Washington, D.C. Heath Policy Immersion Experience of Doctoral Nursing Students: A Phenomenological Study

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Disclosure Statement

• I, Janice Baglietto, declare that neither I, nor the coauthors of this study, Francine Bono-Neri, Elizabeth Infante, Maureen Lowers-Roach and Denise Walsh, have anything to disclose.

• In addition, we have no conflicts of interest.
Objectives

• Define health policy

• Discuss current health policy education in nursing curriculum

• Describe the study

• Discuss outcomes of the study and its implications to nursing
Introduction

• Nursing
  • Respected and trusted
  • Comprises largest portion of healthcare professionals
• Advocates
  • Research serves as guide to governmental officials
• American Nurses Association (ANA)
Background

• Health Policy, according to the World Health Organization (2018):

“refers to decisions, plans, and actions that are undertaken to achieve specific health care goals within a society. An explicit health policy can achieve several things: it defines a vision for the future which in turn helps to establish targets and points of reference for the short and medium term. It outlines priorities and the expected roles of different groups; and it builds consensus and informs people” (para. 1).
Background (cont’d)

• Health policy
  • Provides a foundation for healthcare practice and public health systems
  • Put into action by appointed/elected officials and government agencies
  • Can be at a local, state, and national level
  • Impacts practice and the populations they serve
Background (cont’d)

Health Policy Education

• National Academy of Medicine (2011, formerly known as the Institute of Medicine) recommends health policy education

• *Healthy People* 2020 recognized that through health policy disparities in health can be addressed to achieve health equity
Background (cont’d)

• Barriers to Health Policy Education
  • Challenges to integration in current curricula
  • Lack of perceived relevance to the curricula
  • Lack of interest, knowledge and policy expertise of faculty
  • Lack of resources
  • Conflicts of scheduling and/or time constraints of curricula
Purpose Statement

• The purpose of this study was to describe the lived experience of doctoral nursing students' (PhD and DNP) engagement in a week-long immersion trip to Washington, D.C. as a requirement of their mandatory health policy course.
Ethical Considerations

• Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval
• Participation was voluntary
• Informed consent was obtained from each participant
• Responses were anonymous with no identifiers retained or recorded
• Raw data and other materials will be kept for three years and then discarded.
Methods

• Design
  • Phenomenological Approach exploring the lived experience

• Data collection
  • Google Forms via email to PhD and DNP students

• Survey
  • Demographics
  • Focus question with open-text field

“What effect, if any, did the Washington Immersion Experience have on you as a nursing professional?”
Methods (cont’d)

• Setting and Sample
  • Mid-Atlantic region college in the United States
  • 43 students of the nursing PhD and DNP programs
  • 30 met inclusion criteria
  • Final data: N=15

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Data Analysis and Findings

- van Manen (1997) and Colaizzi (1978) methodology used
- Significant statements were extracted from each response
- Meanings were organized into themes and coded with NVivo 11
- 100% reported positive feedback
- Four themes emerged
Knowledge and Understanding of the Political Process

• Participants expressed a raised awareness and appreciation of the political process

• One participant stated, “The experience gave me increased knowledge on the political process” (R8)

• Others stated,
  • “The exposure has made me more aware....in just how government works.” (R2)
  • The experience provided a way “.... to understand all that goes into lobbying...” (R7)
Nursing's Role as Advocate for the People

• Participants expressed increased awareness and understanding that future actions would be required for betterment of society

• Statements included
  • “…I have become more aware of advocacy…related to the concerns impacting professional nursing, population health and healthcare in general” (R8)
  • “…brought awareness to the impact nurses have and can have…” (R13)
  • “The trip was a great way to learn to advocate…” (R7)
Empowerment Through Increased Awareness

• Participants stated that the overall experience was
  
  • “…very valuable and empowering” (R15)
  
  • “…it showed me how important nurses’ voices are in changing old or implementing new policies” (R5)
Recognition of the Role Professional Nursing Organizations Play in the Political Arena

• Participants described their recognition of the integral role played by professional organizations

• Statements included
  • “I have a greater appreciation for the various nursing organizations...and what they do” (R7)
  • “...showed me how important nurses’ voices are...we need that seat at the table” (R5)
Discussion and Implications to Nursing

• 4,000,000 active RNs in U.S., yet advocacy for health policy remains low (Catallo et al., 2014; National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2018)

• Nurses play pivotal roles in healthcare continuum

• Nurses’ frontline presence affords firsthand knowledge of challenges encountered in the healthcare system (ANA, 2018)

• Research demonstrates that nurses require, yet do not often receive, education and training regarding advocacy in health policy (DiCenso et al., 2012; Heiman et al., 2016; Lewinski & Simmons, 2018)
Discussion and Implications to Nursing (cont’d)

- For political engagement of nurses to occur, an increase in exposure to health policy through education is key
- Results of the doctoral nursing students’ study showed
  - Increased knowledge and understanding
  - Awareness of the need for a nursing voice
  - Sense of empowerment through knowledge and exposure to the process
  - Appreciation for professional nursing organizations’ power and influence in shaping health policy
Limitations

• Varied immersion experiences

• Usage of an electronic survey for data collection

• Inability to validate statements of participants

• Potential for bias as all of the researchers had participated in a Washington, D.C. immersion experience
Conclusion and Recommendations

• Themes validate the benefits and necessity for health policy education in nursing at the doctoral level

• Recommendations:
  • Health policy education in all nursing curriculums
  • Membership in professional nursing organization
Thank You
References


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