

PEDAGOGY AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS IN PRELICENSURE NURSING EDUCATION

TERI A. MURRAY, PhD, APHN-BC, RN, FAAN*

The purpose of this article is to provide a brief description of the New Careers in Nursing (NCIN) program; highlight the features of the NCIN Preentry Immersion program designed to help students achieve academic success; introduce two NCIN innovation teaching projects that used active learning strategies to foster student engagement; and conduct an integrative review on the pedagogies used to foster academic success in nursing education. The integrative review revealed that interactive pedagogies fostered student engagement and increased the students' knowledge acquisition, competence, confidence, and satisfaction. Significant variations in the methodological rigor for the studies included in this review were noted in addition to nebulosity between nursing education research and evaluation. The review validated the need for more rigorous research in nursing education to improve the students' academic experience and subsequent success of all nursing students, including those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, enrolled in prelicensure nursing education programs. (Index words: Academic success; Active learning strategies; Student engagement; Underrepresented minority; Accelerated nursing education; Prelicensure nursing education) *J Prof Nurs* 0:1–8, 2016. © 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Introduction and Problem Identification

The purpose of this article is to provide a brief description of the New Careers in Nursing (NCIN) scholarship program aimed at increasing diversity in the registered nursing population; highlight the features of the NCIN Preentry Immersion program (PIP) that was designed to facilitate the scholarship recipient's academic success; introduce two NCIN innovation teaching-learning projects designed to foster student engagement and, thereby, promote academic success; and integrate the current research on pedagogies used to foster student success in nursing education.

Federal and state nursing organizations, hospital associations, nursing philanthropies, and other health care constituents agreed that recruitment of underrepresented groups into nursing should be a priority for the nursing profession, especially because minorities make up 37% of the U.S. population but only account for 19% of the registered nurse workforce (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2015; National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2013; U.S. Census, 2012). Given this abysmal statistic and amid national discourse and calls to increase the diversity of the health care workforce, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing embarked upon a joint

initiative to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce, the NCIN program. NCIN was designed as a scholarship program for schools of nursing to recruit, retain, and graduate students who were from minority or disadvantaged backgrounds through accelerated baccalaureate or masters nursing education programs. The accelerated programs offered a quick pathway for the rapid entry of diverse individuals into the nursing workforce. This strategic initiative, buoyed by two national landmark reports, “*In the Nation’s Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health-care Workforce and Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Profession*,” was the first ever, national scholarship program focused exclusively on accelerated nursing education as a strategy to expedite diversity within the registered nurse workforce (Smedley, Butler, & Bristow, 2004; The Sullivan Commission Report, 2004).

Crucially important is the retention of students after entry into the nursing program; this is a critical step in the development of a diverse workforce. Many nursing students, including those from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds, struggle to achieve academic success despite meeting the requirements for enrollment in a degree program. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), minority populations made up less than 30% of all students earning a bachelor's degree in 2010 (NCES, 2014). Moreover, the graduation rates were significantly less for minority populations than for students in the White population (NCES, 2014).

*Associate Professor & Dean, Saint Louis University, MO.
Address correspondence to Dr. Murray: Saint Louis University,
8755-7223

Gilchrist and Rector (2007) noted that despite robust recruitment strategies to attract minorities into nursing, some programs have attrition rates that range from 15 to 85%. Banister, Bowen-Brady, and Winfrey (2014) reported that “even after racially and ethnically diverse students gain access to nursing programs, there are a number of challenges that contribute to attrition and impede their academic success, including financial constraints, linguistic differences, academic demands, social isolation and loneliness, encounters with discrimination and racism, and a lack of cultural knowledge and understanding among peers” (p. 317). Thus, when responses to a NCIN student survey revealed that students were experiencing high levels of stress, the NCIN PIP was developed to facilitate the students' likelihood of success (Millett & Kevelson, 2014).

