Teaching and Learning in Nursing (2015) 10, 107–111

Teaching and Learning in Nursing

www.jtln.org

Faculty openings, shortage, and mentoring in associate degree nursing programs

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KEYWORDS:
Associate degree nursing programs;
Faculty shortage;
Mentoring;
Nursing faculty

Abstract
This study surveyed directors of associate degree in nursing programs (n = 253) to identify faculty openings, examine hiring practices, and learn more about the faculty shortage. Directors reported few open faculty positions. Most reported a faculty shortage in their local area due to their rural location, competition from other programs in hiring faculty, and low salaries.
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1. Introduction

In many nursing programs, the shortage of nurse educators has limited the ability of schools to increase student enrollment to meet local and regional health care needs. With a large proportion of nursing faculty near retirement age, this problem is likely to worsen in the future. While the mean age of registered nurses is 47.0 years (Health Resources and Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), the average age of nursing faculty is even higher. The mean age of doctorally prepared nurse faculty across schools of nursing is 53.5 years. Among master's degree-prepared faculty, the mean ages are 57.2 years for professors, 56.8 for associate professors, and 51.2 for assistant professors (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2014a). These increasing ages of nursing faculty will prompt many retirements within the next decade and continue to fuel the current and projected faculty shortage. The faculty shortage has a significant impact on the ability to produce more nurses (Kowalski & Kelley, 2013).

The majority of open positions for faculty in baccalaureate and higher degree programs are for faculty with doctoral degrees (AACN, 2014a). Although associate degree in nursing (ADN) programs may not have the same need for nurse educators with doctoral preparation, the lack of faculty who have doctoral degrees affects the pipeline for administrators of those programs. Mintz-Binder and Sanders (2012) examined the workload and well-being of 242 ADN program directors in the United States. Directors reported significant work demands; stress, burnout, and sleep problems; and decreasing physical health. These findings are of concern not only because of the effects on the directors themselves but also on the programs and faculty. With many directors recruited from the faculty, the significant workload and stress experienced by directors may limit faculty interest in these positions. With few

This study was funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Evaluating Innovations in Nursing Education #70185.

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.teln.2015.03.001
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doctorally prepared faculty teaching at the ADN level, there may not be a sufficient pool of nursing faculty prepared to move into administrative and leadership positions in the future.

Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs in the United States have increased in number at a rapid pace. Current reports indicate that there are nearly 15,000 students enrolled in DNP programs with new programs continuing to open (AACN, 2014b). Although the aims of most of these programs are not to prepare nurse faculty, some DNP graduates assume teaching positions in schools of nursing, and in other schools, current nurse faculty are pursuing DNP degrees (Bellini, McCauley, & Cusson, 2012; Loomis, Willard, & Cohen, 2007; Morgan et al., 2014). More DNP graduates in the nursing education workforce should expand teaching capacity in schools of nursing. In some schools, faculty with DNPs may engage predominantly in clinical teaching but, in others, may teach a full range of courses other than those at the doctor of philosophy (PhD) level (Oermann, Lynn, & Agger, in review). Although the role of the DNP-prepared nurse educator varies across schools, it is clear that increasing numbers of these nurse educators can help with the faculty shortage. In community colleges, not only will these faculty members expand teaching capacity but they also may serve as the pipeline for future administrators.

1.1. Purpose

The purposes of this study were to examine faculty openings in ADN programs, identify the intentions of directors to hire nurse educators with DNPs and other doctoral degrees, and learn more about the faculty shortage in ADN programs.

2. Methods

2.1. Design and Sample

This study was a survey of directors of ADN programs in the United States that were accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. Surveys were sent to a stratified random sample of these programs based on size, location, and ownership (public or private). Of the 554 ADN programs surveyed, 253 directors completed surveys, for a response rate of 45.7%. The survey of ADN programs was part of a larger study of graduates of doctoral nursing programs, hiring intentions of deans and directors, and the roles and responsibilities of DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty in schools of nursing. The study was approved by the institutional review boards of the authors' universities.

2.2. Instrument

The investigator-developed survey collected background information about the ADN program and community college (or college) in which it was housed; faculty and students; faculty openings; intentions of the director to hire DNP-prepared nurses and other nurses with doctoral degrees; and faculty shortage and employment opportunities for nurse educators in their geographic area. In developing the survey, the investigators interviewed deans and directors of ADN and other nursing programs across the United States (Agger, Oermann, & Lynn, 2014), conducted a pilot test, and revised the tool based on the pilot. They survey was Web-based, and directors were e-mailed a link to the survey.

2.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The percentages reported in the results are based on the number of responses to each survey item, not the total number of participants (n = 253), because the number responding to individual items varied. All data analysis was done with IBM SPSS 22.0 (IBM Corp, Armonk, New York). A few of the items allowed narrative responses, and content analysis was used for those open-ended items.

3. Results

3.1. Characteristics of Associate Degree Programs

Of the 253 directors, most (n = 240, 94.9%) were female. The majority of ADN programs were in public institutions (n = 231, 91.3%), and all regions of the United States were represented. Most of the schools (n = 165, 68.2%) offered only an ADN program, but 32 (13.2%) other schools also had bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) or accelerated BSN programs (Table 1). The number of students ranged from 16 to more than 700.

There was a wide range in the number of faculty who taught in ADN programs, from 3 to 153 faculty members. The mean number of faculty was 18.24 (SD = 15.84). Most of the nursing faculty held master's degrees: the average across schools was about 12 faculty members prepared at the master's level and one with a DNP or PhD. Faculty members teaching in ADN programs taught a mean of 22.46 (SD = 10.84) credits/year.

Table 1 Frequency of the programs offered.

Program	n (%)
ADN only	165 (68.2)
ADN and other	42 (17.4)
ADN and BSN	18 (7.4)
ADN, BSN, and other	11 (4.5)
ADN and ABSN	3 (1.2)
Other	3 (1.2)
Total	242

Note. N = 253 for the total sample, but there were missing data for this survey item.
ABSN = accelerated bachelor of science in nursing.

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