

“What are the Stories of Indigenous Nursing Academics working in Australian Universities between 2001-2011”?

Abstract

Focus of the Study

Educating Indigenous nurses is an important strategy in improving the health and wellbeing of Indigenous peoples in Australia. On the face of it, this sounds like a relatively simple strategy, yet the evidence suggests that recruitment, retention and graduation of Indigenous nursing students is far from easy, and requires carefully planned and consistently delivered academic and pastoral support from dedicated Indigenous nurse academics (West, Usher & Foster 2010; Best & Nielsen 2004).

Given this background, the role of Indigenous nurse academics in universities is pivotal. Still a very small group across the nation, Indigenous nurse academics anecdotally report that they carry a large burden of expectation from their communities, the profession of nursing and their universities. In recognition of these challenges, as well as the important role Indigenous nurse academics play in preparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous nurses of the future, this doctoral research will explore the stories of Indigenous nurse academics working in Australian universities over the past ten years between (2001-2011).

Methodology Design (overview)

The primary focus for this research involves accessing personal and professional stories relating to the lived experiences of Indigenous nursing academics working or who have recently worked in Australian universities. This project will use a qualitative constructivist narrative methodology. Between eight and twelve Indigenous nursing academics will be interviewed. The research inquiry paradigm adopted for this study will be constructivist (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). A narrative methodology will be used to underpin data collection, and the in-depth interview transcripts will undergo a narrative analysis and then be thematically analysed for common themes.

Outcomes and Significance

This study will provide a conclusive understanding of the personal and professional experiences of the Indigenous nursing academic participants in relation to their positions as employees in Australian universities. It must be noted that these experiences will not provide a whole encompassing experience of all Indigenous nursing academics, just these select ones who accept the invitation to participate in this study. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that this study will generate valuable research information to contribute to the body of information about Indigenous nursing academics for universities to access, which will assist them in their efforts in recruitment, retention and ongoing support of Indigenous nurses who choose to work as academics on their staff. In addition to this, it will ultimately enhance their capacity as a higher education facility to be more culturally aware of the occurrences in their

establishments that impact both positively and negatively on Indigenous nursing academic employees.