University of British Columbia/Faculty of Education/Department of Educational Studies

Politics of Access: Negotiating Permissions for Qualitative Research into NCLEX-RN© Exam Preparation in British Columbia

Patricia Rampersaud

Introduction

Gaining access is a crucial endeavour in qualitative research and yet very little is written in the literature about the politics of gaining access into higher educational settings. 'Gatekeepers' have the power to permit or deny access.

This poster reports on the politics of gaining access to a local post secondary educational organization for a qualitative study designed to examine how a school of nursing prepared for a relatively new assessment, the NCLEX-RN© exam.

Background

As of 2015, Canadian nursing graduates, except those in Quebec and the Yukon, wrote the American National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN©) as one component in the nursing registration process. The NCLEX-RN© exam replaced a Canadian based registration exam. Researchers found that nursing programs across British Columbia and Canada began adjusting their curriculums and purchasing new computerized teaching and testing materials to prepare both faculty and students for the exam (Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, 2014).

Global and economic restructuring generate the need for policies that are more responsive to economic, labour, and market needs. Educational policies (such as the adoption of the NCLEX-RN© exam in Canada) are often created to assist in managing change however educators are routinely left out of the policy-making process and experience a displacement of their own pedagogical and curricular values.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into how the NCLEX-RN© exam influenced Canadian schools of nursing, nursing administrators, and nursing educators as they prepared students for the new NCLEX-RN© exam.

Methodology

Two complimentary qualitative approaches were used.

Focused ethnography

- examines phenomena in real time, in a natural setting, and uses ethnographic methods to explore an 'emic' point of view.

Critical policy analysis

- is concerned with power, politics, difference and how actors are "constituted in and by policy" (Webb & Gulson, 2015, p. 5).

Figure 1. Youngson, N. (2014). *Exam* [Online image]. Retrieved from http://www.picpedia.org/highway-signs/e/exam.html

Methods

In a school of nursing in British Columbia, my research consisted of

- participant observations
- participant interviews and
- document analysis.

As the researcher in this study, I served as the primary research instrument.

I was both an 'insider' and 'outsider' in the setting related to my own positionality as a nursing educator.

- I was an outsider to the organization that I researched.
- I was an insider in the profession.
- My dual role provided a key component to obtaining access to the organization and its personnel.
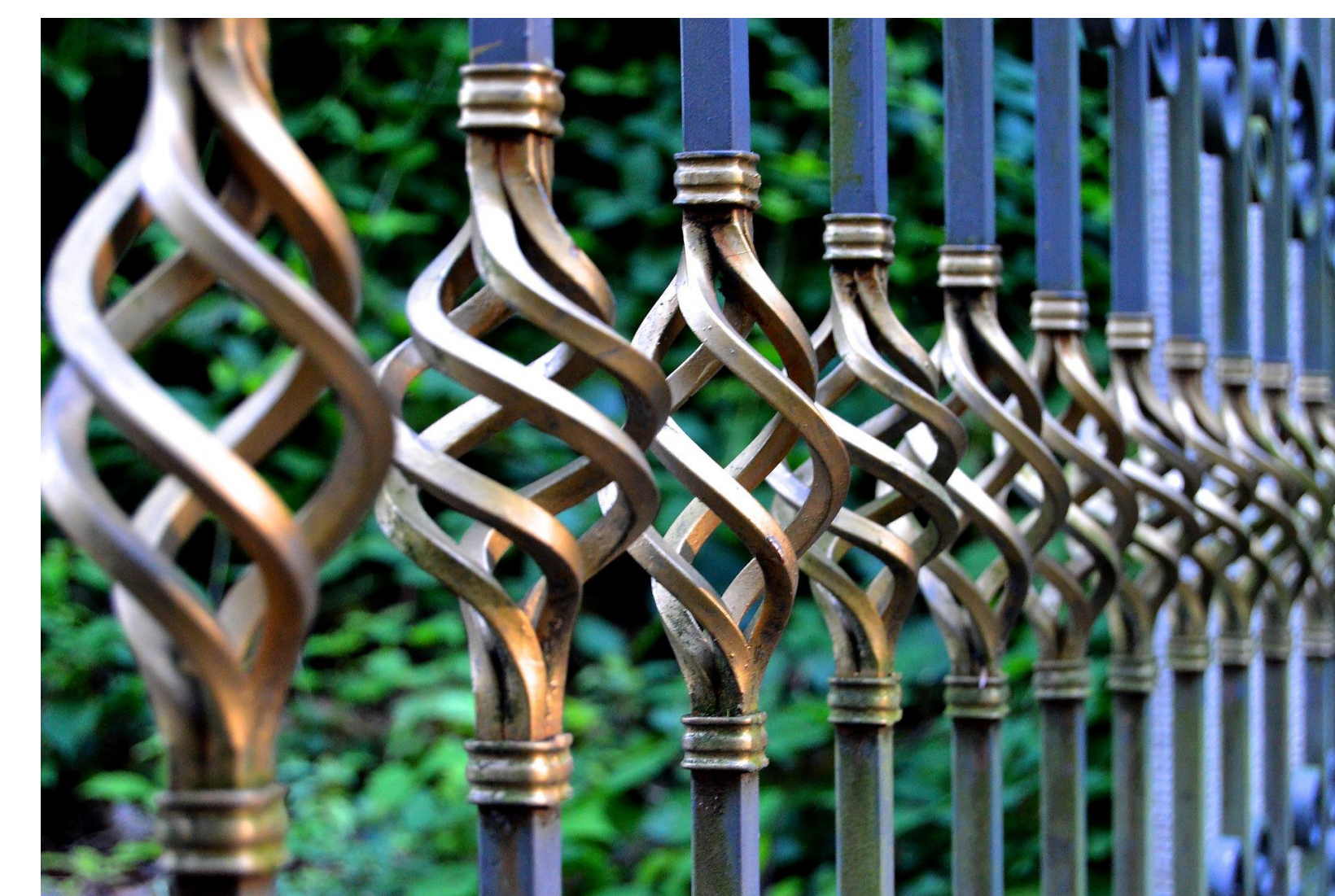

Figure 2. PIRO4D (2016) *Iron Gate* [Online image]. Retrieved from https://pixabay.com/photos/iron-gate-wrought-iron-metal-gate-1623303/

Gaining Access

After submission, ethics approval was obtained from

- the University of British Columbia's Behavioural Research Ethics Board in seven days as a minimal risk study
- the Riverside's [pseudonym] Research Ethics Board in eight weeks. The Riverside organization housed the Bachelor of Nursing school of nursing.

The Riverside Research Ethics Board

- undertook a full board review
- created a list of provisos
- requested amendments to documents.

The ethics board exercised great care to protect the facultys' and organization's welfare partly due to my description of the critical nature of the study.

Gaining access also consisted of multiple points of entry.

Once ethical approval was obtained

- few faculty volunteered to be observed in participant observations or interviews
- communications about meetings was not provided.

A continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation, being reflective, creative, and flexible was required throughout the process of gaining access.

References

Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (2014). *Transition to the NCLEX-RN: Repertoire of strategies.* Retrieved from http://casn.ca/wp--content/uploads/2014/12/TransitioningtotheNCLEX.pdf

Webb, P. T., & Gulson, K. N. (2015). Policy scientificity 3.0: Theory and policy analysis in-and-for this world and other-worlds. *Critical Studies in Education 56*(1), 161-174. doi: 10.1080/ 17508487.2014.949812

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA