite the small number of programs and small number of students who participate, the survey responses indicated there are *many benefits to the study abroad program.	Data needs to be collected on the long-term effects of: vocation choice, graduate study, sustained foreign language adeptness, cultural competence, willingness to volunteer, and involvement in sustainability efforts with disadvantaged populations.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Smith, K., & Curry, K.	2011	Is It Worth It? Measuring the Long-Term Effects of an International Experience for Nursing Students in Ecuador	36 associate degree nursing student graduates from 1999-2008.	USA / to Ecuador	To ascertain if undertaking an international placement assists students in providing demonstrably enhanced culturally compatible care after they graduate and enter the workforce.	Qualitative descriptive study that used a non-experimental survey design. Data was collected using the International Education Survey (IES). Two open-ended questions were asked of participants.	Increases were recorded in all four dimensions measured by the IES scale (professional role as a nurse, international perspectives, personal development, and intellectual development). A number of participants mentioned the placement had been meaningful and that they had grown from * the experience of being an outsider. Themes: *international experience was measurably positive.	Further research is necessary to establish the usefulness of the IES survey in different countries and in programs of various durations.
Harrowing, J., Gregory, D., O'Sullivan, P., Lee, B., & Doolittle, L.	2012	A critical analysis of undergraduate students' cultural immersion experiences.	14 undergraduate nursing students and 8 non-nursing students.	Canada / to Malawi	To ascertain if undertaking an international placement impacts a participant's understanding of culture.	Qualitative narrative analysis was used at 3 different time points. Students submitted two essays describing their understanding of culture. A subgroup completed a 3rd narrative after undertaking a later placement in Malawi.	Students *experienced growth, but *their understanding of culture did not change as a consequence of undertaking their immersion experience.	Further investigation and critical analysis is needed in regard to cultural immersion to ascertain how such experiences contribute to students learning about culture.
Jones, A. M., Neubrande r, J., Huff, M.	2012	A Cultural Immersion Experience for Nursing Students	Undergraduate students: nursing (10), nutrition (2), recreational therapy (1), communications (1). All were females and aged 20-22.	USA / to Ecuador	To study the effects an intense overseas placement has on the cultural attitudes of nursing students	Mixed methods – students tested before departure and after returning on cultural attitudes using Cushner's Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity (ICCS). Students wrote a daily journal.	The ICSS results showed *a positive trend in attitudes of the students toward cultural differences but the results were not statistically significant. However, the students' qualitative journals *revealed a substantial change in their cultural attitudes. *Changes were also seen in the students' personal and professional growth, *in confirmation / redirection of their career choices / goals, and in *appreciating the differences in wealth between the USA and Ecuador.	To strengthen the overall qualitative study, the students should be given controlled questions for their journals and a post trip focus group should be held.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Peiying, N., Goddard, T., Gribble, N., & Pickard, C.	2012	International Placements Increase the Cultural Sensitivity and Competency of Professional Health Students: A Quantitative and Qualitative Study	17 final year health professions students from OT, PT and ST.	Australia / to China or India	To ascertain the difference in students' cultural sensitivity before and after an international clinical placement.	Mixed methods. The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was used to measure cultural sensitivity. A paired sample test was used for analysis. A guided learning journal was also used for the qualitative data. A phenomenological approach was used for the qualitative data.	Quantitative findings: * no statistically significant change in the overall or individual scale scores except for the Acceptance/Adaptation scale. Qualitative findings: *five themes were identified that aligned with an increase in cultural sensitivity and competency.	Additional research is required to confirm the effectiveness of comparable programs. Traditional local placements compared with overseas placements should be studied and longer-term follow-up studies are needed to ascertain if the increases are permanent.
Briscoe, L.	2013	Becoming culturally sensitive: A painful process?	3rd year Midwifery students (17).	UK / to America, Canada or Guatemala	To examine how midwifery students develop cultural sensitivity.	Mixed methods. 13 matched self-assessments pre and post a Global Midwifery Module were compared. The self-assessments allowed for measured responses and a qualitative evaluation.	Students gained an understanding about international midwifery and the module assisted in enhancing their practice and care for people from another culture. When undertaken in a safe place, *critical reflection may assist students in transforming their thinking.	Leaders need to encourage students to reflect in a critical manner.
Diesal, H.J., Ercole, P.M., Taliaferro, D. L.	2013	Changing Knowledge Attitudes, and Beliefs via an Immersion Experience	33 Senior level nursing students.	USA / to Kenya.	To ascertain how or whether cultural immersion influences knowledge and retention.	Quantitative pilot study of quasi-experimental pre-/post-test design. Questionnaires at 3 separate time points (before and after an educational intervention and again at 60 days later).	Findings: both groups were *more willing to provide care for HIV/AIDS patients as a results of undertaking the course. The immersion experience *may have helped the travel group maintain their willingness to provide care.	Future research could examine if immersion experiences have a permanent effect on knowledge retention, attitude and belief changes.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Graham, K., Hill, P., Reynolds, L.	2013	A thematic analysis and a reflective description of the experience of nursing, midwifery and paramedic students on a short-term mobility community health placement in Vietnam.	Nursing (4), Midwifery (2), Paramedics (8) undergraduate students	Australia / to Vietnam	To provide insight into the effects on student learning from undertaking an overseas placement and to enhance understanding about WIL.	Qualitative study design with thematic analysis using semi-structured face-to-face interviews with students and their reflective journals.	Contributes insight into the student perspective of their WIL experience. Themes emerged about *Student safety, *support, *academic rigour of the placement are necessary for a favourable international learning experience.	Requirements for successful WIL include ensuring the safety of students, fully supporting students at every stage and ensuring suitable academic rigour and professional standards are attained.
