

Title:

The DNP Scholarly Project: A Roadmap for Success

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Session Title:

Navigating the DNP Project in Academic and Clinical Settings

Keywords:

DNP project , DNP project roadmap and national standards

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Abstract Summary:

DNP scholarly projects are crucial to development of evidence-based practice (EBP) skills and practice scholarship. However, variance exists in rigor, quality, and approaches to DNP projects, threatening their quality and impact. In this presentation we will share a roadmap for evidence-based quality improvement (EBQI) DNP projects, offering a standardized approach.

Content Outline:

Introduction:

1. The DNP scholarly project is a hallmark of DNP education.
2. Clear national DNP project standards are needed.
3. We outline a DNP project roadmap that operationalizes the AACN (2015) and NONPF (2017) DNP project criteria and provide a rubric for assessing final project quality and rigor.

Main Point 1: The DNP scholarly project is a hallmark of DNP education.

Supporting Point 1: The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) (2015) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) (2017) have specified that Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students must complete a scholarly project with the components of planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of new practice knowledge.

Main Point 2: Clear national DNP scholarly project standards are needed

Supporting Point 1: Significant and widespread variance in the approach, format, rigor, and quality of DNP projects exists.

Example 1: This variance has caused confusion and frustration for students, faculty and the organizations in which DNP scholarly projects are implemented.

Supporting Point 2: National standards can be used as a benchmark for assessing whether adequate levels of rigor and quality are present to support acquisition of a nursing practice doctorate.

Supporting Point 3: National standards can also help distinguish between the DNP scholarly project and Doctor of Philosophy dissertations.

Main Point 3: In this presentation, we outline a DNP project roadmap that operationalizes the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties' DNP project criteria to help guide DNP project formation, evolution and implementation.

Conclusion: The DNP scholarly project is a fundamental component of Doctor of Nursing Practice education. However wide variance in these projects has threatened quality and rigor and has led to confusion and frustration for students, faculty and organizations. National standards are needed to help mitigate these situations. In this presentation, we present a roadmap for the DNP scholarly project that begins with evidence-based practice and then utilizes quality improvement processes to plan, implement and evaluate evidence-based practice changes.

Topic Selection:

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

Abstract Text:

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) have specified that Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students must complete a scholarly project with the components of planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of new practice knowledge. Even with these guidelines, national variation exists in the format, quality and, rigor of the DNP

project, causing frustration for faculty, students, and practice sites where DNP students plan to implement their projects. Data from a national survey revealed that 78 (87%) DNP program directors were 'somewhat' or 'very dissatisfied' with the DNP project and a major challenge was the project structure. These program directors recommend establishing national standards with clear project definitions.

Practice doctorates like the DNP are distinguished by the completion of a scholarly project that demonstrates the synthesis of the student's work and provides the foundation for future practice scholarship. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) have specified that Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students must complete a scholarly project with the components of planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of new practice knowledge. DNP program faculty can use the project as a teaching and learning strategy for establishing baseline practice scholarship knowledge, skills and attitudes, that prepare the next generation of nurses to engage in practice scholarship.

Even with these guidelines, national variation exists in the format, quality and, rigor of the DNP project, causing frustration for faculty, students, and practice sites where DNP students plan to implement their projects. Data from a national survey revealed that 78 (87%) DNP program directors were 'somewhat' or 'very dissatisfied' with the DNP project and a major challenge was the project structure. These program directors recommend establishing national standards with clear project definitions.

The need to clarify DNP graduate scholarship and the characteristics of the DNP project was the impetus for the AACN 2015 white paper. According to AACN and NONPF, DNP projects should be framed by the EBP process and include:

1. Synthesis and translation of evidence
2. Systems or population focus
3. Practice change that impacts healthcare outcomes through direct or indirect care
4. Demonstrate implementation in an appropriate area of practice
5. Include an evaluation of processes or outcomes
6. Include a plan for sustainability
7. Provide a foundation for future scholarship

These criteria suggest that DNP projects should start with the evidence and use EBP and QI processes to solve practice problems.

Clear national DNP project standards are needed for several reasons. National standards can be used as a benchmark for assessing if the quality of the project is on target for awarding a nursing practice doctorate. Standards can provide a clear message that practice doctorates like the DNP produce rigorous, scholarly projects intended to translate existing evidence into practice to solve real-world problems, in contrast to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) dissertations that address gaps in the existing research that contribute to new discipline specific knowledge.

In this presentation, we outline a DNP project roadmap that operationalizes the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties' DNP project criteria to help guide DNP project formation, evolution and implementation.