

Case seminars open doors to deeper understanding – Nursing students' experiences of learning

Introduction

Creation of new knowledge is mainly accomplished by students themselves, and the main task of teachers in higher education is thus to facilitate this learning process (Ramsden 2003). The Case Method is a teaching method in which cases from real life inspire students to actively seek knowledge that they discuss in structured seminars. In the seminars, the problem-solving process is important and the aim of the seminar discussion is to consider different solutions and identify possible ways of dealing with the situation. Case seminars in health education have been evaluated and discussed, but descriptions that can help us understand how students learn in the seminars have not previously been published. In a Swedish nursing programme, where case seminars have been used in teaching cardiovascular diseases for several years, students were asked to describe how the case seminars had helped them in their learning and what had been troublesome with the seminars, and sixty-nine/seventy-two did. The aim of the present study was to describe this learning process from the students' point of view.

Methods

Written data were analyzed using content analysis, a process of organizing and integrating qualitative information into themes, categories and codes. All quotations were read and commented on by the three authors, but the analysis was made by two of the authors in collaboration.

Results

A theme concerning how the Case Method opens doors to deeper understanding was identified as a thread running through different codes and categories. Students described the importance of new perspectives and their wish to participate in discussions with other students. The structure, which involved pre-prepared cases and writing on the white board, positioned the students' own knowledge in a wider context and the learning atmosphere seemed to enable everyone to participate in the discussions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The interest in reflective discussions, other students' points of view and solutions to the cases indicate a deep approach to learning (Ramsden 2003). Two years later the findings were presented to the students who participated in the study. All students agreed much or very much to the analysis presented. To conclude the Case Method seems to involve students in a way that deepens their understanding and critical thinking.

References

Hofsten A., Gustafsson C. & Häggström E. (2009) Case seminars open doors to deeper understanding – Nursing students' experiences of learning. *Nurse Educ. Today*, doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2009.11.001.

Ramsden P. (2003) *Learning to teach in higher education*. RoutledgeFalmer, London