RN-to-BSN Students’ Reflections on Becoming a Baccalaureate-Prepared Nurse

An outcome of RN-to-baccalaureate (BSN) programs is facilitating associate’s degree (ADN) nurses to transform their professional identity and practice role to that of the BSN-prepared RN. This outcome can be accomplished by using reflective strategies to facilitate students’ professional identity and practice role transformation and to assist them in recognizing their transformation (Asselin, 2011; Ruland & Ahern, 2007). A creative professional identity project was developed to provide RN-to-BSN students with an opportunity to reflect on and creatively express their professional transformation to a BSN RN using multimedia. The project was included in the students’ first nursing course in an online RN-to-BSN program. This course focuses on the professional nursing practice role of the BSN RN and introduces students to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2008) and the National League for Nursing (2010) documents regarding the essentials of baccalaureate nursing education and the outcomes and competencies of baccalaureate nursing graduates, respectively. The course is designed to reexamine principles of nursing practice, such as evidence-based practice, communication, leadership, ethics, quality and safety, economics, and policy, through the lens of a BSN RN practice role. The project was placed in the first course to serve as a foundation for students’ learning, perspective, and reflections throughout the program.

The project guidelines were broad so as not to restrict students’ creativity and to allow for individuality; yet, they were structured for objective evaluation using the following inclusion requirements: use any multimedia except Microsoft PowerPoint®, express both the art and science roles of nursing, and provide a written or audio narrative explanation for abstract projects. Project ideas were presented to the students as concrete options or to jumpstart their creativity, including a recruitment or positive image commercial, a personal digital story, or an original poem, song, or artwork. Students were also provided links to tutorials on multimedia options they could use to create and share their projects. Each weekly module contained specific classroom activities to engage students with the project and encourage reflection. Activities included reflective questions regarding the student’s belief system; personal philosophy of nursing, including nursing theory; view on professionalism; and view on nurses’ legitimate power. In addition, activities included discussion assignments regarding the students’ current and anticipated future practice role, plan to maintain evidence-based practice and cultural competence, and view of key characteristics of nurse leaders. The project was due near the end of the course to allow students time with course content and opportunity to complete their reflections.

The projects submitted indicated that students embraced technology and the opportunity to be creative in reflecting on their transformation to a BSN RN. The projects ranged greatly and included interactive presentations, nursing recruitment commercials, digital stories of students’ journeys in nursing, and videos of students creating original artwork and reciting original poems. The faculty were impressed by the depth of reflection and creative expression demonstrated by the students. Clinical nursing knowledge and skill and the essence of caring were evident in the projects, but expanded BSN RN roles in research, leadership, community and global health, health policy, and informatics were also recognized.

These projects demonstrated an expansion, rather than a replacement, of the students’ professional RN identity. Anecdotal comments from the students reflected enjoyment in creating the project; further, students were proud of their creations and requested a location within the online course to share their projects with classmates. Students were able to share their projects by uploading the link to their project or the project itself into a designated discussion board forum.

The project engages all types of learners, with flexibility for students to select their multimedia and method of expression. The creative professional identity project could be widely used in RN-to-BSN programs to help RN students to reflect on their new BSN RN role and transform their professional identity.

References


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