THE WAYS OF LEARNING

EXPERIENCED AND DESCRIBED BY POST-REGISTERED NURSE LEARNERS

By

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary nursing education may lead to changes in the learning processes used by learners, from traditional ways of transmission of knowledge to transformation of knowledge. Present trends encourage critical thinking skills in nursing practice and in nursing education, thus, facilitating nursing learners' transformation of nursing information into nursing knowledge. Identifying ways of enhancing critical thinking skills is pivotal to professional development. In this sense, identifying how these mature post registered nurse (post-RN) learners learn, and how they use critically reflective actions in learning, is important in helping learners to face the challenges of education in order to learn successfully.

The way we learn to acquire a practical skill is different from the way we learn to understand information given in a lecture. Especially in higher education, learners need to think reflectively and critically. Although there are studies describe different learning styles and models of learning and the learner, reflective learning or transformative learning is not described adequately in the literature of nursing education. Mezirow's (1991) transformation theory describes the process of transformation that takes place in adult learning, where prior knowledge is transformed into new knowledge through critical reflection. This study attempted to identify the ways of learning experienced by post registered nurse (post-RN) learners, using a theoretical framework based on Mezirow's transformation theory.

A qualitative, naturalistic approach was used to explore and identify post-RN learners' ways of learning. A purposive sample of 11 post registered nurse learners was

used in this study. A total of three focus group interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. Data analysis followed strategies of qualitative content analysis and the constant comparison method. It was also guided by Mezirow's theoretical framework.

Four major themes emerged from the data: approaches to understanding, knowledge constructing, preserving knowledge, and conceptions of learning. The first three themes describe the ways of learning and the fourth one describes factors influencing learning. Participants apply this new or revised knowledge immediately or may preserve it for future use. Later, this preserved knowledge become existing knowledge and used in participants' next learning situation. Therefore, this study identifies learning as a continuous process.