



**Contexts and narratives of attrition for child
branch students undertaking the Registered
Nursing Programme at the University of
Wolverhampton: an ethnographic performance.**

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Background and Justification for the study

- The recruitment and retention of students on nursing programmes is a major cause of concern (Grainger & Bolan 2006; Rees, 2006; Last & Fulbrook, 2003; Wells, 2003).
- Implications of high attrition rates are wide ranging both for HEI's in meeting targets and staff morale (Council of Deans and Heads, 1998).

Background and justification for the study

- NHS Trusts have a responsibility to provide a supportive learning environment and maintain an adequate workforce (Moseley and Mead, 2007).
- There are emotional, social and financial implications for students who withdraw or are discontinued from the course (Glossop, 2002).
- Aims of Project 2000 to increase student satisfaction and reduce attrition rates (Glossop, 2001)

Purpose of research

- To examine the ‘up-close’ nature of failure, the ‘dirty linen’ of nursing politics, the experiences of nursing students within the social fabric of university life. Completing the programme is a ‘stage’ on which ‘characters’ such as personal tutors, external examiners and placement mentors enter and then leave.

Research Methodology

- Concerned with 'experiences', 'stories' and 'cultural experience' of 'doing' child branch
- Interested in 'mundane', 'dismissible', 'ugly truths' of how people interact with each other
- Explore student experiences in the wider context: of their families; their social networks; the environment of SHaW; their placements

Performative Ethnography

"The aim of an ethnographic study is to understand another way of life from the native's point of view, in the hope of learning from them."

Spradley (1979)

Data Collection

- Students recruited from child branch cohorts towards end of year 1 and end of year 2 of programme
- Total of 6 cohorts recruited to date
- Data collection - focus group interviews

Data Analysis

- Ethnographic data analysis is a search for patterns in the behaviour and thoughts of the participants (Fetterman, 1989) as these patterns make up the culture.
- Data analysed using Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence

Preliminary Findings

- To date the research has produced over a thousand ethnographic folk terms which have cultural meaning for most students.
- The study has also highlighted how students have stories about ‘being tagged onto the end’ by lecturers who ‘often appear to be bored’. Or as one student said ‘being known as a girl called student’

Domain Analysis – ‘...is a cause of stress’

- ‘Feeling inadequate’
- ‘Rumours’
- ‘Lack of information’
- ‘Disorganisation’
- ‘Being told off like a school girl’
- ‘Being picked on in class’
- ‘Making up time’
- ‘Workload’

Domain Analysis – ‘...is a kind of support’

- ‘Personal tutor’
- ‘Mentor’
- ‘Friends’
- ‘Face-book’
- ‘Knowing each other’
- ‘Talking’
- ‘Encouragement’
- ‘Bonding’

Domain Analysis – ‘...is a step (stage) in CFP’

- ‘Missing opportunities’
- ‘Lack of information’
- ‘Feeling a lesser person’
- ‘Defending my branch’
- ‘Disorganisation’
- ‘Not knowing each other’
- ‘Not being treated as adults’
- ‘Teaching being adult biased’

The next stage

- Asking structural questions
- Making a taxonomic analysis
- Asking contrast questions
- Making a componential analysis
- Discovering cultural themes
- Writing the ethnography

Strategies implemented to improve the overall student experience

- Pre course ‘taster day’ – for students who have accepted a place on RN Dip/RN BSc
- Appointment of ‘student advisor’ by SHaW
- Branch specific days in CFP
- Reduction in clinical practice hours to (2300hrs)
- Rationalisation of clinical practice documentation
- Protected study time during practice placements

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Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence

- Locating an informant
- Interviewing an informant
- Making an ethnographic record
- Asking descriptive questions
- Analysing ethnographic interviews
- Making a domain analysis
- Asking structural questions
- Making a taxonomic analysis
- Asking contrast questions
- Making a componential analysis
- Discovering cultural themes
- Writing the ethnography