

Transforming Post-Master's DNP Education:

Student Perspectives About Their Educational Experiences

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Learner Objectives

By the end of this presentation, the learner will be able to:

- List key motives that drive master's prepared APRNs to obtain a DNP degree.
- Identify and discuss specific facilitators and barriers that may affect success for the DNP student
- Begin to develop a plan to address barriers for DNP success as well as to indicate a plan to promote key successful strategies for students in post-masters DNP programs



Background

- 2004: AACN position statement – endorsing the DNP. Recommended as degree to enter into APRN practice by 2015
- 2006: 20 DNP programs nationwide
- 2015: 264 programs nationwide with an additional 60 in development; still no requirement for DNP to practice as an APRN

(AACN, 2004; AACN, 2015a)



DNP Program Development

- DNP Essentials – used to guide development of DNP programs
- Challenges to implementation
 - Focus of programs
 - Program goals
 - Consistency amongst programs

(AACN, 2006; Melnyk, 2013; Udulis & Mancuso, 2015; Waldrop, Caruso, Fuchs, & Hypes, 2014).



Perspectives Concerning Program Implementation

- Program Administrators
- Faculty
- APRN Community

What about the student perspective?

(Brown & Crabtree, 2013; Melnyk, 2013; Nelson, Cook & Raterink, 2013; Udliis & Mancuso, 2015; Waldrop et al., 2014)



Purpose

- Qualitative descriptive study
- Explore perceptions of masters-prepared APRNs who completed a DNP degree
- Perceived facilitators and barriers to success in a DNP program



Methods

- IRB approval from Frontier Nursing University
- Subjects
 - APRNs
 - Graduates of post-Master's DNP programs
- Link to Survey Monkey available through:
 - Doctors of Nursing Practice, Inc. online newsletter
 - Doctors of Nursing Practice community blog
 - Sent to professional colleagues and to the DNP graduates of one university with DNP alumni



Survey Items

Participants were asked:

- Demographic data
- Reasons why they returned for a post-Master's DNP
- What was particularly useful for success in their programs
- Any barriers/challenges to success
- What advice would they offer to DNP students



Survey Items (continued)

- Described their DNP projects
- Discussed dissemination of their findings
- Indicated whether or not the completion of a DNP increased their yearly salaries
- Selected an overall satisfaction rating re: their decision to earn a DNP degree



Demographic Items

- Age
- Gender
- Years of APRN experience
- Months since program completion
- Length of DNP program in months
- Annual personal income



Data Analyses

- Descriptive statistics – demographic data
- Content analysis – open-ended questions



Results

- 47 individuals were recruited
- 39 met criteria for inclusion
- *one participant did not complete demographic data



Demographics (N=38)

Age	Mean: 50.95 years (range 32-66 years)
Gender	89.47% female; 10.53% male
Years as an APRN	Mean: 14.13 years (range 1-33 years)
Months since completion of DNP program	Mean: 19.97 months (range 1 month – 8 yrs)
Program Length in Months	Mean: 19.51 months (range 12-36 months)
Annual Income (n = 37)*	Less than \$50,000: 3 (8%) \$50,000-\$74,000: 3 (8%) \$75,000-\$99,000: 14 (38%) \$100,000-\$149,000: 14 (38%) Greater than \$150,000: 3 (8%) *1 participant skipped this item



Question 1: *As a masters-prepared APRN, please list 3-4 reasons why you decided to return for your DNP*

4 Themes:

- *Professional reasons (38%)*
- *Personal reasons (27%)*
- *The desire to teach (19%)*
- *To earn a terminal degree (16%)*



Examples of *Professional Reasons*

- Promoting the profession
- Advancing one's career
- Earning leadership positions
- Parity with APRN peers
- Improvement of patient care
- Professional satisfaction



Examples of *Personal reasons*

- Improvement of knowledge of evidence-based practice, research, or a clinical interest area
- The desire to learn
- Personal growth
- Tuition affordability
- The ability to return for a DNP soon after earning an MSN



Question 2: *What did you as a student find particularly helpful or useful for success in your DNP Program?*

5 Themes

- *Faculty/mentor support (30%)*
- *Program-specific characteristics (24%)*
- *Peer support (24%)*
- *Personal attributes (16%)*
- *Family and community/employer support (6%)*



Examples of *Faculty/mentor support*

- Supportive faculty
- Supportive DNP Project Team (committee) chairs
- Supportive program directors



Examples of *Program-specific characteristics*

- Structure of courses
- Ability to learn online



Examples of *Personal attributes*

- Organizational skills
- Self-motivation
- Focus



Question 3: *Please list any barriers or challenges to your being successful in your program*

3 Themes

- *DNP program issues (51%)*
- *Personal barriers (36%)*
- *Professional issues (13%)*



Examples of *DNP program issues*

- Less than supportive faculty, chairs, and/or program directors
- Perception of “chaos” within the program
- Perceived educational inconsistencies



Examples of *Personal barriers*

- Time management
- Maintaining work/school/home balance
- Sustaining a rigorous academic workload
- Family emergencies



Examples of *Professional issues*

- Lack of clear professional goals for DNP-prepared APRNs
- Negative attitudes regarding the DNP from APRN colleagues due to the lack of salary increase
- Lack of DNP-prepared mentors



Question 4: *What advice for success would you offer current DNP students or students considering returning for the DNP?*

3 Themes

- *Educational and study strategies for success (45%)*
- *Personal recommendations (42%)*
- *Program selection recommendations (13%)*



