

**An Investigative Study into the Advanced Certificate in
Nursing (Enrolled Nurse) Course.**

A Thesis submitted to the School of Education, Macquarie University in partial
fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education.
March 1999



MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to all the Registered Nurses who provided their time that enabled this research to materialise. Acknowledgment is also due to the TAFE Nurse Teachers who also provided their time and encouragement as the project emerged. Special acknowledgment is due to my friend and colleague, Margaret Sullivan, who started me on this long and frequently painful journey.

Although this research is regarded as one person's work, it could never have happened without a patient and supportive loving family and friends. I thank them all.

ABSTRACT

The New South Wales Advanced Certificate in Nursing (Enrolled Nurse) Course was implemented in October 1991. The Advanced Certificate is a twelve-month course, which commences in the Technical And Further Education (TAFE) environment with a seven-week block of theory concerning essential care. This is followed by approximately six months in the hospital clinical areas. Students then re-enter the TAFE learning environment for another seven-week theory block consisting of specialty nursing care before returning to the hospital specialty care areas.

Anecdotal reports suggested that both Registered Nurses and Enrolled Nurses were experiencing frustration in the hospital clinical environment. Investigation of these reports would provide valuable information to inform educational and workplace practices.

A major longitudinal research project was implemented in 1992 to investigate the perceptions of Enrolled Nurses, TAFE teachers of Enrolled Nurses and Registered Nurses who work with Enrolled Nurses in the hospital clinical environments in relation to the newly implemented Advanced Certificate of Nursing (Enrolled Nurse) course.

This current study is embedded within a larger strategy. This study is an investigative study into the New South Wales Advanced Certificate in Nursing (Enrolled Nurse) course. The study investigates both the TAFE theoretical and the hospital clinical components of the course.

The investigation was carried out by surveying over 140 Registered Nurses statewide. This research effort presents the second questionnaire that relates to the student's specialty hospital clinical care experience. The survey questions examine four broad areas.

Information relating to the execution of the Enrolled Nurse program

Information relating to learner performance after the block of theoretical instruction.

Information relating to workplace experience

Information relating to professional issues.

The response to the survey indicated that the majority of Registered Nurses felt that the Enrolled Nurses were adequately prepared for the workplace experience. Some Registered Nurses provided examples of where they perceived deficits in knowledge or skills. These deficits generally fell into two broad areas. One area was situations where theory may not adequately prepare students eg. Crisis situations such as trauma, aggression or death. The second area of deficit suggested by Registered Nurses were skills that are considered inconsistent with the educational preparation for the role and function of Enrolled Nurses. The findings of this research have implications for the hospital workplace, educational institutions and the body of nursing professionals.

The perplexity over what Enrolled Nurses should and shouldn't do intensifies the confusion surrounding the role and function of the Enrolled Nurse. Some of the questions that arose from the research are addressed in the recommendations.

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