Student Learning Experiences in a RN to BSN Capstone Course

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METHODS

Descriptive Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis

Protection of human subjects: SUNY Delhi IBB approval

Sample
- RN to BSN students who successfully completed the capstone course

Recruitment
- Email, learning platform messages, and course announcements
- Participation: voluntary, following informed consent

Data Collection
- Focus groups lasting 1-2 hours, with 2-5 students per group, and two course faculty as facilitators
- Conducted live via Zoom video conferencing
- Semi-structured interview guide
- Recorded interviews were transcribed by one faculty, using speech recognition software

Data Analysis
- Content analysis; data saturation was achieved
- Transcripts were analyzed line by line, data grouped and coded, and categories identified
- Major themes were identified and verified; analysis was verified by co-researchers.

LIMITATIONS
- Scattered phrases from focus group audio were lost during recording
- Small sample size may limit transferability
- Several weeks’ course may not be fully applicable to longer courses
- Self-selection resulted in higher academic level students for the sample
- Focus groups were limited for time

REFERENCES

CONCLUSIONS
- Plan and manage individual project topics
- Identify and clearly articulate project goals and objectives
- Appropriate flexible practicum hours
- Make prior written personal learning objectives
- Use of educational technology increased
- Career planning
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RESULTS

Themes
- Description of Themes
- Perceived Areas of Strength
- Perceived Areas of Stress

■ Comprehensive seven-week classroom and practicum course
■ Builds upon prior learning, incorporates critical thinking, reasoning, and reflection, and fosters independence in practice
■ Allows students to develop their own individual projects in healthcare settings during a 45-hour guided practicum experience

BACKGROUND

- Nursing capstone courses provide a learning experience that students have not encountered previously in their program of study (Jukkala, Greenwood, Motes, & Block, 2013). Guided by a clinical preceptor and course faculty, students create learning objectives, activities, and plan evidence of their accomplishments by designing a learning contract to map out their unique practicum project.

- Students often approach the capstone course with concern and anxiety over the unknown (Kerr, Hemmings, & Kay, 2013). Data from students’ course evaluations, student-faculty communications, and anecdotal reporting indicated that while students gain confidence and acknowledge their accomplishments towards the end of the practicum, there is stress from the intensity and expectations of the capstone (Rebeschi & Aranoss, 2009). This perceived stress prompted a qualitative study into students’ experiences in a RN to BSN capstone course.

PURPOSE

This descriptive qualitative study collected data on students’ experiences, perspectives, reflections, and suggestions for how the RN BSN capstone course experience could be improved. The data will be included in program assessment and directly impact course revisions.