Report on the Nursing Education Research Unit

March 1997 – March 2000

McMaster University,
Faculty of Health Sciences
School of Nursing
Nursing Education
Research Unit

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The Nursing Education Research Unit, often referred to as NERU, was established in 1995 by the McMaster University School of Nursing to promote nursing education research within the School, and to investigate curriculum related issues. Specifically, the unit addresses current learning/teaching issues with the intent of expanding our understanding of all aspects of the process, and applying learning to curriculum issues within the School of Nursing, expanding our understanding of all aspects of the teaching/learning process, and contributing to educational research at a national and international level.

**Structure...**

The Unit comprises a Director and a Research Associate. There are approximately 50 researchers affiliated with NERU, representing faculty, clinical associates and members from community agencies.

NERU operates under an informal structure where researchers choose to work together in small interest groups on various projects. At the completion of a project, members can choose to continue working in that area, or may choose to pursue a project in a new area, within the same research group, or by forming a new group.

NERU affiliated researchers meet as a large group on a monthly basis at which time members update one another on their progress, share ideas for new projects and provide assistance and feedback around current projects. Members also use the NERU meetings to discuss issues related to the ongoing functioning of the unit, and its mandate. Decisions regarding the unit are made collectively.

**Funding...**

NERU is internally funded through the School of Nursing. NERU has been successful in securing additional funding for projects from internal competitions (e.g. Niemeier Funds) and grants available through the broader university (e.g. Teaching and Learning Project grants available from the Centre for Leadership in Learning).
The Unit supports educational research in many ways...

NERU staff provides support to the various projects with a variety of activities:

- Provide information on potential funding sources for projects
- Conduct literature searches
- Collect data (e.g. selecting random samples, mailing out questionnaires, organizing and taping focus groups)
- Enter and analyze data (i.e. Data is entered into SPSS, cleaned for keypunch errors, and staff work with the group to run statistical analysis).
- Assist with preparation of papers and presentations
- Coordinate the work of the unit
- Arrange meetings and disseminate minutes and meeting materials

NERU also houses a database containing instructions for authors, circulation information and contact information for the journals that publish educational research. Information about potential funding sources is also available through the NERU office.

Collaboration with other programmes...

NERU also works in collaboration with the Programme for Educational Development (PED). PED is a component of the Education Services unit of the Faculty of Health Sciences. PED houses the educational research and development activity of the faculty and is available for consultations related to educational research.
Areas of Expertise...

NERU affiliated researchers bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the unit.

Members have expertise in:

- Educational research methodologies
- Development and evaluation of interactive instructional materials
- Use of technologies in distance education
- Implementation and evaluation of problem-based learning
- Program evaluation
- Student assessment

Other Activities....

*Exit Survey:* Each year, NERU carries out an exit survey of our graduates. This survey provides information about student perceptions of the strengths and limitations of the program, and any suggestions for change. This information is used to review and revise the curriculum, by the programme, as necessary.

*Follow-up Survey:* In addition to the exit survey, NERU conducts a survey every third year in which we send a questionnaire out to graduates from the previous five years. This survey looks primarily at the employment status of our graduates and any formal education they have completed since graduation. These surveys not only provide information that is useful for reviewing and revising the curriculum, but they also identify issues that NERU researchers may choose to study. In addition, the information is used for reports such as accreditation documentation.

*Workshop/Conference:* Another potential initiative of NERU is an international event to be held October 22-26, 2001, consisting of a series of workshops showcasing our areas of expertise under the title Create the Future: Workshops in Innovative Approaches to Nursing Education. This is in part a follow-up of our successful international conference, entitled Global Connections in Nursing Education that was held in June. 1996.
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Book on PBL: Also in progress is a book about problem-based learning in nursing education, that is being written primarily by NERU members. The various authors are working on chapters for the book to be published by Jones and Bartlett in the fall of 2000.

NERU Interest Groups and Their Activities 1997-1999....

The NERU interest groups listed below are at various stages in their research - some have completed projects, whereas others are fairly new and are identifying research questions and developing methodologies. Presentations, publications and funding for the past three years are included.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

A key focus for the PBL interest group is to investigate factors that influence PBL (e.g. tutor role, group size) and their subsequent impact on learning. Currently, this group is carrying out a joint project with the University of Ottawa to determine the outcomes of a PBL approach compared to a conventional educational approach. At present we have completed one manuscript and anticipate two others will be produced from this study.

