Partnership Functioning and Sustainability in Nursing Academic Practice
Partnerships: The Mediating Role of Partnership Synergy

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Objectives

- Examine the concept of academic practice partnerships (APP) in nursing within the current context of healthcare in the United States
- Provide a review of the empirical literature and describe the theoretical framework
- Review research methodology and findings
- Describe the significance of this study to nursing and partnership science
Academic Practice Partnerships

Background
Academic-Practice Partnerships

Approved by the AACN Board of Directors in March 2010, a joint task force was convened by AACN and the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) to develop resources for nursing leaders looking to develop and sustain effective academic-practice partnerships. While this collaboration continues through the newly formed AACN-AONE Academic-Practice Partnership Steering Committee, the following resources are now available:

- GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ACADEMIC-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS

Endorsed by both AACN and AONE, these 8 guiding principles will help nursing leaders to develop collaborative arrangements based on common goals, mutual respect, and shared knowledge.
Definition of APP

“Mechanism for advancing nursing practice to improve the health of the public. Such intentional and formalized relationships are based on mutual goals, respect, and shared knowledge. An academic-practice partnership is developed between a nursing education program and a care setting. Such relationships are defined broadly and may include partnerships within nursing, and other professions, corporations, government entities, and foundations”

Call to Partner

- National nursing organizations and governmental agencies support partnership

So what is the problem?

- Partnerships are not simple, current APP have been described as

“parallel play with siloed policy and political realities. Behaviors range from toleration to coordination, which are usually structured, superficial, and mechanistic....”

(Warner & Burton, 2009, p. 330)
Review of the Empirical Literature & Theoretical Framework

Nursing APP Literature
Partnership Synergy Framework
# 3 Systematic Reviews: Nursing APP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors &amp; Focus</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beal (2012)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 Themes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General APP</td>
<td>• Pre-requisites to successful partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 110 articles met criteria of 300 reviewed</td>
<td>• Benefits of partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Type of partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Workforce development</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nabavi, Vanaki, &amp; Mohammadi (2012)</th>
<th><strong>Determined 4 main stages of partnerships</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Clinical Education</td>
<td>• Mutual potential benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 15 articles met criteria of 85 reviewed</td>
<td>• Moving from being competitors to collaborators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Joint practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mutual beneficial outcomes</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>De Geest, Dobbels, Schonfeld, Duerinckx, Sveinbuarnardottir, &amp; Denaerynck (2013)</th>
<th><strong>Focus</strong>: Education and practice/clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• APP structure</td>
<td><strong>Organizational</strong>: Strategic plan or contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 85 met criteria</td>
<td><strong>Major Limitation</strong>: Formal evaluation of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>partnerships - “the content and approach of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evaluations varied largely and were general of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>poor quality”</td>
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## Summary of Nursing APP Literature

### Positives
- 3 recent review of literatures
- All describe a need for APP research
- Each review of literature had a slightly different slant but did not conflict

### Limitations
- Dearth of research on APP
- Did not include gray literature
- No review included literature passed 2010
Theoretical Framework

Partnership Functioning → Partnership Synergy → Sustainability

(Cramm, Phaff, & Nieboer, 2013)
Research Study
The Problem

- **Complex challenges** face the nursing profession in the US
- Nursing education and nursing practice **need to partner** to meet these challenges
- Evaluation of nursing APPs have been **limited** to solitary descriptions of anecdotal success
- **More information about APP** is needed to cultivate the alliance between nursing academia and service
Research Questions

- **R1**: What are the characteristics of the participants and institutions?
- **R2**: What is the relationship between partnership functioning, synergy, and sustainability?
- **R3**: Does partnership functioning exhibit a direct effect on sustainability, or is the effect mediated by generating partnership synergy?
Research Design

Non-experimental
Cross-sectional
Descriptive
Convenience sample

Power Analysis

\[ N = \frac{L}{\gamma} + k + 1 \]

\[ 98.409 = \frac{13.62}{0.149} + 6 + 1 \]
Ethical Considerations

- Study approved by UNCO IRB
- Minimal risks to participants
- Measures to decrease risk of confidentiality
- Participation is voluntary
- All data will be reported in aggregate form
Data Collection

