

RPN to BScN TRANSITION:

IN AND OUT OF A PROGRAM – BACK INTO THE PROFESSION

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BACKGROUND

- Bridging/accelerated nursing programs are the most rapidly growing nursing educational offerings
- Across North America, policy recommendations promote increasing bridging opportunities for nurses (e.g., IOM, 2010; CNA, 2006)
- RPN-BScN bridging programs have been offered in Ontario since 2005
- 6 universities and 10 colleges in Ontario deliver RPN-BScN bridging education
- Very little evaluative data is available on these programs



THE STUDY

In December 2011, the RPN-BScN program offered in collaboration by the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT), Durham College (DC), and Georgian College (GC) received funding from ONCAT to look at:

- Student performance in our bridging program
- Student behaviour in our bridging program
- Student experience of bridging education
- Outcomes of our bridging program for students



PHASES OF THE STUDY

Phase 1

- Student academic performance; student tracking data analysis
- Student experiences including transition into the program

Phase 2

- Extended demographics to understand context of students' lives
- Student perceptions of:
 - Facilitators and barriers to success in bridging education
 - Use and evaluation of university and college services and supports
 - Experience within the program year by year

Phase 3

- Outcomes of bridging education for graduates



OVERVIEW OF THIS PRESENTATION

Examination of the concept of “transition” for RPN-BScN Bridging Program students as they:

- Enter, progress through, and complete the program
- re-enter their profession as a different kind of nurse



DATA SOURCES & ANALYSIS

Data Sources:

- Focus group interviews (110 students in 2009-2010)
- Online qualitative survey responses (133 current students in summer 2012)
- Telephone interview and online qualitative survey responses (30 program graduates in fall 2012)

Method of Analysis:

- Thematic analysis
- Multiple member teams
- Nvivo9/10

TRANSITION

As a concept was...

- Intentionally explored
- Uncovered through thematic analysis of questions about student experience
- Identified across program duration and various contexts
- Differentiated from a parallel process of personal transformation



TRANSITION INTO THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes
What is the student perception of preparedness for the program?	Students perceive they enter the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familiar with the content they <u>expect</u> to encounter• Unprepared for the demands of a university program and sometimes the <u>actual</u> focus of learning
What is the student perception of transition into the program?	Transition into the program is characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frustration, often rooted initially in resistance to accepting new expectations• Challenges associated with finances, logistics, and work-life balance• Internalization of university expectations (and later an associated sense of accomplishment)

TRANSITION THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes
What is the student perception of transition through the program?	<p>Transition through the program is characterized by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A growing sense of accomplishment over time and with experiences• Newfound appreciation for not only expecting flexibility, but being flexible• Role transition that is most apparent to students in practicum or workplace settings

TRANSITION THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes	Examples
What is the student perception of changes to self through the program?	Year 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal gains • Perspective • Time management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence, knowledge • Motivation, discipline • Work-life balance
	Year 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal gains • Stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in character, confidence • Fatigue, stress, frustration
	Year 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal gains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resilience, changing character and outlook, awareness of growth

STUDENT CHANGES TO 'SELF AS A PERSON' THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Themes	Summary of Comments
a) Students are able to see personal gains and give credit to themselves and the program (and sometimes describe gains despite the program)	Students report focusing on their studies with determination and commitment, sometimes with and sometimes without perceived school and family support.
b) Students describe a consistent upward trend in positive personal attributes that constitute self as nurse	Personal changes are specific to responding to adversity and to rising to a challenge engendering broader perspectives and claims of resilience, empathy, and appreciation.

STUDENT CHANGES TO 'SELF AS A NURSE' THROUGH THE PROGRAM

Themes	Summary of Comments
a) Critical thinking & understanding of impact of one's action and one's role are enhanced with increased knowledge, skill and theory/research base	Many respondents provided examples where they focused on self-assessment of professional growth through critical thinking, knowledge enhancement, and skill acquisition.
b) Growth shows up in professional work, but is integral to the personal development that occurs because of the program	Many examples were cited of how the personal and professional are connected in becoming a registered nurse.

