

Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a method to reveal assumptions, values and understandings of teachers regarding international nursing student learners

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ABSTRACT

The Bradley Report (2008) highlights a need to investigate the experiences of international students in regard to learning and teaching with a focus on local and contextual issues. This presentation results from Participatory Action Research (Haslett, 2009) to explore learning and teaching issues relevant to international undergraduate nursing students at one campus of a Queensland University.

Nursing education research is informed by many approaches, including the traditional science positivist approaches. The positivist approaches assume an ordered 'real' world of teaching, which is in stark contrast to the experience of many neophyte nurse educators. In this project, PAR exposed the differences between espoused teaching theories and best practice as promoted by the University and actual teaching beliefs and practices of staff. There were commonalities in staff perceptions that international nursing student learners have different and specific needs and international students were initially conceptualised as 'the problem'. Through PAR meetings, staff revealed different understandings of 'the problem', tensions between workload and University promotion of an internationalised curriculum. In these discussions, different teaching and learning strategies were shared. The differences between these reflected the experience of the teachers, revealing the different underlying beliefs about teaching and learning and exposing different staff values. Some staff employed a framework of equity to help contextualise the issues and their response to the challenges of teaching international student learners. Through discussions and sharing a real 'sense of the possible' was created for staff. This engagement in the process and the realisation that action was possible was a highlight of the project to date. The next step is enacting agreed upon actions. This project provides a concrete experience of PAR, which we can share and offer for further consideration.

REFERENCES

Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H. & Scales, B., (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final report*, Commonwealth of Australia.

Haslett, S.K., (2009), 'Unpicking the links between research and teaching in Higher Education', *Newport CELT Journal*, 2: 1-4.