

'SANDWICH PhD': CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL EXPERIENCE ABROAD

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ABSTRACT

International PhD internship, named "Sandwich PhD" in Brazil, is an opportunity to improve research abilities, to become known in academic area and to establish and/or increase work opportunities in an international context. In this article, we describe key factors regarding the planning and development of the "Sandwich PhD" as experienced by professors and students involved in the collaboration between the School of Nursing, University of São Paulo and Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, University of Toronto, Canada. We also present the participation of PhD students' network as an alternative to the "Sandwich PhD". An international experience, when well-planned and developed correctly, promotes students' personal and professional development and favors the internationalization of Brazilian graduate programs and research groups.

Descriptors: Nursing. Education, graduate. International educational exchange. International cooperation.

RESUMO

O estágio de doutorado no exterior, conhecido, no Brasil, como "Doutorado Sanduíche", é uma oportunidade de aprimorar as habilidades em pesquisa, destacar-se no meio acadêmico e estabelecer e/ou ampliar oportunidades de trabalho em contexto internacional. Neste artigo, descrevemos elementos-chave do processo de planejamento e desenvolvimento do Doutorado Sanduíche aprendidos por professores e alunos envolvidos na colaboração entre a Escola de Enfermagem da Universidade de São Paulo e a Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, Universidade de Toronto, Canadá, e apresentamos a participação em uma rede de doutorados, como alternativa ao Doutorado Sanduíche. A experiência internacional, quando bem planejada e desenvolvida, promove o desenvolvimento pessoal e profissional do aluno, favorece a internacionalização dos programas de pós-graduação e dos grupos de pesquisa brasileiros.

Descritores: Enfermagem. Educação de pós-graduação. Intercâmbio educacional internacional. Cooperação internacional.
Título: Doutorado sanduíche: considerações para uma experiência de sucesso no exterior.

RESUMEN

Una estancia de doctorado internacional, "Doctorado Sándwich" como es conocido en Brasil, es una oportunidad de mejorar las habilidades de investigación, hacerse conocido académicamente y establecer y/o agrandar las oportunidades de trabajo en el contexto internacional. En este artículo, nosotros describimos factores importantes del proceso de la planificación y desarrollo del "Doctorado Sándwich" aprendidos por estudiantes y profesores involucrados en la colaboración entre la Escuela de Enfermería de la Universidad de São Paulo y la Facultad de Enfermería Lawrence S. Bloomberg, Universidad de Toronto, Canadá y presentamos la participación en una red de doctorados como una alternativa a la estancia doctoral internacional. La experiencia internacional, cuando bien planeada y desarrollada, promueve el desarrollo personal y profesional del estudiante y favorece la internacionalización de los programas de postgrado y de los grupos de investigación brasileños.

Descriptores: Enfermería. Educación de postgrado. Intercambio educacional internacional. Cooperación internacional.
Título: Doctorado sándwich: consideraciones para una experiencia exitosa en el extranjero.

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INTRODUCTION

Brazil had 32 Graduate Programs *stricto sensu* in Nursing credentialed in 2008 by the Coordination of Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), from which, 14 at PhD-level⁽¹⁾. The main objective of the Graduate Program is to train researchers capable of developing and testing nursing knowledge⁽²⁾. Therefore, it is desirable that the PhD student, in addition to competence, dedication and maturity, seek to empower future researchers to act as independent researchers.

The challenge of science in general and nursing in particular, is to train PhD students with researcher skills that may be equivalent to the best international research centers and who are able to work in partnership with national and international scholars. In order to achieve these goals, CAPES, as well as other state and national research funding agencies, have broadened the subsidies for PhD internship in foreign universities, known as "Sandwich PhD". In 2009, CAPES granted 1349 new scholarships abroad, of which 806 were PhD internship scholarships⁽³⁾.

The Sandwich PhD is an opportunity to improve skills in research, join the international academic environment and establish and/or expand job opportunities. This experience provides the student contact with prominent international researchers, the interaction with students and professionals in their area of interest and contact with other educational institutions, health centers and research laboratories.

This article describes the experience of two PhD students from the School of Nursing, University of Sao Paulo, who took the internship at Lawrence S. Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, in the University of Toronto.

The trajectory performed to achieve the scholarship demanded planning, negotiation with faculty researchers at the University of Toronto, requests for scholarships and financial resource, in addition submitting the planning of activities to be developed and the goals to be achieved during the internship. This experience report aims to reflect this experience about the "Sandwich PhD", provide elements to assist those interested in living this experience as well as motivate those interested in applying for a PhD to include this activity and plan means to enable it.