TRANSITION INTO PRACTICE BEYOND THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes	Examples
How do graduates experience transition to RN practice within their <u>first six months</u> post-graduation?	Dual transition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RPN to RN • student nurse to RN 	“I found the transition from student nurse to RN more challenging than RPN to RN.”
	Heightened professional demands requiring greater critical thinking and a broader perspective	“I am using a lot of insight and knowledge in regards to the patient so it’s not only about getting tasks done, but rather looking at the patient as a whole.”
	Awareness and internalization of increased professional responsibility	“You have more responsibility... I have to make decisions by myself.”

TRANSITION INTO PRACTICE BEYOND THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes	Examples
How do graduates experience <u>overall</u> transition to RN practice?	A process that takes time and occurs as a result of both new learning from their BScN and work experience as an RN	“I think this is sort of a misconception that this happens once you receive your registration by itself... the transition comes with years of very hard work and actually collaboration that is happening throughout our academic career and your connections with professional organizations... it does not actually happen only when you obtain your license.”
	Focusing on greater interprofessional collaboration and healthier relationships	“I have a great support system so I feel confident and when I don’t, I have my colleagues to confirm things or inform me of new things I didn’t know.”



TRANSITION INTO PRACTICE BEYOND THE PROGRAM

Research Question	Themes	Examples
How do graduates experience <u>overall</u> transition to RN practice?	Requiring greater leadership knowledge and skills than they previously possessed as RPNs (and which they gained in the program)	“Leadership – the program that we took and many other subjects that we have there (e.g., ability to deal with conflict). You can solve problems faster than RPNs and I feel the problem was in myself before university... I wasn’t so good before university, but now... it is much easier.”
	Challenging because graduates have to figure out how to introduce change into the practice environment	“I am finding that [practice environments are] not necessarily what we learned and you are met with a lot of resistance when you try to bring about your ideas... in some ways there are opportunities to change and I have definitely had that experience, but I have also been met with resistance.”

PROGRAM IMPACT FOR GRADUATES

Research Question	Themes	Examples
For graduates of the program, what is the impact on their lives of becoming an RN?	Increased self-esteem, confidence, feelings of accomplishment, and pride in achieving an important goal	“It’s enriched me personally because I realize I love to learn and it’s made me realize I can do more. There’s more opportunities, there’s more potential to do other things as a Registered Nurse than an RPN.”
	For some, a moderate increase in salary or a sense of job security	“The opportunity to work and live here and be secure.”
	A heightened self-appraisal of professional freedom, autonomy, and satisfaction	“Prior to being an RN, I constantly felt like I had my hands tied and I wasn’t able to do things so that was rewarding.”



WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT TRANSITION?

Transition into the program:

- Is not easy, anticipated, or generally welcomed
- Involves an intersection between expectations of what they will encounter and the reality of university nursing education
- Is as much about adjusting to changing work-life balance needs as it is about realizing academic expectations



WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT TRANSITION?

Transition through the program:

- Follows a pattern over time
 - Initial reactivity and resistance
 - Growing responsiveness, at times grudgingly
 - Moving to self-directedness, proactivity, & transformation
- Early in the program, personal gains are off-set by challenges experienced
- Practicum and work experiences provide a mirror for student insight into how they are changing
- Involves changes to both ‘self as a person’ and ‘self as a nurse’



WHAT DID WE LEARN ABOUT TRANSITION?

Transition out of the program and into practice:

- Involves dual transition from
 - student to RN
 - RPN to RN
- Includes a process of internalization of professional responsibility and accountability
- External transition into RN practice leads to an internal process of personal and professional transformation through the experience of RN role enactment

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

Understanding the transition processes that we are identifying will help us to:

- Advise prospective students
- Support students as they progress through the program
- Support faculty in developing contextually-oriented approaches to teaching-learning
- Recognize the developmental nature of this educational experience