Maynes, N., Allison, J., & Julien-Schultz, L.	2013	An Examination of Longevity of Impact of an International Practicum Experience on Teachers' Beliefs and Practices Four Years Later	17 preservice teachers.	Canada/ to Kenya	To study the impact, four years post placement in Kenya, of two participants to ascertain the longevity of the impact on them.	Qualitative phenomenological investigation. 2 of the original 17 pre service teachers who participated in three weeks in Kenya. Original study done four weeks post trip.	The participants advised their experience changed their view of social justice. Both participants indicated the *experience affected their lifestyles, vocational choices and practices. They *retained the initial impact. Their reflections became strongly held beliefs about themselves and other people. Each showed a great respect for people of diverse circumstances.	Further research is needed to compare the practices and expressed values of students who have undertaken an international WIL placement in a developing country with those who have not. This will show if their professional growth is due to the distinctiveness of the placement.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Puri, A., Kaddoura, M., Dominick, C.	2013	Student Perception of Travel Service Learning Experience in Morocco	9 Health profession students (dental hygiene and nursing students).	USA / to Morocco	To explore student perceptions of service learning in Morocco while adapting health care practices to cultural diversity.	Qualitative study using semi-structured, open-ended interviews.	Themes: *motivation to serve, *bridging theory to practice gap, *bridging inter-cultural gaps and urban/rural divide, *inter-professional learning and collaboration, *lack of access to care and ethical issues and professional *growth as a health care provider.	Authors acknowledge the lack of diversity and gender balance among the participants and therefore recommend that additional studies are comprised of a diverse population.
Stebleton, M. J., Soria, K. M., Cherney, B. T.	2013	The High Impact of Education Abroad: College Students' Engagement in International Experiences and the Development of International Competencies	287,498 undergraduate students across 12 universities in 2010. The response level was 34.7 % (n =99,810). 58% female, 41.9% male from relatively diverse backgrounds	Various	A multi-institutional study that looked at if different international activities that students participate in produce dissimilar results re enhancing the students' global and intercultural proficiencies.	Quantitative using the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU).	The findings suggest that university overseas experiences * increase students' intercultural and global capabilities. These meet or exceed the results of other overseas travel experiences.	The researchers recommend qualitative interviews to be done with students who have completed education abroad opportunities to learn more about the students' experiences.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Tuckett, A., & Crompton, P.	2013	Qualitative understanding of an international learning experience: What Australian undergraduate nurses and midwives said about a Cambodia placement.	39 x 3rd year bachelor of Nursing and dual degree nursing/midwifery students.	Australia / to Cambodia	To detail the experiences of 3 groups of Nursing and Midwifery students from Australia who undertook a four-week international placement in Cambodia.	Interpretative research design using qualitative analysis. Students answered two questions prior to travel. Additionally, on days 7, 18 and 27 of placement, the students answered open-ended questions.	The data uncovered two main themes: * 'global citizen/better citizen and *personal/professional development.' The placement allowed students to see how a vastly different health system runs. It enabled students to appreciate the values and beliefs of a different culture. This helped them *gain tolerance for understanding other cultures. Students *felt empowered and inspired by the placement. It equipped them with skills they can use throughout their lives.	Additional research is needed to ascertain the tangible continued effect of experiences like these.
Charles, L., Maltby, H., Abrams, S., Shea, J., Brand, G., & Nicol, P.	2014	Expanding Worldview: Australian nursing students' experience of cultural immersion in India	8 senior Australian Nursing students.	Australia / to India	To detail the experience of Australian nursing students who undertook a five-week cultural immersion program in India.	Qualitative descriptive design using the reflective journals of the students. Data analysis used Colaizzi's (1978) steps to guide the study.	5 themes emerged: *focus on self, *focus on difference, *recognition of validity of a different system, *working within the cultural infrastructure and *application and transferability. The participants progressed through the themes at different rates but there were common themes across several journals.	Additional studies of different immersion experiences are needed. Required also is research into the long-term cultural implications of these experiences.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Kaerney, S., Perkins, T., & Maakrun, J.	2014	A transformative experience: A short-term cross-cultural service-learning immersion to Kenya	21 undergraduate pre-service teaching students.	Australia / to Kenya	To explore the impact of the service-learning experience on the students' personal growth and their development of professional competences.	A qualitative case-oriented study where students were observed and recorded throughout the immersion. Meetings were filmed for the purpose of the study. Some students were interviewed about the immersion and others gave interviews to media. Student journal reflections were also used.	Students *developed self-confidence in their abilities and their practice. It was *a life changing experience. Students were placed in confronting environments and *they developed the capacity to turn a difficult situation into a positive one.	Longitudinal studies on the impact of these types of programs is needed to better appreciate the implication and length of the impact. Studies are also needed on the impact on the community, the school and students being, 'served'.
Browne, C., Fetherston, C., & Medigovich, K.	2015	International clinical placements for Australian undergraduate nursing students: A systematic thematic synthesis of the literature.	Systematic review of the existing information on overseas experiences offered by Australian undergraduate nursing programs.	N/A	To explore 3 questions: how have previous experiences been described, how have participants and stakeholders ascertained if it was successful, what benefits or challenges were identified.	Systematic review.	8 studies met the inclusion criteria and using thematic analysis, five key themes were identified: *developing cultural awareness and competence, *providing a global perspective on health care, *translation of theory into practice, *growing personally through reflection and *overcoming apprehension to successfully meet the challenge.	The personal successes of the students were identified but additional research is needed to identify all stakeholder experiences including those of the teachers, the placement agencies, travel providers and communities where the placements are undertaken.

