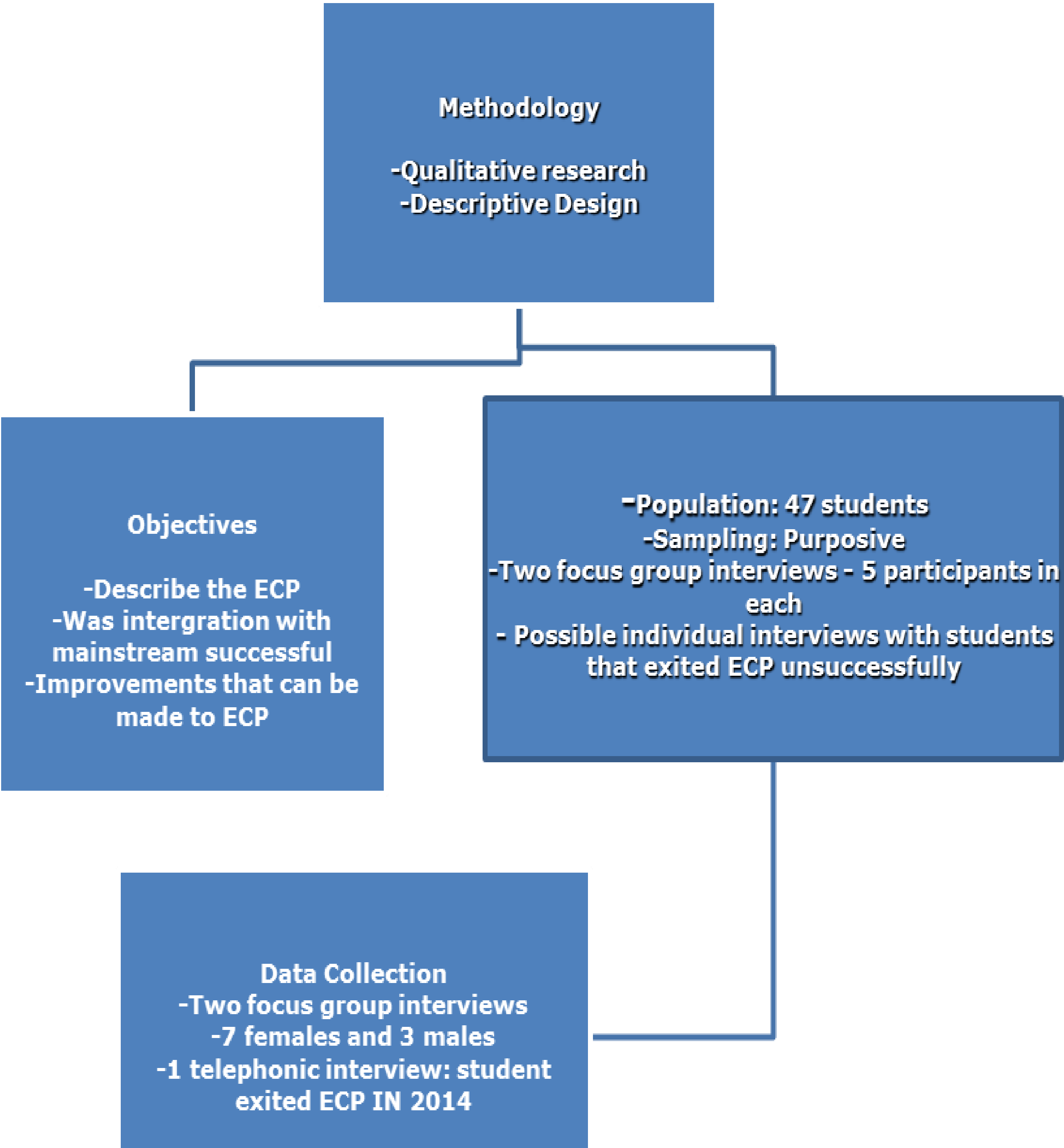


Nursing students’ perceptions of an extended undergraduate curriculum programme within a higher education institution

Introduction

South African apartheid era created unequal learning opportunities in underprivileged communities. Post-apartheid access to tertiary education increased as a way to remedy past mistakes . However, under-preparedness of previously disadvantaged students surfaced even though access to tertiary education institutions improved. The Council for Higher Education (CHE) defines under-preparedness as difficulty for students to adjustment to the prescribed curriculum as well as an inability to study independently in a higher education setting. The Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) was implemented to improve throughput and to ensure underprepared first year students have a strong academic basis for them to succeed in their studies at a tertiary institution. Students in the ECP have their first year of education spread over two years.

Research Design and Methodology



Results

Thematic data analysis is still in progress, however these two themes are prominent:

○ Stigmatization

Participants felt that they were thought to be “stupid or slow learners” because their studies were extended by an extra year. They perceived that they were considered inferior to mainstream students, by the relevant students and the faculty members. Participants complained that all documentation, exam results, etc. still identified them as ECP even though they have integrated into the mainstream curricula two years ago.

Interview 1
Participant B:
“ I thought, I was top of my class at school but now I am part of the slow learners class at college.”

Interview 2
Participant C:
“I heard their lecturer saying, don’t worry about them, they ECP.”

Interview 1
Participant E:
“When they put our results on the board, ECP is written next to our name. It’s like we still in ECP.”

○ Strong educational foundation

Meaningful and supportive relationships were established with lecturers and clinical facilitators in ECP. Lecturers still check up on students even after integration takes place. Participants identified that there was enough time to correct their individual educational deficits, this was particularly valued by the individuals that were employed before commencing formal studies. The participants believed that they received in-depth learning as they were still able to recall facts from three years before.

Interview 2
Participant A: “Even now the ECP lectures still come and check up on us to see how we doing.”

Interview 1
Participant 5: “ I worked at PicknPay for 19 years , I had no study skills etc. All I knew is that I wanted to better myself.”

Interview 2
Participant E: “Even now I can still remember anatomy from 1st year, where the mainstream students can’t remember most of their work. They worked at a faster pace and rushed through their content where in ECP we could take our time to learn our work.”

Conclusions

The Extended Curriculum programme, from the data that has been analyzed thus far, appears to be reaching the intended outcomes. Unfortunately the stigma that is associated with the programme, due to a lack of insight, has an almost debilitating effect on the students when they informed that they are part of the programme. The support that the students receive from the lecturers and clinical facilitators is what turns their focus back to studying to achieve their goals. Data analysis in this research is still continuing.

Literature cited

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