

Research and Practice Informed Case Studies: Janet Hunter and Karen Rawlings-Anderson (School of Health Sciences)

About Janet and Karen

Janet Hunter is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of Nursing, School of Health Sciences. She teaches Adult Nursing, specialising in clinical skills education and surgical care. Before joining City, University of London as a visiting lecturer in 2000, she worked as a Senior Sister for Barts and the London NHS Trust.

Karen Rawlings-Anderson is a Senior Lecturer in the Division of Nursing, School of Health Sciences. She teaches Adult Nursing and specialises in teaching professional issues in nursing and clinical skills. Prior to joining City, University of London in 1991, she worked as a Ward Sister at the Middlesex Hospital.

Interview

00.14 Who are you and where do you teach?

JH: So, my name's Janet Hunter and I work in the School of Health Sciences.

KRA: And Karen Rawlings-Anderson, also from the School of Health Sciences.

00.25 Can you describe your academic speciality in relation to research and teaching?

KRA: We both work in the Nursing Division, so we teach student nurses, mainly in simulation and clinical skills teaching.

00.40 Who are your students?

JH: Primarily our students are actually nursing students, within our BSc students and our post-graduate diploma students, who we teach in terms of clinical skills education and simulation.

01.01 Who is the audience for your research?

KRA: The main audience for our research is other educators, mainly in healthcare, but I think a lot of the stuff that we do, [...] so for example the board games doesn't have to be healthcare, so that would be of interest to others. Most of the conferences that we would go to would either be healthcare education, nursing education, clinical skills education.

01.35 Who is the audience for your research continued...?

JH: Within the university we try and get together to share our research and practice. Sometimes it's just our teaching techniques – certainly we've done that within Health itself, in the School of Health Sciences and certainly with Cass and Law as well. So, we're growing a community whereby we can share our experiences and see whether some of our practices, not necessarily that they can adopt them, but you can take on board how people are doing it and see if it would work for you.

02.10 What do you understand by the term "research and practice informed teaching"?

KRA: I think it can mean several things. So, it can mean either teaching the students about the evidence base; because we're a professional, practice discipline, there's an evidence-base to nursing, so it can be teaching about that. But from our point of view about actually teaching it's about using sound pedagogy to underpin our teaching. And using other people's research to inform us about what's best practice educationally, because there's quite a lot of research on simulation isn't there?

JH: There's a huge amount of work on simulation and I think, with simulation, it's about using the right teaching method for what you want to teach your students to improve the best learning

experience. And I think that sometimes we can adopt something, do something, but maybe it's not the right thing to do. So actually being able to underpin your teaching and look at the research to see if it's the best way forward and it's actually going to match your students' learning styles, the learning experience, whether you want them to have a deeper learning approach [...] of what they're actually investigating. And I think we've found that more as we've done simulation, probably than other areas of teaching.

03.33 What does research and practice informed teaching mean to you?

KRA: Because we work in a practice discipline, the focus is often on the evidence-base for the practice and they don't think about the evidence base for the educational approach. So, people are so worried about teaching about what's the best practice, say in terms of safety for patients, or what research underpins/what's the best treatment modalities, and then because that's the focus, people sometimes forget to think: "but how am I going to engage my learners in this." Just telling them about it isn't enough and we want to try and make the subject more interesting and exciting for the students.

JH: And do you think it's also got something about their transferability of skills? When you talk about the practice in terms of, if we can teach them about the evidence-base and about research that makes them go out and look at their own practice. And even the way that we're teaching – because one of the things nurses have to do is to teach other healthcare professionals – so I think there is that transferability element as well.

04.45 How do you integrate your research and practice with your teaching?

KRA: One of the things that student nurses often say towards the end of their nurse programme is that they really don't have enough confidence in their ability to be safe in the management of medicines. And so we wanted to try and find a way of helping students to learn about that. But, doing drug calculations and learning about actual different medicines themselves, the students find really dry; it's not very interesting. So, we were trying to think of a way of making that perhaps a bit more lively for them, so we came up with this idea of making a board game. So we came up with a board game which is very loosely based on Snakes and Ladders. We did actually get it professionally manufactured, but there's no point in coming up with these ideas if you don't then evaluate whether they actually make any difference to the students. Now it's identified some areas for further research where we need to look at, well, the students say it helps their research, but we need to really have a look and see, well, do they do any better in their drug calculations exams, for example.

06.08 How do you make your students aware of your research and practice?

KRA: I would say that you need to include them and try and include them from the beginning, not just add them on at the end. So, really telling them about your ideas and saying "what do you think" before you've even come up with a project. Because students have some very good ideas about how you could take things forward. And sometimes we have very different ideas as educators, so you need a student's view to begin with. I would say that's the main thing, isn't it?

JH: Yeah, and I think we've always tried to do that haven't we? Because with the board game, as Karen said, they played the game, they gave us feedback, but I think what's really interesting is they've played the game since it's been commercialised and they're going "oh, we made these changes! We made these suggestions!". So I think for them that was really important, that they saw they were listened to and things did change because of their voice.

07.12 What would be your “top-tip” for creating research and practice informed teaching?

KRA: I think it’s just about having a dialogue with them when you’re teaching with them and saying [...] “we’re trying this out”. And we have had a couple of sessions, haven’t we, where we’ve tried things out and we’ve realised halfway through a session that it’s not really working. And you say to the students “This isn’t really working is it?” and they say “No.” But I think if you’re not open to that, they’re not going to give that feedback.

JH: It’s about that relationship you have with your students. It comes down to that, really. A lot of it.

[End]