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Approaches to Learning in the context of an outcomes-based curriculum

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Approaches to Learning in the context of an outcomes-based curriculum.

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Research Question

How does an outcomes-based curriculum influence approaches to learning in an interprofessional postgraduate programme for healthcare professionals?

Research Questions

• How do healthcare professionals, as students approach the experiences of learning?
• Do outcome statements drive student learning?
• Do outcome statements encourage or discourage direction of learning?
• Do outcome statements drive teacher activity, selection of content, selection of learning activities and assessment?
• What are the challenges to current understandings of student learning from the lecturers’ perspectives?

Research Design

• Evaluation Research
  – Fourth Generation Evaluation, Constructivism.
• Phenomenology - Husserl
  – Change in direction following data collection and preliminary analysis.
  – Previous research on approaches to learning underpinned by Phenomenography and Survey approaches using inventories.

Main Theoretical/Conceptual Foundations

• Deep & Surface Learning
• Barnett et al.’s (2001) conceptualisation of curriculum change around 3 domains of action, knowledge and self

Operationalisation of the study

• 1 group of interprofessional postgraduate students (n=11) – senior positions in organisations, demographics…
• Lecturers (n=4) – 2 full-time, 2 part-time.
• External Examiner
• One-to-one in-depth interviews
• Pilot - 2 interviews
### Ethical Issues

- **My Role**
- **Insider Researcher**
- **Importance of Gatekeeper**
- **Clarifications to participants**
  - Timing & Venues of interviews
  - Approval ~ 5 months

### Data Collection & Analysis

- **Data Collection**
  - Interviews (Bracketing)
  - Documentary Analysis
  - Reflective diary
- **Data Analysis**
  - Giorgi’s (1985) framework
  - Descriptions are based on experiences within the context of that experience.
  - Step 1: Getting a sense of the whole
  - Step 2: Discrimination of meaning units
  - Step 3: Transformation of the lived experience into psychological language
  - Step 4: Individual description of the situation
  - Step 5: The general description of the situated structures

### Empirical Findings

#### Students:
- Learning as Action
- Learning as Knowledge
- Learning as Personal & Professional Development

**Issues of note:**
- The weighting on any one of these will depend on the student’s background from a professional perspective, years of experience, current practices in healthcare and motivation to develop their own careers and personal development.

#### Lecturers:
- Influence of own backgrounds and current status on their perspectives of student learning.
- Some lecturers challenging the learning outcomes and refining them, while others, were quite keen to use them as a reference check and guide.

#### External Examiner
- Curriculum mapping
- Assessment – creativity, innovation, challenges, support.
- Students using their own individuality.
- Students applying learning to their own situations and linking back to evidence.

### Major implications of the study

- **Academia**
  - Pluralistic evaluation (Students, Lecturers, External Examiner)
  - Postgraduate Interprofessional Sample
  - Contextual influences
- **Policy**
  - Influence of Curriculum Mapping
  - Transparency of Learning Outcomes
  - Evaluation method

### Key Readings