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CLINICAL TEACHING AND LEARNING

AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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

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at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

Bonnie Patricia Kay Schroyen

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Abstract

For student nurses, the clinical setting is considered to be the most valuable and also the most complex learning situation of their professional education. There are currently many issues in New Zealand that affect the quality of experience available in clinical areas for these future nurses. This research was initiated by a polytechnic nursing lecturer to explore one teaching and learning situation in clinical settings with a group of student nurses in order to improve it.

This study took place during an eleven week clinical block for the students in the last semester of a three year Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing) programme. The research question identified by the student participants was: "How can we improve the teaching and learning in clinical settings?" Using an educational action research model the students identified the essential elements in the situation in order to plan, implement and evaluate a practical change strategy.

The main finding in the analysis was that the staff nurses have a major influence on the students' learning in clinical settings. Five staff nurses working closely with these students in clinical areas were included as the study widened to involve those affected by the proposed change. These staff nurses added their perspectives and these informed the planning phases. The students chose to introduce contract learning into their interactions with the staff nurses as a method to improve the teaching and learning in clinical settings.
During the action phase it was discovered that because these students were working in diverse clinical areas and were developing unique learning relationships with the staff nurses, the method of implementing contract learning required innovation and perseverance. The individual experiences of these students, the staff nurses and a polytechnic lecturer are described as a case study of events. The action taken and the reflection on factors which hindered and which facilitated the success of contract learning are presented from the perspectives of all participants.
# Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................... I

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................ II

GLOSSARY .......................................................................................................... IX

Chapter One ........................................................................................................ 1

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................. 1

Study aims .......................................................................................................... 1
Background ....................................................................................................... 2
The educational context .................................................................................. 3
Bachelor degree preparation ......................................................................... 4
Teaching and learning in clinical settings .................................................... 5
The 2000/01 review of undergraduate nursing education ......................... 9
Teaching and learning in the local context .................................................. 10
The research process ...................................................................................... 14
Significance of the study ............................................................................... 16
Structure of the thesis .................................................................................... 16

Chapter Two ..................................................................................................... 19

LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................................................................... 19

Introduction .................................................................................................... 19
What are the aims of nursing education? .................................................... 20
What defines 'good' teaching and 'quality' learning? ................................. 22
How do students learn from experience? .................................................... 23
How can a teacher promote quality learning? ............................................ 27
Which factors hinder and which facilitate learning in clinical settings ... 30
What influences the clinical teaching role for a polytechnic nursing lecturer and for a staff nurse? .......................................................... 31
What defines the role for the polytechnic nursing lecturer and for the staff nurse in clinical teaching? ............................................................ 35
What do nursing students learn in clinical settings? ................................... 38
What are the influences of the clinical learning environment on student learning? ................................................................................. 39
Summary ......................................................................................................... 42
**Chapter Three** ................................................................. 44

**ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY** .................................. 44

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research and nursing education</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research methodology</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant characteristics of action research</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research and change</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action research model of Kemmis and McTaggart</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigor in action research</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The action research in this study</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of the study</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical considerations</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The participants</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Four ........................................................................ 70

**RECONNAISSANCE** .......................................................... 70

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process - developing a shared understanding</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating group process</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student perspectives of the current situation</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff nurse perspectives of the current situation</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher perspective of the current situation</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic decisions from this analysis</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter Five ......................................................................... 90

**ACTION PLANNING** ......................................................... 90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process - practical planning considerations</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for a practical innovation</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing contract learning and a personal profile</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for change</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a contract document</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing the personal profile document</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDICES........................................................................................................184
Appendix A  Clinical learning environment model........................................184
Appendix B  The different phases and cycles in this action research........185
Appendix C  Participant information sheet, students ............................186
Appendix D  Consent form, students .........................................................191
Appendix E  Participant information sheet, staff nurse .........................192
Appendix F  Consent form, staff nurse .....................................................196
Appendix G  Audit trail ..........................................................197
Appendix H  Joint staff nurse/student interview schedule ....................200
Appendix I  Individual student interview ..............................................200
Appendix J  Individual staff nurse interview ........................................201
Appendix K  Results of small group instructional diagnosis ..................202
Appendix L  Phases/cycles and data analysis ......................................203
Appendix M  Sample learning contract format ..................................207
Appendix N  Sample student personal profile format ..........................208
Tables

Table 3-1: Table of invention........................................................................................................... 66

Table 4-1: Clinical settings and numbers of student participants ............................................. 73

Table 4-2: SGID results .................................................................................................................. 75

Table 7-1: Example of reflective journal format.......................................................................... 136

Figures

Figure 1: Kolb’s experiential learning cycle..................................................................................... 25

Figure 2: Action research spiral....................................................................................................... 52

Figure 3: Representation of interactions of participants in this action research............................ 110
Glossary

The following terms are defined for the purposes of this study:

**Staff nurse:** A registered nurse employed by the healthcare agency in which the student is gaining clinical experience.

**Student:** An undergraduate Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing) student from a polytechnic.

**Clinical setting:** Nursing practice areas in various healthcare organisations where students are placed by the polytechnic for planned clinical learning experiences.

**Elective experience:** An undergraduate nursing student's learning experience in a clinical setting in the final six months of their three year Bachelor of Health Science (Nursing) programme.

**Polytechnic Nursing Lecturer:** A teacher employed by a polytechnic. Teaching responsibilities may be in the classroom or in clinical settings.