Objective

To describe key elements of the planning and development process of the PhD internship abroad and to reflect on the benefits of this type of internship for the graduate student.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF "SANDWICH PhD"

Considering the many activities needed between planning and implementation of "Sandwich PhD", we recommend that the possibility of internship abroad is conceived before the enrollment in the first year of the Graduate Program. The choice of advisor in the internship abroad is fundamental to the use of "Sandwich PhD". These contacts should be initiated in advance, because the earlier the contact is made, the greater the possibility that there is availability of the advisor. It is advisable that the student presents himself/herself integrally, as well as their Brazilian advisor, usually with a mini-curriculum. In a formal letter, it is important to detail training and qualification, explain what is a "Sandwich PhD" (since most of the foreign professors have never heard about such modality), explaining the thematic of interest or provide brief description of the research project or data collected. You must also include a proposal of initial work, stating the duration of the internship and additional information about the source of funding for the internship.

Having an established list of goals is also an important action to optimize the time and the activities to be developed. Furthermore, it assists the foreigner advisor/supervisor to define strategies that will be used during the training period. In our experience, the goals of the "Sandwich PhD" were developed in agreement between graduate students and advisors, and sent for analysis and suggestions from their advisor/supervisor at the University of Toronto.

The language issue is crucial to the success of "Sandwich PhD". Besides being a requirement by funding agencies and funding institutions, fluency is essential to take advantage of planned activities and program achievement, which involves participation in classes, courses, lectures, study groups, workshops, data analysis, and writing scientific articles. The English language proficiency required

for obtaining financial resource was the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the two students held specific preparatory courses to undergo the examination, which was of great help.

Another element that must be carefully planned in advance is how to have money for daily expenses and housing, as university residences and furnished apartments are difficult to find. It is worth mentioning that there are several possibilities for funding the "sandwich PhD". In the case of Sao Paulo State, the internship costs of one of the PhD students were covered with PhD Scholarship and grant its technical reserves of the Foundation for Research Support of the State of Sao Paulo (FAPESP), essential to maintain student living in Toronto for six months. It is also noteworthy that the flights were granted by the Graduate Studies Office at the University of Sao Paulo. The other student was funded with "Sandwich PhD" Scholarship from CAPES, which covered the cost of flight, housing, meals and transportation during their four months stay in the city of Toronto.

Finally, the preparation of the documentation required by the university and the country where the internship will take place must be provided in advance to facilitate entry into the country. It is noteworthy that the documents are needed not only for visa approval, but also for presentation to the immigration service on arrival in the foreign country.

In general, the planned and developed activities by the authors during the internship period included: participation in graduate courses classes and in research carried out by the advisor and colleagues, writing abstracts for international scientific events and scientific articles in partnership between advisors in Brazil and advisors abroad. In addition, visits to hospitals were made, which allowed the observation and monitoring of the activities of nurses in their respective clinical areas of expertise.

Establishing a good relationship in the international institution and leaving a good impression through the performed work can result in future partnerships. Given the need for internationalization of higher education in Brazil⁽⁴⁾, "Sandwich PhDs" can contribute to the networking of researchers who personally know each other and therefore have confidence in the quality of the work being developed so that the visibility of Brazilian scientific production may be expanded.

PhD International Network

Partnerships between educational institutions as well as working groups and international collaborations may be facilitators for conducting overseas training. For students who cannot leave Brazil for consecutive months, some PhD students' networks allow participation in online courses, short visits or intensive courses, such as summer courses, thus promoting international experience. We refer specifically to collaboration INPhD - International Nursing PhD Collaboration, a collaborative program of Nursing PhD students in partnership with universities from different countries: University of Toronto, Canada, University of Sydney and University of Melbourne, Australia, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain, University of Turku, Finland and the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

The INPhD Collaboration was designed by professors from the Faculties of Nursing, University of Toronto and Melbourne aiming to "develop a network of researchers, professors and students working in sustainable and long term collaborations, sharing effective and innovative methodologies for nursing studies, care and health promotion from an international perspective"⁽⁵⁾.

There are three main INPhD Collaboration activities: (i) active participation (readings, presentations and discussions) in an online course with students from partner institutions, coordinated by a professor member of the program; (ii) online co-orientation or internship for a minimum of four months in one of the partner institutions; (iii) participation in summer course, held every two years, which are performed research seminar, workshops to equip the development of articles for publication in international journals, as well as activities related to the internationalization of nursing.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participating of a "Sandwich PhD" or an international collaboration in nursing is a rewarding experience, both professionally and personally. This experience allows students to know other graduate research groups, experience different processes of academic work, learn alternative ways of funding research, strengthen contacts and create partnerships with researchers in different countries.

This is a unique opportunity for the Brazilian Nursing, in relation to its strengthening and internationalization, which should be experienced by many graduate students as part of the training and qualification of independent researchers.

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