VALUE OF THE DOCTORATE OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP) IN NURSING EDUCATION

Diane Anderson, DNP, MSN, RN, CNE – Associate Professor  |  danderson@chamberlain.edu
Cari Simpson, DNP, MSN, RN, CNE – Associate Professor  |  csimpson@chamberlain.edu
Chamberlain College of Nursing

Purpose

- Explore the benefits in promoting teaching experiences in nursing education by DNP faculty
- Discuss the value of DNP faculty being a contributing member of the team in an academic setting
- Promote collaboration of all degrees within an academic setting
- Generate discussion to enhance the collegial process of all faculty teaching team members
- Strategize efforts to clarify and unify terminal degree programs
- Support nurses pursuing research-concentrated and practice-focused doctoral degrees to maintain nursing’s continued advancement as a profession

Background

The DNP is considered to be the “newer” terminal degree in Nursing.
- Numerous DNP programs now offer elective education, or education leadership options in curriculum development, education theory, testing and evaluation methodology. If a comparison was done to assess the core focus of the DNP degree and the National League of Nursing (NLN) Core Competencies for Nurse Educators (2005), the alignment would be comprehensive.
- Considered the practice degree to compliment the PhD research degree
- Many university settings don’t consider the DNP candidate for classroom instruction; however, the rationale for this practice is not clearly defined
- The DNP was recognized by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) as a terminal degree in 2003
- Entry into practice at the bachelor degree level has been debated since 1965. The same debates are now seen at the doctorate degree level as to what constitutes a terminal degree, particularly in academia. It is clear that more education is better, and there is evidence that the level of education is strongly correlated with patient outcomes [Tanner, n.d.].

Goals

The learner will be able to:
- Identify the value and contributions of the DNP in the role of nurse educator
- Define the DNP’s role in nursing education and how it compliments other terminal degrees in academia
- Promote collaboration and unity amongst all terminal degree prepared nursing educators in the realm of academia

Evidence

Graduates of either a PhD or DNP programs have not specifically prepared for a faculty teaching role, and upon graduation both still require mentoring and preparation in teaching methodologies, program development and curriculum design. There continues to be a gap between the value of the DNP in academia and the contributions that would enhance the research focused PhD.

There is a lack of collaboration and sharing of knowledge regarding evidence based practice concepts along with professional experiences that would enhance nursing education between the two terminal degrees.

Considerations

The DNP practice focus should complement the research focused PhD in the academic setting.
- DNP can share knowledge of nursing practice and evidence based practice strategies with students in the classroom and clinical setting.
- The purpose of the DNP is to put into practice the knowledge gleaned from research and educate others in the advancement of practice, policies and high-quality health care [Edwardson, 2010].
- Nursing as a practice profession must embrace the contributions of both DNP and PhD prepared nurses to expand and then implement the scientific basis for patient care.

Conclusions

It is advantageous for both the PhD and DNP to collaborate in the classroom setting, sharing both clinical and research experiences, which will aid in strengthening the nursing profession overall.
- Nurses with a DNP are well suited for administrative, academic and policy making roles.
- DNP programs are focused on preparing its graduates to integrate the scholarship developed by nurse researchers.
- It is time that these terminal nursing degrees support one another and begin to share the wealth of knowledge that each brings in order to advance the profession of nursing [Edwardson, 2010].