The PIP was designed to prepare students for the rigors of the intense and rapidly paced accelerated nursing education program. The PIP toolkit was composed of modular components that included individual skill assessment inventories (learning styles, study, test taking, time management, and stress management), which, based on the student's response, presented guided instructions for faculty to assist the student to improve his or her skills in the area of needed assistance (NCIN, PIP, 2012). There were also modules on mentoring and leadership development to assist the students with the socialization process for professional role development (NCIN, PIP, 2012). The goal of the PIP was to provide the student with the preentry preparation to maximize his or her chance of success (NCIN, PIP, 2012).

The literature is replete with strategies that purport to promote academic success for students who are from minority and/or disadvantaged backgrounds. The strategies for retention tended to fall into one of three broad categories: (a) academic enrichment (study techniques and test-taking skills, time and stress management skills, and/or remediation and tutoring sessions); (b) academic guidance (mentoring, peer coaching, counselors and academic advisors, faculty support, and the early identification of risk factors with subsequent intervention); and (c) financial support through various forms of aid and scholarships (Baker, 2010; Bellefleur, Bennett-Murray, Gulino, Liebert, & Mirabito, 2009; Dapremont, 2011, 2012, 2014; Igbo et al., 2011; Loftin, Newman, Gilden, Bond, & Dumas, 2014; Walker et al., 2011). On the contrary, much less research has been conducted on the relationship between the teaching strategy (pedagogy) and academic success in nursing education and even lesser on the compressed learning experiences of an accelerated time frame (Millett, Stickler, & Wang, 2015). Popkess (2010) and Reyes (2008) found that pedagogy may influence the level of the student's engagement and, as a consequence, the student's success in the course. Pedagogies that incorporated active modes of learning tended to foster the mastery of clinical concepts, problem solving, and critical thinking (Popkess, 2010; Shin, Sok, Hyun, & Kim, 2015; Wagner, 2014). This active mode of teaching created an engaged learner environment that contributed to

knowledge acquisition, a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and would thereby lead to the student's academic success (Popkess, 2010; Shin et al., 2015; Wagner, 2014). If increased student engagement could facilitate learning, then it seems plausible for educators to consider teaching strategies that foster engagement to increase the student's chance of success in addition to a focus on retention strategies if the student has been deemed at risk for success (Burch, Heller, Burch, Freed, & Steed, 2015). To this end, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation NCIN National Program Office and National Advisory Council issued a competitive call for proposals that were innovative and could facilitate academic success for students enrolled in the NCIN programs. The full text of the two innovative teaching projects selected can be found in this supplement. The first project, designed by Pellico et al. (2016) engaged students through the arts to improve the student's observation and assessment skills. This approach involved creativity, risk taking, curiosity, and considerable interaction between faculty and students. The second project, developed by Boyd, Warren, and Glendon (2016), used the series gaming to actively engage students in an experience to reinforce concepts on arterial blood gases. Both projects used pedagogical approaches that fostered active participation and student engagement.

Consequent to the call for proposals and curious about the relationship between pedagogy, active learning, and academic success, an integrative review of the literature was conducted to integrate the findings of the literature on pedagogy and academic success in nursing education. The purpose of the integrative review was to answer the question: Do pedagogical approaches that incorporate active learning strategies foster increased student engagement and thereby promote academic success in nursing education?

Literature Search Stage

Integrative reviews are based on “past research that has been summarized by drawing overall conclusions from many studies and represent the state of the current research literature on the subject matter” (Russell, 2005, p.8). In distinguishing the types of reviews, it should be noted that this integrative review was based on the definition and methodology proposed by Whittemore and Knafelz (2005) and “was a summarization of past empirical literature to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a particular phenomenon” (p.546). It was limited to a comprehensive review of the published research on pedagogical approaches that fostered student engagement in nursing education using the following framework: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and data presentation and conclusion.

Methodology

For the purpose of this review, *academic success* was defined as course or program completion with the inherent achievement of outcomes (Renn & Reason, 2013). *Pedagogy* was defined as the method and practice of teaching (Oxford, u.d.). *Active learning* was defined as

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