The Power of the BSN: Impact on Professional Identity

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If BSN programs produce “professional” nurses, then it follows that when ADN nurses return to school for a BSN, the nurses undergo a change in professional identity.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do nurses returning to school for a BSN experience professional identity development?
2. What experiences in a BSN program do nurses identify as influencing their professional identity?
Conceptual Framework: Mezirow’s Transformation Theory

Disorienting dilemmas
- Transformational experience
- Prompts questioning and self-examination
- Exploration of new options
- Changes a person’s frame of reference

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative study
  - Naturalistic Inquiry
- Data collection
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - Professional portfolios
- Participant selection
  - Purposive sampling

ANALYSIS

- Ongoing process
- Four step process
  - Utilizing the date
  - Emergent category design
  - Negative case analysis
  - Bridging, extending, surfacing the data

(Erlandson et al., 1993)
My BSN pulled out the person that I am and that I can be professionally. It was a total confidence booster...The BSN program taught me that I have the capability of furthering myself, of being that smart person that I didn't know existed prior to this program.

Sarah
EMPOWERMENT

- Leveling the playing field
- Valued member of the team
- Voice
- Expert/legitimate power
- Control over career

With a BSN you realize that the doctors have their roles to play, the nurses have their roles, and the patients also have a role or you can't achieve the ultimate goal, which is recovery. A challenge that I had prior to my BSN was I can only do my role and that's all I can do. Now, everybody's got to work together to meet the goal. Jenny

Wait, I have been educated. I have a valid opinion. Rachel

ROLE DEVELOPMENT

- User of evidence-based practice
- Disseminator of knowledge
- Change agent
- Leader
- Advocate
- Educator
I learned that the role of the nurse is more encompassing. We’re that social worker, hands on clinician, that educator, we’re that team player, that advocate, and so much more. Stacy

When we weren’t busy, I would get my computer out and start doing research. I looked at ways we could decrease our C-section rate. Rachel

Before I took this class, I thought I was a good teaching nurse. Now I have a better understanding of how and what patients understand when presented with health information. Fiona

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**CHANGE IN WORLD VIEW**

- Image of nursing
- A nurse is a nurse
- Just a nurse
- See the bigger picture
- Feelings of optimism and new possibilities
- Thirst for learning

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**A nurse is a nurse:** when I finished my ADN I said I’m a nurse. What do I need my BSN for. You do the same things and earn the same paycheck? Elizabeth

**Just a nurse:** I scoffed at the “professional nurse.” Like what does that make me? Because even as a BSN you’re still just a nurse. You’re still a staff nurse. Fiona

**I am a nurse:** The BSN program gave me confidence and enabled me to see nursing as my career. It has taught me not to be a passive, but to be active in shaping the future of professional nursing practice. Sarah

**I am a nurse. Yes, I AM a nurse!** Sarah
IMPLICATIONS: Academic Setting
Nurse educators play important role in professional identity development
• Emphasize lifelong learning
• Explain BSN expands upon rather than repeats ADN
• Reduce fear of returning for a BSN
• Develop transformational learning experiences

IMPLICATIONS: Clinical Setting
• Support professional identity in the workplace
• Harness the power of BSN nurses
• Reward nurses who pursue a BSN

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY
• More focused interview schedule
• Only included ADN nurses
• Only included female nurses
• Faculty as researcher
FUTURE RESEARCH

- Academically: what curricular changes are needed to sustain professional values after graduation
- Clinically: how can workplace support professional values