

Title:

The DNP Project: Goals and Glitches

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Session Title:

Navigating the DNP Project in Academic and Clinical Settings

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DNP project goals, DNP scholarly projects and threats to quality DNP scholarly projects

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Abstract Summary:

The goals of the DNP scholarly project are to address healthcare issues, develop EBP, mentoring and leadership skills, and launch future scholarship. Students, faculty and organizations often encounter challenges when developing, implementing and advising these projects. This presentation will explore the evolution of the DNP scholarly project and challenges faced.

Content Outline:

Introduction: DNP scholarly projects often challenge students, their advisors and the organizations in which they are planning to implement.

1. The DNP scholarly project is a hallmark of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree
2. DNP projects are intended to improve outcomes and vital to development of evidence-based practice (EBP) skills while building a foundation for future practice scholarship.
3. The evolution of DNP programs and the DNP scholarly project has created a climate of confusion around what DNP scholarly projects should look like.
4. The disconnect that often exists between academia and clinical practice creates challenges navigating DNP scholarly project development, advising and implementation.

Body. Main point 1: The DNP Scholarly Project is a hallmark of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree.

Supporting Point 1: The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties have specified that DNP students must complete a scholarly project that has its foundation in evidence-based practice (EBP) and includes planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of new practice knowledge.

Main Point 2: DNP projects are intended to improve outcomes and are vital to development of evidence-based practice (EBP) skills while building a foundation for future practice scholarship.

Supporting Point 1: Research supports that evidence-based practice is key to quality, safety and improved outcomes.

Supporting Point 2: While PhDs are intended to conduct rigorous research to create new knowledge, DNPs are charged with being EBP experts, meaning EBP skill development is a cornerstone of DNP education.

Supporting Point 3: The DNP scholarly project is meant to build a foundation for ongoing practice scholarship.

Main Point 3: The evolution of DNP programs and the DNP scholarly project has created a climate of confusion around what DNP scholarly projects should look like.

Supporting point 1: Since the creation of the first DNP program 20 years ago, these programs are often led, taught and advised by PhD-prepared faculty who often have limited education and experience in evidence-based practice, or by DNPs who were educated in programs that were more steeped in research than in evidence-based practice.

Example 1: data from a recent national study on EBP in Nursing Academics suggests that there is a disconnect between PhD and DNP-prepared faculty's self reported EBP competency and their scores on a valid and reliable EBP knowledge questionnaire.

Supporting point 2: Whereas the role of the PhD is to identify gaps in knowledge and conduct rigorous, scientific research to create new knowledge to fill such gaps, the role of the DNP is to be an EBP expert; identifying, appraising and synthesizing a body of evidence and utilizing it to identify best practice.

Main Point 4: The disconnect that often exists between academia and clinical practice creates challenges navigating DNP scholarly project development, advising and implementation.

Supporting Point 1: Many nurses leave clinical practice when they pursue careers in academia

Supporting Point 2: When faculty engage in clinical practice they continue to be connected to issues within clinical practice arenas and stay current on best practices.

Conclusion: DNP scholarly projects are a hallmark of DNP education. When well done, DNP projects provide many benefits to students and the organizations where they are engaged. However, multiple factors threaten the quality of such projects. Employing a standard project roadmap that starts with EBP and employs QI processes for implementation and evaluation provides hope for consistency and quality DNP scholarly project development and implementation.

Topic Selection:

Navigating the DNP Project in Academic and Clinical Settings (25520)

Abstract Text:

The DNP Scholarly Project is a hallmark of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) education. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF), DNP students must complete a scholarly project that has its foundation in evidence-based practice (EBP) and includes planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of new practice knowledge.

Goals of the DNP project include to improve outcomes by addressing identified issues within healthcare, build EBP skills and create a foundation for future practice scholarship. Research supports that when an evidence-based practice approach is utilized for decision-making, quality, safety and improved outcomes are realized. DNPs are charged with becoming EBP experts, meaning EBP skill development is imperative. When well done, the DNP scholarly project provides such an opportunity to develop skills around executing, mentoring and leading evidence-based practice changes within organizations. The last purpose of the DNP scholarly project is to develop a foundation for ongoing practice scholarship.

Despite the national guidelines outlined above, variation exists in the format, quality, and consistency of the DNP project. One possible cause for this variation is the rapid evolution of DNP programs and the DNP scholarly project. Since the arrival of the first DNP program 20 years ago, the number of DNP programs has risen dramatically. Because these are doctoral programs, these programs are often led, taught and advised by PhD-prepared faculty who's education was steeped in teaching them to be quality researchers, or by DNPs who were educated in DNP programs that were more steeped in research than in evidence-based practice. The result is faculty who find themselves with limited education and experience in evidence-based practice, meaning faculty may not have the training in EBP and continued connection to clinical practice needed to support project advisement. In fact, results from a recent national study on EBP in nursing academics revealed that faculty teaching in DNP programs ranked themselves as competent to highly competent in EBP. However, EBP knowledge tests in these same faculty were low. This lack of adequate knowledge of EBP has created a climate of confusion around what DNP scholarly projects, causing frustration for students, faculty and organizational mentors and leaders where DNP students implement their projects. Moreover, this variation is having a negative impact on the generation of knowledge from practice by DNP prepared nurses. This gap between knowledge and competence can be filled by EBP professional development and creating common DNP project criteria that send a clear message that all graduates from DNP programs are prepared to carry out EBP projects that contribute new practice-based knowledge.