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In 2014, Ruhija was recruited to the International Medical Program, Region Östergötland, as head of unit. In 2019, she commenced her PhD studies at the School of Health Sciences, Örebro University, focusing on experiential learning and design-based approaches to strengthening healthcare competencies in diverse international contexts. In 2025, she became a specialist in primary healthcare.

Non-technical skills are critical for safe and effective healthcare delivery, yet their development requires educational approaches that are context-sensitive and experience-based. This thesis explores how healthcare professionals in the Balkan region and in the context of international partnership collaborations in Sweden perceive non-technical skills and investigates how these skills can be developed through a design-based experiential learning approach.

Across four studies, a survey-based experiential learning model was developed and iteratively refined using a design-based re-search methodology. The model was theoretically grounded in experiential learning theory as described by David Kolb. The findings demonstrated that structuring learning around participants' professional experiences provided a reflective framework for knowledge development and application. The approach describes how the knowledge of non-technical skills is formed in the inter-action between the individual, team and organisation, and how it is influenced by context-specific conditions. The results suggest that integrating experiential learning cycles into context-adapted educational design can strengthen professional competencies and contribute to sustainable capacity building in diverse healthcare systems.

ISSN 1652-4063
ISBN 978-91-7529-753-8

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2026

Doctoral Dissertation

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Participatory research in a Balkan healthcare context

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Medical Science with a specialisation in Healthcare Science



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