Exploring Multiple Intelligence Theory In The Context Of Teaching And Learning In Undergraduate Nurse Education In Ireland

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Abstract

Multiple intelligences theory has only recently entered the teaching and learning dialogue in education and research. It is argued that despite the rhetoric of a student centred approach, nurse education remains wedded to conventional teaching approaches, which fail to engage with the individual and unwittingly silence the student's voice. This study examines the concept of Multiple Intelligences (MI) and outlines Gardner's contention that the brain functions using eight intelligences, which can be employed to improve learning at an individual level. On exploring the Irish literature to date, no data were found ascertaining the potential of MI or the adoption of such teaching approaches in nursing education. The theoretical paradigm underpinning this study is multiple intelligence theory (MI). The philosophical paradigm that guided the study is grounded in positivism. The research paradigm is quasi-experimental pretest posttest non-equivalent control group design. Two groups of second year undergraduate nursing students undertook the study, treatment group (n=26) and control group (n=18). The intervention for the treatment group involved using a five-phase model, developed by Weber (1999), known as a multiple intelligence teaching approach (MITA), while the control group received traditional teaching approaches. The multiple intelligence development assessment scale questionnaire (MIDAS), which includes three intellectual style scales (IS) was used over the three phases of the study to profile participants MIs and to ascertain if MITA affected treatment group scores on MIDAS MI and IS. The independent variable was method of instruction, that is, MITA and traditional teaching approaches. The dependent variable was participants' 'Nursing Practice Studies' exam results, other module exam results and MIDAS MI and IS score results. Data derived from these observations were analysed using various parametric and non-parametric methods, which were deemed appropriate for the study. Significant differences were found between groups with the treatment group out performing the control group in 'Nursing Practice Studies' exam results. Findings on other module exam results also revealed some significant differences. The MIDAS MI and IS scores for both control and treatment groups revealed significant differences in participants' scores. In addition, significant changes on MIDAS MI and IS scores were observed within groups. The MITA intervention was evaluated using an instrument developed by the researcher (Evaluation of multiple teaching approach- EMITA) and treatment participants related very positively about the approach. It is contended that MITA has great potential in nursing education, particularly in terms of reinforcing learning beyond the educational domain and into the individual's professional development and clinical practice. Arguably, this departure from traditional approaches to teaching will contribute to the present post-technocratic model of education and to the conceptual understanding of MI approaches to teaching and learning in third level education.