Author/s	Date	Title	Participants	Country of Origin/ Placement Destination	Purpose/ Objective	Method used	Findings/implications/outcomes	Recommendations
Murray, B.	2015	Nursing Students' Experiences of Health Care in Swaziland: Transformational Processes in Developing Cultural Understanding	6 nursing students.	USA / to India	To examine the experiences of nursing students following a placement in Swaziland.	Qualitative study using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis.	Four themes emerged: *transitions, *perceptions, * internalisation and *incorporation. The stress and cultural dissonance experienced by the students led to an increase in their cultural understanding and awareness. The results reflect other published research that shows the value of overseas study in teaching cultural understanding.	For educators to come up with ways of incorporating similar processes of cultural dissonance to provoke the onset of coping strategies in students without having them undertake travel to a foreign country. Possibly placing students in placements that are outside their comfort zone will have this effect.
Afriyie Asenso, B., Reimer-Kirkham, S., & Astle, B. (2013).	2016	In Real Time: Exploring Nursing Students' Learning during an International Experience	8 Nursing students.	Canada / to Zambia	To examine how nursing students learn during an overseas placement.	Qualitative design, utilizing ethnographic data collection methods. Students were observed and interviewed 3 times during their overseas placement.	Three major themes: *expectations shaped students' learning, *engagement facilitated learning and critical reflection enhanced learning.	Innovative ways need to be sought in order to create long-term mutually beneficial partnerships between students and international hosts to avoid shallow and expensive trips that may reinforce social inequalities.

