

Experiences of North-west University Nursing Students in Problem Based Learning (PBL)

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ABSTRACT A qualitative, descriptive, exploratory and contextual research design was conducted using in-depth discussions to describe the nursing students' experiences of PBL. Purposive sampling was used to recruit eligible students for individual interviews (n=8) and three (n=30) focus group discussions in a private location. The study consisted of inductive analysis to identify critical themes that emerge from interview and focus group data. The reporting used "voice" in the text; that is, the researcher gave participants' quotes to illustrate the themes described. Themes that emerged during the analysis were PBL challenged students; problematic group cohesion, PBL as a positive educational strategy. The challenges included: unfamiliarity with PBL, inadequate resources in the library and computer laboratories to support PBL, time pressures and work overload of students. Inadequate clinical learning and support from professional nurses in the clinical services was also noted as a challenge for PBL. Positive conclusions included valuing of the strategy as it promoted critical thinking, communication skills, teamwork and learning from others. Students indicated that the positive experiences outweighed the negative experiences and PBL should be introduced at first year level and integrated into the improvement of clinical learning. Recommendations from key informants include retention of PBL and strengthening of the strategy by empowering both the students and Faculty in the use of PBL and collaborating with professional nursing clinical staff to raise awareness of PBL and engaging them in the educational strategy.