

Discussion Board Assignments: Student Reflections from an Online MSN Program

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BACKGROUND

Quality instructional design and course preparation involves hours of work for the online instructor; likewise, the online learner has come to understand that online education involves great effort.

- ❑ Online education in nursing has recently experienced expansion.
- ❑ Growth in online nursing instruction has increased the need for nurse educators to study effective online teaching strategies.

PURPOSE

This study's purpose is to increase understanding about what students perceive to be meaningful discussion board assignments.

- ❑ Discussion board (DB) forums are popular means of student to student and student to instructor interaction in an online course.
- ❑ Use of DBs require improved pedagogical techniques and instructional design to make them comprehensive student learning opportunities.

METHODS

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) involves the analysis of text, in the context of its use.

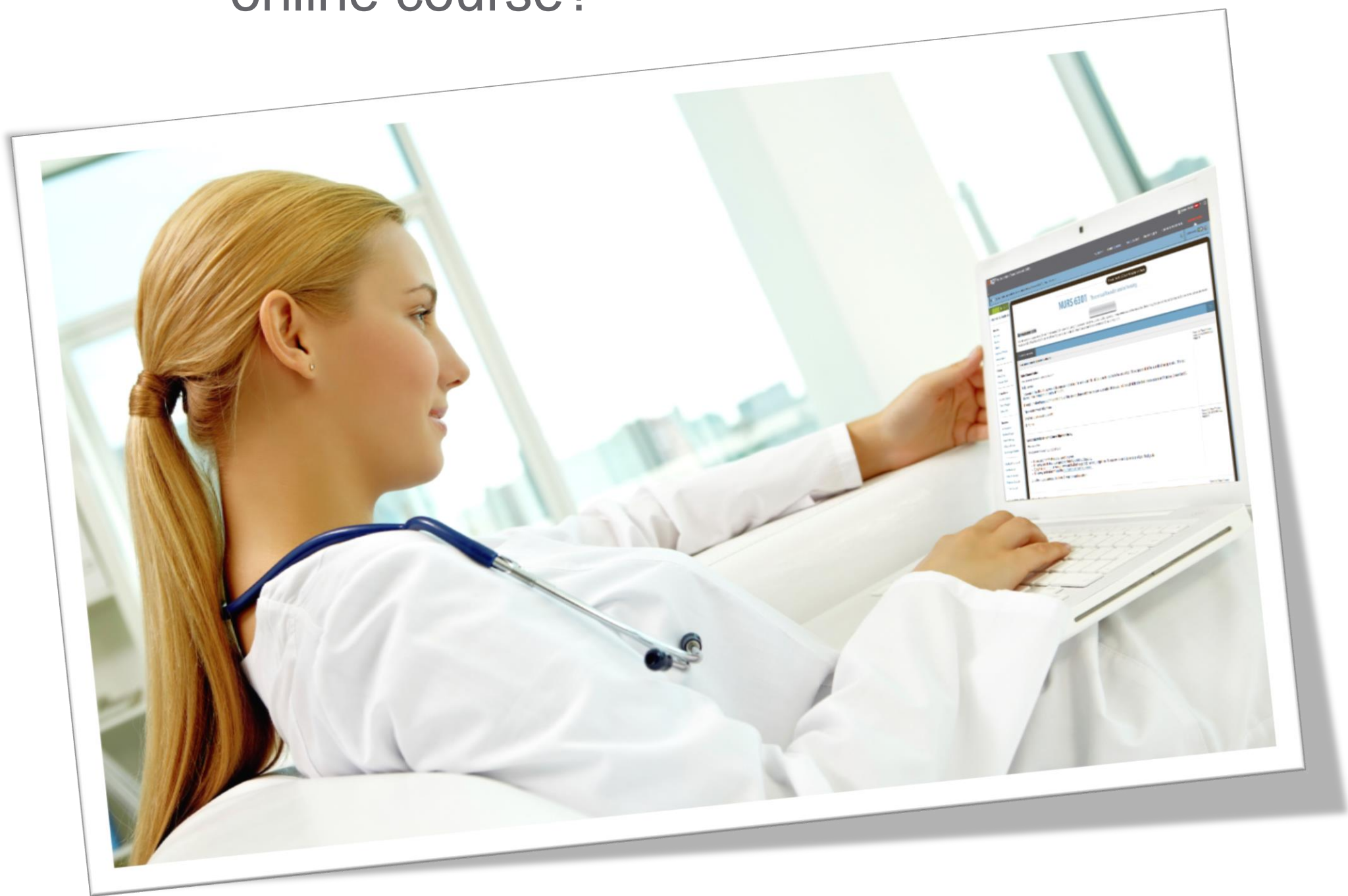
- ❑ It provides new insights and increases researcher's understanding of a particular phenomenon.
- ❑ This study was problem driven: to seek information about how to improve discussion board assignments through student reflections.

METHODS



Qualitative content analysis (QCA) is the methodology being used in this ongoing research to retrospectively analyze survey data. Students voluntarily complete a three question, researcher created, online survey.

- ❑ Describe the best discussion board assignment experience you have had in an online course.
- ❑ What amount of faculty involvement do you think works best for the discussion board assignments?
- ❑ What total percentage of your grade do you think the discussion board assignments should represent in an online course?



INITIAL RESULTS

Research Question 1: Describe a positive experience with a DB assignment.

The most common theme to emerge from the students' description of a positive experience with a discussion board assignment was categorized as "interaction between students."

Three subcategories appeared: 1) sharing, 2) relevance; and, 3) input.

The following excerpts illustrate the three subcategories.

Category: Interaction between Students
Subcategory: Sharing
"My favorite DB's are when I am asked to reflect on something in my personal practice, an experience to share about."
"I really enjoy the feedback from my classmates, and enjoy interacting with them. It has been nice to be able to see others opinions on different issues, and to discuss their stances on these different issues."

Category: Interaction between Students
Subcategory: Relevance
"The best discussion board assignment that I can remember is when discussing something related to the course, and not having to repeat the same thing on each of the postings. Sometimes instructors require postings on things that are not relevant to the course and just confuse everyone."
"The best discussion board experience is when a good discussion topic is chosen and the classmate participation is active because it simulates a real class discussion that would happen without breaks."

INITIAL RESULTS

Category: Interaction between Students
Subcategory: Input
"I think the best experience I had with the discussion board, was when the students were given the opportunity to create a question on the discussion board for the rest of the class to follow. I found that to be rewarding."
"The best discussion board assignment was when we had to create our own questions on the chapters. It provides a meaningful thought process when it comes to understanding the readings."

DISCUSSION

A limitation of this study is that the students have had different instructors throughout the MSN program.

Initial results seem to indicate that collaboration within a discussion board forum provides for the facilitation and transformation of the student from a participant to a reflective practitioner.

Research data collection is ongoing to confirm improved pedagogical techniques and instructional design for DB assignments.

REFERENCES

Complete list of references available upon request.

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