Demographic
- Personal
- Institutional characteristics
- Partnership characteristics

PSAT-S
- 15-item questionnaire on partnership functioning
- 9-item questionnaire on Synergy
- All questions on 5-point Likert Scale

Sustainability
- 9-item questionnaire
- All questions on 5-point Likert Scale
Data Analysis

- R1: What are the characteristics of the participants and institutions?
  - Frequency distribution

- R2: What is the relationship between partnership functioning, synergy, and sustainability?
  - Correlational design – Pearson’s $r$

- R3: Does partnership functioning exhibit a direct effect on sustainability, or is the effect mediated by generating partnership synergy?
  - Path Analysis
Research Question #1
Findings

What are the characteristics of the participants and institutions?
Research Question #1

Findings

Characteristics of participants

- 145 participants
- 106 participants qualified – active partner in APP
- White women, age 50-59
- Registered Nurses
- Highly educated
- Partnership length varies <3 years or >10 years
- Institutions
  - Hospitals (TJC)
  - BSN+ (CCNE)
Research Question #2

Findings

What is the relationship between partnership functioning, synergy, and sustainability?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.70**</td>
<td>-.80**</td>
<td>-.46**</td>
<td>-.28*</td>
<td>-.52**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Efficiency</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-.67**</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.41**</td>
<td>-.58**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Administration and Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.53**</td>
<td>.28*</td>
<td>.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Non-Financial Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.47**</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Sustainability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>.33**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Synergy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>-</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05 ** *p < .01

Zero-Order Correlation Coefficients of Partnership Functioning, Sustainability, and Synergy (Table 5)
Research Question #3

Findings

Does partnership functioning exhibit a direct effect on sustainability, or is the effect mediated by generating partnership synergy?
Figure 1. Final path model examining the meditational effect of partnership synergy between partnership functioning and sustainability. Dashed lines represent nonsignificant paths. The path coefficient in parentheses represents the decreased magnitude of the coefficient in the presence of synergy—that is, evidence of partial mediation.

* $p < .05$  ** $p < .01$
### Summary of Findings

#### Most Participants
- White
- Women
- Age 50-59
- Registered Nurses
- Highly educated
- Partnership length <3 years or >10 years
- Institutions
  - Hospitals (TJC)
  - BSN+ (CCNE)

#### Correlation
- PSAT-S Good reliability
- Relationship among variables are statistically significant except non-financial resources and sustainability
- Leadership and efficiency had negative correlation with other variables; all other correlations positive

#### Path Analysis
- Partnership synergy is a partial mediator of partnership functioning and sustainability
- There is a statistically significant path from synergy to sustainability
- There is a predictive negative relationship between efficiency and sustainability
Interpretation and Relationship with Previous Research
Significance of the Study

- Partnership functioning constructs
  - leadership and efficiency
  - synergy

DARK REALITY?

OR....

LACK OF FORMALITY?
Significance of the Study

- All previous partnership synergy studies reveal positive correlation of the variables
- This study had negative correlation of leadership and efficiency with the other variables related to high leadership and efficiency scores and lower synergy scores

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<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>15.02</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>11.25</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergy</td>
<td>20.09</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance of Study

Creation of Synergy?
Limitations

- Non-experimental design
- Cross-sectional “snapshot”
- Convenience sample
- Identifying participants
- Perception of APPs
Significance of the Study

- Foundational research in APPs
- Synergy → Sustainability
- PSAT-S Reliable tool
  - Cronbach’s alpha ranged 0.84-0.92
- Recommendations for further research
  - Repeat this study with highly structure/ formal APP
  - Qualitative study on “parallel play”
  - Further work with PSAT-S in English
“...entities can no longer thrive in the parallel play mode of existence and that academics and service truly inform each other, partnerships have reemerged from their lethargic past and are being touted as a solution...”

(Bleich et al., 2004, p. 285)
Questions?