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Nursing Administrators Perspective of the Nurse Faculty Shortage in Their Schools: A "Bird's Eye View"

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Background: Nearly one million registered nurses will reach retirement age within the next 10 to 15 years, including a large number of nurse educators (Keele & Alpert, 2015). With sixty-three percent of nursing faculty over the age of 45 and another nine percent are over 61, the majority of current faculty will have retired by 2020, the year in which the IOM recommends that 80% of the nursing workforce be baccalaureate prepared (Frank, 2013). As noted by Fang and Kesten (2017), there is a “sense of urgency for the nursing education community to address the impending exodus of senior faculty and to develop younger faculty for their successful succession”.

Beyond the bleak statistics, it is important to identify and interpret how the nurse faculty shortage affects schools of nursing by speaking with those individuals currently facing and managing those challenges, nursing administrators.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of the nurse faculty shortage from the perspective of a nursing administrator.

Method: A qualitative, interpretive method, Heideggerian hermeneutics, was used. Heideggerian hermeneutics is a philosophy and interpretive research approach “in which researchers seek to understand the experience of the individual within multiple contexts: the individual, the environment, and culture” (Jarosinski & Pollard, 2014, p. 190).

Before initiating participant recruitment, University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained. Sampling was purposive. Participants represented selected community colleges and four-year institutions of varied missions, populations and programs. Accessing Chairs, Deans and Program Directors of both graduate and undergraduate programs, and community colleges included phone calls, meetings and word- of- mouth in order to enlist their participation in this study. The researchers provided participants with an in-depth description of the study, overview of the interview format, and time to ask questions. Participants were again reminded that they may interrupt or terminate their participation in the study at any time without penalty. All participants provided written consent.

Data sources consisted of narrative accounts accessed through the interview process and post-interview written observations (field notes). Interviews were conducted for a time span of 45 minutes to one hour. Researchers used a semi structured interview format including questions that were open-ended, exploratory, and designed to encourage self-reflection. A final sample size of 25 was considered sufficient, thus acknowledging Benner’s caveat that numerous observations and interviews with the

same study will generate a large volume of text (Benner, 1994). Inclusion criteria consisted of administrators from community colleges and four-year colleges who were able to articulate their understanding of the nurse faculty shortage and provide their perspective of the nurse faculty shortage at their school as well as how they were managing it.

Analysis: A modified version of Diekelmann, Allen, and Tanner's (1989) method was used to interpret transcribed texts.

Results: Four themes emerged. *Making do/Getting by* reflected the measures taken by schools to meet the challenges of the faculty shortage. Administrators from undergraduate and graduate programs voiced parallel concerns; those from both four-year schools and community colleges identified increased workload, significant gaps in faculty clinical expertise, and poor morale as outcomes of this shortage.

Onboarding described how schools are finding new and creative ways of recruiting and retaining faculty. "Onboarding," is similar to an expanded and deliberate form of orientation that socializes faculty to the institution. Most schools included an informal mentorship process in addition to a more formal orientation.

Changing Expectations depicted the complexity of an academic role and the academic environment, and shifting demands and requirements of faculty. Faculty workload has increased over the years in individuals who are already overworked with limited resources.

Elephant in the Room identified how administrators are facing the impact of salary and financial issues in faculty recruitment and retention. The "elephant in the room" reveals the unspoken truth-salary inequities are real. Across the board, administrators viewed this as a challenge in addressing the faculty shortage, recruitment and retention.

Implications/Conclusions: The nurse faculty shortage is taking its toll on nurse administrators. A multi-pronged approach is needed including re-aligning role expectations with higher salaries and compensation (Daw, Seldomridge, Battistoni, & Belcher, 2018), providing financial support for doctoral degree completion, expanding mentorship programs to promote faculty retention, and focusing efforts on making a career as a nurse faculty member an attractive option.

Title:

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Abstract Summary:

This qualitative research explored the experience of the nurse faculty shortage from the perspective of nursing administrators from community colleges and baccalaureate nursing programs. Four themes emerged reflecting how administrators are managing current challenges related to recruitment and retention of faculty.

Content Outline:

I. Background

1. Eastern Shore Western Shore - Faculty Initiative
2. Identifying the nursing faculty shortage in Maryland
3. Clarifying issues and gaps created by the nursing faculty shortage
4. Administrators' experience of the nursing faculty/nurse educator shortage
5. Explore their experience of the shortage from both a personal and an institutional perspective
6. Choosing a qualitative approach

II. Method

1. An interpretive perspective
2. Heideggerian hermeneutics-an approach in which researchers seek to understand the experience of the individual within multiple contexts
3. Recruitment
4. Sample
5. Semi-structured interview format

III. Analysis

1. Diekelmann, Allen, and Tanner's method (1989)

IV. Results

Four themes emerged

1. Onboarding
2. Changing expectations

3. The elephant in the room
 4. Making do, getting by
- V. Next steps: How do we address the nurse faculty shortage in ways that support current faculty and invite new faculty to be involved, invested faculty members? What are we doing right? How do we implement improvements that are problem-solving rather than diminishing?

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