Context of the study

Historically, a big change in the provision of nurse education with the introduction of Project 2000 moving from the traditional apprenticeship style training to university led education and training., (Alcorn & Topping 2009). There was a gap in the NHS workforce filled by Health Care Assistants, (HCA) who ultimately want to become qualified nurses.

Qualitative Methodology

• A qualitative study was carried out to investigate when in the programme student nurses who had previously worked as a HCA made the transition to thinking and feeling like a Student Nurse rather than a HCA.
• Focus on students' thoughts and experiences.
• Semi structured interviews.
• Purposive Sampling.
• Small sample.
• Thematic Analysis using Coaizzi’s framework.

Analysis of Findings

Academic Work

• “…..I really struggle with my writing skills, like exams and things...there are practical exams like the OSCII, and the presentations as well, some of them I am going to find tougher than others” Participant 2.
• Boyd & McKendry (2012) suggest that student nurses need to learn the conventions of academic writing.
• All students studying undergraduate health professional courses undertake a study skills module right at the beginning of their programme. This module provides this information for the students.

Spiral Curriculum

• The curriculum that the student nurses follow who participated in the authors research is described as a spiral curriculum. This means that students study a topic and then it is revisited later in the course but at a deeper level.
• Additional information is added to increase knowledge.
• “…..BLS, its been different every time........we haven’t done the same thing, and every time its been dead good, we’ve learned something different.” Participant 5.

Teaching Principles versus Specifics

• When teaching clinical skills we teach principles rather than specifics eg. Moving and Handling.

Knowledge Underpinning Practice

• Knowledge underpinning practice was one of the main differences between the HCA role and the Student Nurse role cited by the students. They discussed that knowledge came from a variety of sources and that it is the key to implementing high quality care.

• “One of the ladies made Sim-Man feel sick......I thought it was real, I got right into it, I was engrossed in those practicals, I love them....” Participant 5.
• Moule (2011) suggests that simulation is an innovative pedagogic teaching strategy, it encompasses a range of different knowledge and skills.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice

• When interviewed all the students stated that they definitely felt like student nurses rather than HCA.
• They all felt in their first placement that the roles they were undertaking were very similar to their HCA role but after that they recognised the need for knowledge to underpin practice and their accountability being able to justify their clinical decisions.
• Overall from the author’s findings of this research study we as academics need to be mindful that former HCA’s may need additional support in the first year of the programme to facilitate the transition from HCA to student nurse.
• The additional support may be in the form of extra tutorial support for academic work or help in gathering the right evidence to achieve learning outcomes in clinical practice.
• Mentors in clinical practice also need to be aware that former HCA’s may need to be reminded of the importance of being able to justify clinical decisions with evidence based practice.

References