How Do Student Nurses of English Language Learner Populations Experience NCLEX-RN Style Questions?

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Abstract
The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how student nurses of English language learner populations experience NCLEX-RN style questions. Evidence suggests difficulty in improving the nation’s diversified nursing workforce, resulting in concerns over minority nurse representation. Student nurses of English language learner populations are more likely than non-English language learner student nurses to be out of sequence or released from a nursing program. The extant literature says that student nurses of English language learner populations struggle with NCLEX-RN style questions and that they have significantly lower pass rates than their English speaking counterparts. The literature reveals that EFL students may feel self-conscious about their accent, and are consequently less likely to engage in class participation or communicate with peers. Additionally, there are problems not only understanding course content in English but also expressing their knowledge of English. Barriers exist related to leaving home, entering a different world, and feeling isolated from culture and family. A Heideggerian phenomenological approach was used to explore the phenomena. A hermeneutic approach is often used in situations where meaning is sought and a deeper, perhaps overlooked, understanding is missing from the extant literature. Nine students were recruited from two colleges of nursing, one public and one private, and invited to participate in hermeneutic interviews. A team of hermeneutic scholars analyzed transcripts using a Heideggerian hermeneutic approach and results were rendered in the form of three overlapping patterns and five sub-patterns that illuminated and interpreted common experiences across participants. The three patterns were: 1) time as an antagonist to NCLEX-RN success, 2) situational context as a way of thinking, and 3) NCLEX-RN as a deterrent to English language learner diversity in nursing. The five sub-patterns were: 1) thinking through: not enough time to think through the question, 2) NCLEX-RN style question design: success in context, 3) imagining a situation ‘thinking out’ versus ‘being in’ a situation, 4) sociocultural perspective: one’s cultural background can change the answer, and 5) emotional expression as an aspect of culture. The results rendered are thought to be common experiences among student nurses of English language learner populations.

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