Experiences Influencing the Academic Performance of 1st Year Nursing Students at the Western Cape College of Nursing, South Africa, during 2008

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- Western Cape DOH – WCCN
- Denosa
- The study participants
Problem Statement

- Increased failure and attrition rate of 1st Year students over past few years
- This results in smaller numbers of nurses qualifying
- Contributing to shortage of nurses in the country
- Negative impact on health human resource development
- Concern for WCCN and DoH
Purpose of study

- To explore the experiences of 1st Year students at a nursing college undergoing transition
- To facilitate planning of appropriate institutional interventions
- To support and improve the academic performance of 1st Year students
- To decrease the failure and attrition rates
- To improve the throughput of nurses at the end of four years training
- To contribute to the reversal of the decline in health human resource capacity in South Africa
Research methodology/Procedure

- Qualitative – Exploratory and Interpretivist paradigm
- Ethical clearance - UWC
- Permission: WCCN
Ethical Principles

- Non-maleficence (do no harm) - informed consent
- Protection of privacy, anonymity confidentiality
- Beneficence & Justice - right to withdraw
Research Process

- Sampling: Purposeful
- Maximum variation sampling
- Data Collection: Feb - April 2009
- Focus groups – semi structured - students and face to face interviews - staff
- Data analysis: Thematic analysis
Scientific Rigour

- **Credibility** (whether themes + storyline correspond)

- **Reflexivity** – Researcher discloses personal feelings, background, perceptions, pre-conceptions, biases, assumptions & role

- **Dependability** - same steps for each interview

- **Transferability** - participants’ own words, literature control
Main themes

- Social barriers to study
- Difficulties in transition
- A “hell away from home” (living environment)
- Inadequacies in the academic environment (learning environment)
Social barriers to study

- Social background
- Poverty

"circumstances are not viable back home as there are too many problems or they are fighting or they are suffering and you have to face the problem in your home… if you are at home you can’t study because today you will see that there’s no food and maybe you are obligated to make a plan for food. It’s not nice…we have problems at our homes and even now whilst we are here in this nursing we have problems at home (FGD2)"
Continue...

- **Home circumstances**
  
  *by the time I get to study it’s 10 o’clock at night, when everything else is done, my children is sleeping. So it’s a huge impact on me academically, living out (FGD 1)*

- **Violence**

  *I was shot there … just when I got off the taxi around past eight … and that influences your studies … FGD 2)*

  …we have students regularly … being dispossessed of cell phones, money … one student lost all her books because they couldn’t get money … (Interview 3)
Difficulties in transition

- Adjustments - personal, academic, social - lack of sense of belonging

The experience was difficult in terms of the adaptation from ... high school as they used to present lectures for us ... where if you read a book and its being explained to you. ... wasn’t what I expected they would be. They didn’t... explain to me - because we had some tutors [at WCCN], they read the work out of the book and when we asked questions they couldn’t explain to us what it about (FGD 2)
Continue…

For all of us English is not your first language and you will have a problem when you come in a tertiary institution and you don’t know that … and they don’t give you like a slow, I don’t say spoon-feed but take it at a slower pace (FGD 2)

The failure rate has increased since we introduced an English only policy(Interview 1, 3, 4)

My tutor shouted at me everyday in front of people and I would be stressed, sometimes hurt, and cry, and one day I cried at the hospital because my tutor swore at me in front of people because I did not greet her (FGD 3)
A Hell away from home

- Disappointed expectations

  The furniture is very old, it’s like baboons are staying there … you get to this place and inside the furniture is old and you are scared and you are not used to other people … when the visitors leave, they leave the furniture. It’s scary, please!! (FGD 2)

  What I was expecting is for our school to be like others and be a place to have fun, like there’s a pool but its dirty, everything - like sports and … everything, like other schools. … and … the shower stuff, hygiene environment of the hostel is very poor. … the other thing that gets to us a lot here in school is that there is no sport, … you find that you will have stress, you write tests one after the other and after you’ve finished and you’re free, you would like to have fun and play ball, go dancing, go to the concert (FGD 1).
Unimportant and devalued

I will not recommend anybody to come to this place, because number one how can you stay in a room which you have to share ... How can you stay like that, you can’t live like that ... they don’t inform you that the geysers are put off ... [they don’t know] how to handle us as adults ... they belittle you even more as what they do on the academic level ... it is not nice at all! (FGD 4)
Basic needs not met

*We couldn’t help falling asleep because we are hungry and the food that we get, the potato beef stew, you can’t eat it and the rice sometimes is old or it’s not well cooked so we can’t or we don’t get filled with the food. … I got the sausage I could taste it when I put it in my mouth, it was off and I had to throw it away…* We get hungry here at school, so we can’t even concentrate (FGD 2)
Unfriendly place

I did not know when I came here that this school is rotten, I thought I was going to be at Pentec or Bellville or maybe in Athlone, I did not know I was coming here, I thought it was in Bellville right?... ‘Oh’, it’s in Klipfontein and then I came here ... I just saw this blue, orange building, and then I walked inside and I said but it looks like a hospital and then you come to your room and then you see this iron bed ... but this thing also affecting us because the condition of the school is, no man ... Even if someone is asking you’ where are you studying?’ I say I’m studying in Pentec ... (FGD 2, 3, 4)
Inadequacies in the Academic Environment

- **Teaching style**
  
  *The other lecturer who doesn’t have a clue what she’s teaching! ... If you don’t know what you teaching how is the student going to learn?* (FGD 1)

- **Inadequate use of language**

  *My observation was the illiterate facilitators ... our lecturers do not ... speak fluent or pure English ... They speak Afrikaans ... they just mix Afrikaans because it’s their language, so they’ve got a better understanding themselves* (FGD 2)
Continue…

- **Teaching resources-inadequate**

  For such a big facility not to have a microphone that works or the battery that dies all the time … not to have …an overhead projector for us … sound, I can hundred percent say that had those students be able to hear what the whole topic was about, we would’ve gotten a much better response from the students and we would’ve gotten a much better mark at the end of the day because then we would brought across the story that we wanted to do (FGD 1)
Continue…

… even the microphone, the technology don’t want to work and I mean you had to … stop or you first had to go get someone and it is also valuable teaching and learning time that is wasted in the class … that is not conducive for teaching especially with this big classes … not really not a pleasure to teach (Interview 3)

• Fear to consult lecturers

  the lecturer said ‘if you have a problem just come to me, not the whole class’, and then we, we were scared; I was scared to go to the lecturer alone because I don’t know what she is going to say … even when speaking Afrikaans, we’re scared of saying what are you saying in English now? (FGD 2)
Concluding Statement

- The findings reveal that these 1st year nursing students had numerous experiences which negatively influenced their academic performance.
- Recommendations-SANC, WCCN/CPUT/DoH
Thank you for listening