

"New Paths to Learning" - an impression of the NIS study day held at the RCN on 24 June 1991.

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The aim was to provide a forum where participants could explore current issues and their effects on provision. An interesting addition was the request to bring a member of teaching staff. To enlighten them perhaps? More on my tutor's opinions later.

The first speaker was Alan Myles, Principal Lecturer, Institute of Advanced Nursing Education at the RCN. He gave an overview of the current educational reforms, focusing upon Project 2000 and its resource implications. Alan used as the focal point for his talk a cultural analysis model adopted by a North West college, which highlights the variety of topic areas now being introduced into nursing curricula. The most obvious area for resource expansion was mentioned very early - that is the need for a greater variety of sociology and psychology texts. From the information given, one major implication is clear - our existing library stock is insufficient to support these new weird and wonderful subjects such as rationality, aesthetics and the new revolutionary topic area of information technology, or IT for the hip! Unfortunately, the underlying message is that unless money is poured into libraries we will never have suitable resources.

The second speaker was Angela Faulkner, Education Consultant and lecturer at Brooklands College. Angela spoke about the principles and practice of adult education, touching on the educational changes and the implications regarding student status. The new emphasis upon student-centred learning and the greater push towards students responsibility for their education were highlighted. Angela covered all aspects of adult education which are now becoming more appropriate to nursing.

The morning ended with the first of two group sessions. The topic areas discussed included the effect of change, the impact of adult-centred learning, and the problems of maintaining a quality service. The timing was right, as most of the discussions continued throughout the delicious lunch and helped to break down barriers as shared moans and groans were revealed.

After lunch, the most dynamic speaker of the day, Marie Adams, Senior Tutor Librarian at Barnet College, gave her presentation. Marie filled the generally acclaimed 'graveyard' session with anecdotes and honesty. She reminded us that the grass isn't always greener on the other side of the fence, and that change is inevitable. The message was clear - to survive we must adapt, and use every change as an opportunity. Yet to be proactive we need information, a key resource which is sadly missing.

This final point was carried over into the discussion groups, with one of the topics being the involvement of librarians in all stages of curriculum development. Other subjects included budgeting, performance indicators, and how to manage your managers.

My teaching colleague, Norma Entwisle, has always been a supporter of libraries, but this study day gave her a greater insight into the variety of problems we face and exactly what we have to offer. A vice-principal commented that the teacher had adopted the attitude of a religious zealot when libraries are discussed. It is perhaps a shame that senior managers mock our supporters rather than listen to them!!

From a personal viewpoint I found the day enjoyable and the company interesting, and came away feeling enthusiastic with the number of contacts made and ideas gained. I took comfort from the fact that we are all battling with the same gremlins - just the names are different.

Copies of the notes given out at this study day are available from Tony Shepherd at the Royal College of Nursing (see p2 for address) at a cost of £2.00. Cheques payable to 'Royal College of Nursing'.