

REGISTERED MENTAL HEALTH NURSE EDUCATORS PERSPECTIVES ON PRE-REGISTRATION MENTAL HEALTH NURSE EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

A QUALITATIVE STUDY

BACKGROUND

The Future Nurse Standards (FNS) is the current national framework developed by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) that outlines what is required by all nurses upon entry to the register. The framework no longer sets out specific standards for each specialism of nursing and instead expects all fields of nursing to achieve the same competences. This is a significant change & concerns have been raised from the field of mental health that this framework is a step away from field specific nursing and a step towards genericism.



METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative design was adopted. 11 RNMH educators across four Scottish Universities participated in semi-structured interviews via Microsoft Teams. 3 participants were male and 8 were female. Teaching experience ranged from < 5 years to > 20 years & participant age ranged from 30-60 yrs.

Thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2022) was applied to interpret, code and present the data collected from interviews.

AIM

To explore the perspectives of registered mental health nurse (RMHN) educators involved in delivering the pre-registration MH nursing programme since the introduction of the NMC (2018) FNS



FINDINGS:

1. A GENERIC NURSE PROGRAMME, PRIORITISING PHYSICAL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE, IS REPLACING THE SPECIALISM OF MH:

“It is important that mental health nurses have a grasp on physical health model because we know that mental health populations have poor physical health outcome [but] my opinion would be that it has swung too far”

3. EDUCATORS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FNS INTO PRE-REGISTRATION NURSE EDUCATION

“The mental health team weren't even really involved in developing the curriculum...Top down hierarchical model... senior team maybe just took that and sort of put it in the bin on the way out”

2. THE FNS REDUCE RNMH EDUCATORS ABILITY TO ACT AS ROLE MODELS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENT PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

“Students are struggling with their sense of identity as well and sense of belongingness. They don't have enough exposure to the mental health nursing team in terms of that consistent exposure, so they don't really have the identity”.

4. FREEDOM TO DELIVER CONTENT IS IMPEDED BY THE RIGIDITY OF FNS AS WELL AS FREEDOM TO CHALLENGE THE FNS

“Universities say let's think critically and you're like, can we think critically about what we do... It's like stop that, we're not having any of that and won't be doing any of that, we'll think critically about things that don't involve our business”

5. CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING, ACHIEVING, MAINTAINING AND DEMONSTRATING MENTAL HEALTH NURSE-RELATED COMPETENCY

“[mental health students] went away going we're still not competent to do the vast majority of these skills in practice... There is no way any one of those nursing students would go into practice tomorrow saying they were competent in doing that.”

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The FNS are having a detrimental impact on RNMH education by failing to adequately prepare RNMH graduates for their role

The lack of MH-specific skills outlined in the FNS considered to be indicative of a move towards genericism and increased emphasis on physical health care is considered to have been introduced at the expense of critical MH skills.

A key recommendation of this study is for nurse educators to ensure that field specific identity is not being compromised and efforts are made to strengthen this to better equip students to advocate for their profession and for those within their care.



REFERENCES

Nursing and Midwifery Council (2018) Future Nurse: Standards of Proficiency for Registered Nurses. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/education-standards/future-nurse-proficiencies.pdf>. (Accessed 15 March 2025)

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2022) Thematic analysis: a practical guide. London: SAGE Publications.