Funding:

Rideout, E, Benson, G, Brown, B & Ingram, C. The Outcomes of Two Approaches to Nursing Education. Niemeier Grant, McMaster University School of Nursing $1900.00

Publications:


Rideout, E. Doing PBL: The roles, influences and behaviours of tutors. In Conway, J & Williams, A (Eds.) Themes and Variations in PBL. Newcastle, AU: PROBLARC
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Presentations:

Rideout, E Student Perspectives of the Outcomes of Problem-Based Learning. 4th Annual Assessment Conference for Nurse Educators. Indianapolis, IN, November 1999.

Rideout, E Doing PBL: The roles, influences and behaviours of tutors. 5th International Conference on Problem-Based Learning. Montreal, PQ, July, 1999


Informatics

A key focus for the Informatics interest group is exploration of the factors that facilitate the use of new technologies, like the Internet, and CD-ROM, within nursing education. To date, this group has investigated how students, staff and faculty utilize and understand informatics in nursing education, and the technology available to nursing in order to help facilitate the teaching and learning process

Publications:


Presentations:

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Self Directed Learning (SDL)/Learning Styles Inventory (LSI)

The SDL/LSI interest group is looking at the various strategies to promote self-directed learning and the influence of various factors, such as culture, on the preferred learning styles of nursing students.

Publications:


Presentations:


Carpio, B., Illesca, M., Ellis, P., Crooks, D., Avilla, E., Goegan, T., Tompkins, C.,

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Ellis, P. & **Carpio, B.** Learning styles inventory: its use in a student-centered nursing curriculum. 17th Annual Lilly Conference on College Teaching, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, November 21, 1997.


**Evaluation Measures Group (EMG)**

The EMG reviews evidence related to existing student evaluation measures and explores the application of evidence to the student evaluation process within the B.Sc.N. programme. Current projects include evaluating student performance in tutorials and the evaluation of triple jump exercises.

**Funding:**


Ladouceur, M, Rideout, E, Black, M, Crooks, D & Ingram, C Evaluation of Individual Performance in Small Group Tutorials. Teaching and Learning Grant, McMaster University. $1741.00

Rideout, E. Funding for Student Research Assistant, Summer Career Placement, Human Resources Development Canada. $1785.00
Presentations:


Confidence

Since the development of confidence is an expected outcome of any nursing programme, this group has investigated the factors that lead to its development. This research resulted in a definition of confidence and strategies for the student, tutor and clinical setting to enhance the development of professional confidence.

Funding:


Presentations:


Portfolio Development and Use

This group has explored the use of portfolios in faculty and student evaluation. A process of faculty evaluation has been developed and reported on and now the group is focusing on the use of portfolios in student development of critical reflection and evaluation.

Funding:

Brown, B, Royle, J, Matthew-Maich, N & Witmer, D. Exploring the Experiences and Reflections of Nursing Students in Developing College of Nurses of Ontario Professional Portfolios. Niemeier Grant, McMaster University School of Nursing. $1800.00


Brown, B., Carpio, B., Crooks, D., French, S., Hunsberger, M., Love, B., O'Mara, L., Black, M. The Meaning and Development of Professional Confidence as Perceived by Nursing Students and Faculty. Funded by the Niemeier Fund, April, 1996 ($1,414.00)

Papers:


Presentations:


Other:

Publications:


Presentations:


Documentation:

Rideout, E, Hunsberger, M, Brown, B & Sek, J (1997). Self-Study Guide to Nursing Documentation. McMaster University Teaching and Learning Grant ($1400.00); Faculty of Health Sciences Education Services ($1000.00) and B.Sc.N. Program ($300.00).

Program Evaluation:

Reports:


Presentations:


Student Attitudes to Current Issues

Publications:


Funding:

Sword, W., Reutter, L., Meagher-Stewart, D. & Rideout, E. (2000). Baccalaureate Students Attitudes and Beliefs about Poverty. Submitted for funding to University of Alberta Faculty of Nursing Research Fund and Niemeier Fund, McMaster University.