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Understanding Preparedness: The Influence of Teaching and Learning Experience on Bioscience Integration by Nursing Lecturers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how teaching and learning experiences influence nursing lecturers’ preparedness to integrate biosciences in their teaching practice. The biological sciences have been a problematic component of nursing education and practice for many years and bioscience knowledge levels amongst many nursing lecturers are reported to be poor. This research encompasses a detailed exploration of the teaching and learning experiences of ten New Zealand nursing lecturers to identify experiences that influence their preparedness with bioscience integration.

The phenomenon of preparedness was explored from the perspective of transcendental phenomenological philosophy and the key theoretical construct of intentionality. Study participants’ subjective, conscious experiences were explored through in-depth interview and phenomenological analytical procedures to identify the universal experience and essences of how experiences came to be. Preparedness as a phenomenon is influenced by participants experiencing contrast, reflection and responsibility in learning, nursing, and teaching practice. These cognitive and affective processes occur as a result of the complex relationship between experiences, personal values and beliefs about ‘good’ nursing and teaching practice, and are found to be more influential than experience alone. This is an important discovery for nursing education as mere exposure to examples of bioscience in nursing may not affect students’ or lecturers’ perceptions of bioscience value.

The way that bioscience knowledge is valued within personal perceptions of good nursing underpins lecturers’ preparedness, and shapes the way that learning, teaching and practice experiences are evaluated. The research demonstrates the importance of reflective learning and meaning perspectives in bioscience education, and the preparedness of nursing lecturers to practice integrated teaching. However,
despite a willingness to integrate bioscience when teaching nurses, lecturers question their confidence with traditional academic perceptions of bioscience knowledge. The findings question contemporary pedagogies in bioscience education and epistemological perspectives of bioscience theory in the context of nursing as a practice-based profession. Recommendations are made to facilitate reflective learning, and lecturers’ preparedness with integrated teaching, through progressive spiral curricula that value clinical bioscience knowledge and the contribution of nursing lecturers’ clinical expertise.
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