

Overcoming barriers to measuring learning in the affective domain: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of learners' reflective journals

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ID: 961**Title:** Overcoming Barriers to Measuring Learning in the Affective Domain: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Learners' Reflective Journals**A/Prof Gary Rogers, Prof Harry McConnell****Introduction/Background:**

Benjamin Bloom described three domains of learning: cognitive, affective and psychomotor. Educational effectiveness in the affective domain, which includes attitudes, values and human engagement, has proven particularly difficult to measure among clinical learners. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative analytical methodology developed by British psychologist Jonathan Smith, which has been extensively utilised in health psychology for understanding the lived experience of, as well as the ways in which people make sense of, illness. It may also serve as a useful tool for identifying evidence of learning in the affective domain in the reflective journals of clinical learners.

Purpose/Objectives:

To utilise IPA to identify examples of affective domain learning in learners' reflective journals.

Issues/Questions for exploration or ideas for discussion:

Feasibility, acceptability and potential problems with the use of this methodology.

Results:

150 Year 3 medical students completed reflective journals whilst participating in an intensive week-long clinical simulation scenario program, of whom 113 consented to the inclusion of their journals in the study. Their submitted text files were loaded into the qualitative analysis program NVivo8 and IPA undertaken with a focus on learning experiences in the affective domain. Participants found the week of clinical simulation challenging and exciting but also draining, both physically and emotionally. Many learners described internal experiences and reflections that confirmed useful affective learning. Immediate feedback from simulated patients often elicited student reappraisal of priorities and approaches in patient interactions. For most participants, the simulation succeeded in contextualising learning through reference to its immediate application in patient care.

Discussion:

Measurement of learning in the affective domain is notoriously difficult in the evaluation of educational interventions. The IPA methodology, borrowed from health psychology, appears useful for understanding how clinical learners experience and make sense of their learning experiences in relation to their attitudes, values and human engagement. Learners who are used to providing textual evaluation of the process of learning activities will, however, need training to ensure that their journaling is reflective and introspective, rather than evaluative of the learning experience provided.

Conclusions:

IPA applied to reflective journals appears to have utility as a technique for evaluation of clinical educational interventions that aim to facilitate learning in the affective domain.