Appendix 2

18 July 2016

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

for 2015 Brunei Overseas Mobility Group

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter is to introduce Peggy Essl who is a Master of Disability Studies student in the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit at Flinders University. She will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

She is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of 'What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement. She wants to find out how undergraduate disability and developmental education students describe their experience of a short-term overseas mobility placement.

She would like to invite you to assist with this project by agreeing to be involved in an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. No more than one hour on one occasion would be required.

Be assured that every effort will be made not to identify you and to keep your individual information confidential in the resulting thesis, report or other publications. However, due to the small number of participants and the fact that all the participants are from an identifiable source, your anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Due to the nature of the study, it is very unlikely that you will divulge any information pertaining to illegal behaviour, socially unacceptable behaviour or anything that would cause you embarrassment etc. Nonetheless, in order to mitigate any physical, psychological or social risks, you are free to decline to respond to any or all questions or ask that the interview to cease at any time without any explanation or consequence. Also, you will be able to view and amend interview transcripts and ask that any unprocessed part of the data or all the unprocessed data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study prior to the data analysis being undertaken.

Since she intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the thesis, report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed. The recording will not be made available to any other person. It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants (or a transcription service) for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement which outlines the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me at the address given above or by telephone on 08 8201 3970, fax 08 8201 3646 or e-mail louise.reynolds@flinders.edu.au

Thank you for your attention and assistance.

Yours sincerely

Dr Louise Reynolds
Research Supervisor
Disability and Community Inclusion
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7234). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 3

INFORMATION SHEET for 2015 Brunei Overseas Mobility Group

Title: *What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement?*

Researchers:

Ms Peggy Essl
Disability and Community Inclusion Unit
Flinders University
Ph: 8201 5221

Supervisor(s):

Dr Louise Reynolds
Disability and Community Inclusion Unit
Flinders University
Ph: 8201 3970

A/Prof Caroline Ellison
Disability and Community Inclusion Unit
Flinders University
Ph: 8201 3422

Description of the study: This study is part of the project entitled '*What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement.*' This project will investigate how undergraduate disability and developmental education students describe their experience of a short-term overseas mobility placement. This project is supported by the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit at Flinders University.

Purpose of the study: This project aims to gain an understanding about the student's lived experience while undertaking a disability related short-term overseas mobility placement. The emergent themes from the data sources will provide a description of the international placement experience. This description will address the paucity of existing literature on Disability students' overseas short-term mobility placements which is non-existent.

What will I be asked to do?

You are invited to attend a one-on-one interview with a Master's student who will ask you a few questions about your overseas mobility experience in Brunei. The interview will take 45 to 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to help with looking at the results. Once recorded, the interview will be transcribed (typed-up) and stored as a computer file and then destroyed once the results have been finalised. Participating in the interview is voluntary.

What benefit will I gain from being involved in this study?

The sharing of your experiences will help fill the gap in the knowledge of the self-reported perceptions of Disability and Developmental Education students participating in an overseas short-term mobility placement. It will also provide insight for course administrators and academics in the Disability and Community Inclusion Unit to improve the planning and delivery of future programs as well as help to support in the promotion of similar experiences to future students.

Will I be identifiable by being involved in this study?

Due to the small pool of potential participants and the fact that all the participants are from an identifiable source, it is not possible to guarantee your anonymity. However, you can be assured that any information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. Additionally, due to the nature of the study, it is very unlikely that you will divulge any information pertaining to illegal behaviour, socially unacceptable behaviour, or anything that would cause you embarrassment etc. Nonetheless, in order to mitigate any physical, psychological or social risks, you are free to decline to respond to any or all questions or ask that the interview to cease at any time without any explanation or consequence. Furthermore, if you experience any emotional distress during the interview, the interview will be ceased immediately and not rescheduled. After a minimum of 24 hours has passed, Louise Reynolds will contact you via email to see if you wish to come back and be interviewed. If you decline, no further contact will be made with you. Also, you will be able to view and amend interview transcripts and ask that any unprocessed part of the data or all the unprocessed data that you have contributed be withdrawn from the study prior to the data analysis being undertaken. Once the interview has been typed-up and saved as a file, the voice file will then be destroyed. Any identifying information will be removed and the typed-up file stored on a password protected computer that only the Master's student, Ms Peggy Essl, will have access to.

Are there any risks or discomforts if I am involved?

Other group members may be able to identify your contributions even though they will not be directly attributed to you. The investigator anticipates few risks from your involvement in this study. However, some participants may experience anxiety and/or emotional distress. If you do experience anxiety and/or emotional distress, the interview will be ceased immediately, the interview will not be rescheduled and no further contact from the research team will be made with you following the cessation of interview. There are counselling / support services which you may access free of charge. Flinders University Health, Counselling & Disability Services phone number is 8201-2118 and Lifeline's 24 hour telephone support phone number is 13 11 14. Additionally, you are able to contact the research team at any time if you have questions or concerns.