Examples of *Educational and study strategies for success*

- Stay focused; be organized; work ahead; do not give up
- Select a topic of interest for the DNP project
- Be realistic about project time constraints
- Develop effective relationships with school peers/the DNP cohort



Examples of *Personal recommendations*

- Expect a deep time commitment
- Consider work reductions
- Ask for family support
- Delegate home responsibilities



Examples of *Program selection recommendations*

- Research DNP programs for:
 - Reputation
 - Stability
 - Fit to the student



Question 5: *Please describe what type of capstone project you completed*

- *Evidence generation projects (39%)*
- *Practice change/quality improvement projects (27%)*
- *Literature reviews (14%),*
- *Other projects (20%)*



Examples of *Other projects*

- Continuing education modules
- Community health projects
- Strategic plans for future projects
- Case studies



Dissemination of Scholarly Work

76% of participants disseminated the findings of their DNP projects in some way:

- Podium or poster presentation (55%)
- Presented AND published (13%)
- Published without presenting (8%)



Salary and Satisfaction

Salary:

- No salary increase (64%)
 - Reductions to work in academia

Satisfaction:

- Mean: 8.44 on scale of 1-10
- 56% responded with 10/10



Discussion

- More facilitators identified than barriers to success (67 responses versus 47)
- Uses for this data:
 - Student and faculty education
 - Strategic planning
 - DNP program development and implementation



Initial Recommendations

- Consistency in academic requirements
- Consensus of vision for the overall goal of the DNP as a terminal degree
- Evidence-based practice and the *DNP Essentials* as the basis for curricula



Program Length

- Range 12 – 36 months – consistent with the findings of Udlis and Mancuso.
- AACN: Minimum 12 months of full time study for post-masters DNP programs

(AACN, 2015b; Udlis & Mancuso, 2015)



DNP Projects

Variation in types of DNP projects consistent with the literature

- Vary widely in quality
- May not be consistent with the AACN's *DNP Essentials*

(AACN, 2015b; Brown & Crabtree, 2013; Melnyk, 2013; Nelson et al., 2013; Waldrop et al., 2014).



DNP Projects

- Faculty consensus on DNP project outcomes is needed
- Should reflect the *DNP Essentials*
- Focus on translation of the evidence, quality improvement, and practice change
- Positively influence patient outcomes

(AACN, 2015b; Nelson et al., 2013; NONPF, 2015)



Student Perspective on DNP Programs

- *Faculty/mentor support and program-related characteristics* – most cited as facilitators to success
- *Program issues* were the most frequently cited barrier to success, even above *personal issues*



Capitalizing on Facilitators

- DNP Project Team Leader (chair) mentoring by experienced faculty who are:
 - Knowledgeable in evidence-based practice
 - Familiar with the *DNP Essentials* and current AACN recommendations for project implementation
 - Experienced in fostering an encouraging environment for students



Capitalizing on Facilitators

- Incorporating information on strategies for program success at student orientation
- Dialogue re: professional and personal obligations
- Balancing the demands of a program
- Team-building activities



Study Limitations

- Convenience sample
 - One online professional site
 - Snowballing from one university
- Written responses to open-ended questions
 - Anonymity and online format



Conclusions

- More facilitators identified than barriers to success
- DNP program factors contribute to both the perceived facilitators as well as perceived barriers to student success in post-master's DNP programs



Conclusions

- Faculty must develop and maintain high quality curricula that focuses on translation of the evidence, quality improvement, and practice change to positively influence patient outcomes



Conclusions

- DNP program administrators must continue to strive for consistency both within and among programs using the *DNP Essentials* and the AACN white paper to guide DNP curriculum, project requirements, and terminology



Conclusions

- Quantitative and qualitative data is needed
 - Educators
 - Students
- Enhance and refine DNP curricula to meet the needs of future students



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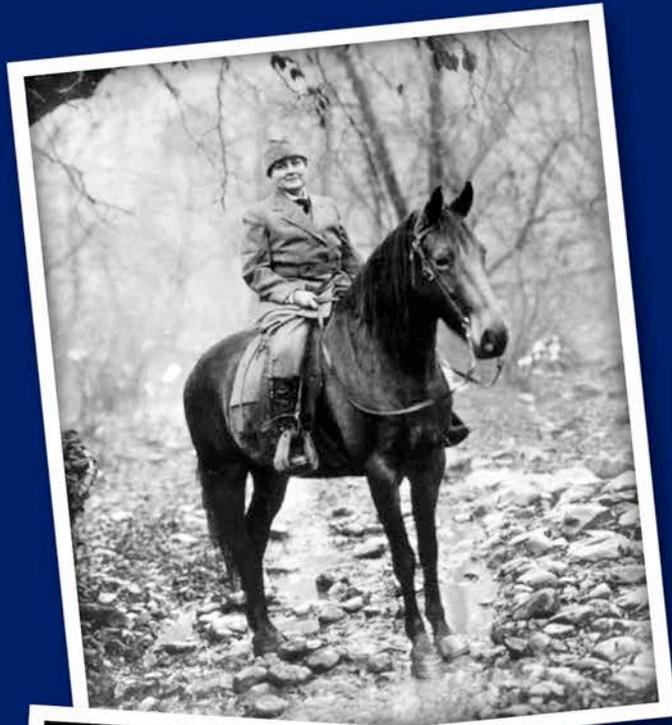
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