How do I agree to participate?

Participation is voluntary. You may answer 'no comment' or refuse to answer any questions and you are free to cease the interview at any time without effect or consequences. A consent form accompanies this information sheet. If you agree to participate please read and sign the form and send it back to me at louise.reynolds@flinders.edu.au.

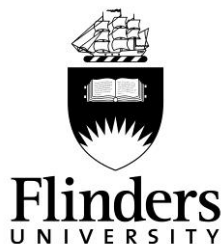
How will I receive feedback?

If you wish, you will be able to view and amend a copy of your interview transcript as soon as it becomes available. Additionally, outcomes from the project will be summarised and given to you by the investigator if you would like to see them.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and we hope that you will accept our invitation to be involved.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project number 7234). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au

Appendix 4



CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH by interview

What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement

I

being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the Letter of Introduction and Information Sheet for the research project on 'What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement.' I have read the information provided.

- Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
- I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
- I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
- I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - The information gained in this study will be published as explained and every effort will be made not to identify you and to keep your individual information confidential. However, due to the small number of participants and the fact that all the participants are from an identifiable source, your anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on my progress in my course of study, or results gained.
 - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....

Researcher's signature.....Date.....

NB: Two signed copies should be obtained. The copy retained by the researcher may then be used for authorisation of Items 8 and 9, as appropriate.

I, the participant whose signature appears below, have read a transcript of my participation and agree to its use by the researcher as explained.

Participant's signature.....Date.....

Appendix 5

Interview Guide

Interview Questions/topics

Opening/rapport

1. Where have you travelled overseas prior to undertaking this trip?
 - Please describe your previous overseas travel experience/s.
2. How did your prior overseas travel influence your decision to go on this placement?
 - What wisdom did you bring to Brunei from your previous overseas travel?
3. If you have not had prior overseas travel experience, what motivated you to choose to go to on the Brunei placement?

Questions about the placement

4. Where did you go on your placement?
 - How long did you go for?
 - When did you go?
5. What were your expectations of your overseas placement?
 - How were your expectations met?
 - Please elaborate.

Questions about the experience

6. How did you feel in the first 48 hours after arriving?
 - What was the environment like? How was it different from what you anticipated?
 - What was your accommodation like? How was it different from what you anticipated?
 - What was the food like? How was it different from what you anticipated?
 - What were the Bruneians like? How were they different from what you anticipated?
7. How did it feel to be a non-native?
 - In general?
 - In terms of your placement?
 - In terms of language?
8. What did you find unexpected
 - about the placement activities?
 - about other experiences during the trip?
9. What did you find surprising
 - about the placement activities?
 - about other experiences during the trip?

10. What did you find difficult
 - about the placement activities?
 - about other experiences during the trip?
11. What did you find challenging
 - about the placement activities?
 - about other experiences during the trip?

Questions about the impact of experience

12. How has your experience during this placement impacted your attitude about international disability services?
13. How has your experience during this placement impacted your attitude toward other cultures?
14. How do you think your future practice in the disability field will change as a result of this experience?
 - How did the experience enhance your skills in working with people with a disability?
 - How did the experience assist with your professional development?
15. How has this overseas placement experience impacted you as a person?
 - How did the experience impact your interpersonal skills?

Summary questions

16. In regard to your experience is there any event or matter you would like to share?
17. If you would recommended this experience to other Disability students, why would you?
18. What advice can you provide to future students considering going on a similar overseas placement experience?
19. What skills are necessary to be a good student mentor/supervisor on an overseas placement?
20. After graduation, would you consider being a graduate student mentor/supervisor to other students doing an international placement?
 - Why or why not?
 - If yes, what skills would you bring to the role of overseas student mentor/supervisor?
21. Have you kept in touch with any contacts / friends you made while in Brunei?
 - How do you keep in touch?
22. Do you have any suggestions for improvements for future overseas placements?

Appendix 6

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:

7234

Project Title:

What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement?

Principal Researcher:

Ms Margaret (Peggy) Essl

Email:

peggy.essl@flinders.edu.au

Approval Date:

15 July 2016

Ethics Approval Expiry Date:

30 June 2018

The above proposed project has been approved on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 7234). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

In order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the **National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)** an annual progress report must be submitted each year on the 15 July (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval using the report template available from the [Managing Your Ethics Approval](#) SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects

The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data.

Your first report is due on 15 July 2017 or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest.

Student experience of undertaking short-term international WIL placement

Peggy Essl, July 2017

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, principal researcher or supervisor change);
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes / additions to information and/or documentation to be provided to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., questionnaire, interview questions, focus group questions);
- extensions of time.

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the [Managing Your Ethics Approval](#) SBREC web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Committee if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the Executive Officer of the Ethics Committee on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au immediately if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.

Appendix 7

MODIFICATION (No.1) APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	7234		
Project Title:	What was the experience of undergraduate disability and developmental education students undertaking a short-term overseas mobility placement?		
Principal Researcher:	Ms Margaret (Peggy) Essl		
Email:	peggy.essl@flinders.edu.au		
Modification Approval Date:	1 March 2017	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	30 June 2018

I am pleased to inform you that the modification request submitted for project 7234 on the 9 February 2017 has been reviewed and approved by the SBREC Chairperson. A summary of the approved modifications are listed below. Any additional information that may be required from you will be listed in the second table shown below called 'Additional Information Required'.

Approved Modifications	
Extension of ethics approval expiry date	
Project title change	
Personnel change	yes
Research objectives change	
Research method change	
Participants – addition +/- change	
Consent process change	
Recruitment process change	
Research tools change	
Document / Information Changes	
Other (if yes, please specify)	

Additional Information Required
None.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS

1. Participant Documentation

Please note that it is the responsibility of researchers and supervisors, in the case of student projects, to ensure that:

- all participant documents are checked for spelling, grammatical, numbering and formatting errors. The Committee does not accept any responsibility for the above mentioned errors.
- the Flinders University logo is included on all participant documentation (e.g., letters of Introduction, information Sheets, consent forms, debriefing information and questionnaires – with the exception of purchased research tools) and the current Flinders University letterhead is included in the header of all letters of introduction. The Flinders University international logo/letterhead should be used and documentation should contain international dialling codes for all telephone and fax numbers listed for all research to be conducted overseas.
- the SBREC contact details, listed below, are included in the footer of all letters of introduction and information sheets.

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee (Project Number 'INSERT PROJECT No. here following approval'). For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

2. Annual Progress / Final Reports

Please be reminded that in order to comply with the monitoring requirements of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research \(March 2007\)](#) an annual progress report must be submitted each year on **15 July** (approval anniversary date) for the duration of the ethics approval.

If the project is completed *before* ethics approval has expired please ensure a final report is submitted immediately. If ethics approval for your project expires please submit either (1) a final report; or (2) an extension of time request and an annual report.

Student Projects

The SBREC recommends that current ethics approval is maintained until a student's thesis has been submitted, reviewed and approved. This is to protect the student in the event that reviewers recommend some changes that may include the collection of additional participant data. Your next report is due on **15 July 2017** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. The report template is available from the [Managing Your Ethics Approval](#) SBREC web page. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.*

3. Modifications to Project

Modifications to the project must not proceed until approval has been obtained from the Ethics Committee. Such proposed changes / modifications include:

- change of project title;
- change to research team (e.g., additions, removals, principal researcher or supervisor change);
- changes to research objectives;
- changes to research protocol;
- changes to participant recruitment methods;
- changes / additions to source(s) of participants;
- changes of procedures used to seek informed consent;
- changes to reimbursements provided to participants;
- changes / additions to information and/or documentation to be provided to potential participants;
- changes to research tools (e.g., questionnaire, interview questions, focus group questions);
- extensions of time.

To notify the Committee of any proposed modifications to the project please complete and submit the *Modification Request Form* which is available from the [Managing Your Ethics Approval](#) SBREC

web page. Download the form from the website every time a new modification request is submitted to ensure that the most recent form is used. Please note that extension of time requests should be submitted prior to the Ethics Approval Expiry Date listed on this notice.

Change of Contact Details

Please ensure that you notify the Executive Officer if either your mailing or email address changes to ensure that correspondence relating to this project can be sent to you. A modification request is not required to change your contact details.

4. Adverse Events and/or Complaints

Researchers should advise the [Executive Officer](#) immediately on 08 8201-3116 or human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au if:

- any complaints regarding the research are received;
- a serious or unexpected adverse event occurs that effects participants;
- an unforeseen event occurs that may affect the ethical acceptability of the project.