

SYSTEMATIC PREPARATION FOR TEACHING IN A NURSING DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PROGRAM



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Lack of preparation for the faculty role, particularly for teaching, has long been an area of concern in graduate nursing education. This article describes a systematic approach to preparing students in a doctor of philosophy (PhD) program for their future roles as nurse educators. All PhD students at Rush University are required to take a nursing education course that contains four modules: the teacher, learner, and learning environment; the basics of curriculum and course design; evaluation of the learner, course, program, and institution; and the new faculty member. Students also complete a practicum in the course. Students are interviewed before the course begins and complete a self-assessment of their teaching experiences. Based on their learning needs, students are enrolled in the course for variable credit. The course has received excellent evaluations since its inception. The success of this course demonstrates that an education course can be an essential component of the nursing PhD curriculum. (Index words: Nursing education; Faculty preparation; Doctoral education; Teaching) *J Prof Nurs* 31:305–310, 2015. © 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

AS WE APPROACH the peak of a nationwide nursing faculty shortage, there is widespread concern about the future of the nursing professoriate (Aiken, 2011; American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2010; Nardi & Gyurko, 2013). Approximately one half of the current nursing faculty workforce is expected to retire within the next decade (Aiken, 2011). At the same time that faculty members are retiring in record numbers, the nursing workforce is estimated to lose 500,000 nurses to retirement resulting in a nationwide nursing shortage (Aiken, 2011). Thus, there is a great need to develop new nursing faculty members to replace retiring faculty and to fill the additional number of faculty positions required to educate the increased number of nurses needed in the next decade. To meet this need, the recent *Institute of*

Medicine (2010) report on *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (2010) recommended doubling the number of doctorally prepared nurses by 2020.

In addition to the need for an increased number of nurse educators, there is also concern about whether nursing faculty are adequately prepared to be educators (Lewallen & Kohlenberg, 2011). Whereas the shortage of faculty limits the number of nurses who can be educated and graduated each year and perpetuates the nursing shortage (Hinshaw, 2001), the skill of faculty as educators impacts the quality of the future nursing workforce (Tanner & Bellack, 2010). The lack of preparation of faculty members for the role of educator has been a longstanding concern in nursing and other disciplines (Bartels, 2007; Hinshaw, 2001; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000; Tanner & Bellack, 2010). Although teaching is the primary activity for the majority of nursing faculty (Minnick & Halstead, 2002), most doctoral programs lack a systematic approach to preparing doctoral students as educators and for the transition to the faculty role (Bartels, 2007; Hinshaw, 2001; McDermid, Peters, Jackson, & Daly, 2012). Indeed, few programs require formal coursework in educational theory, instructional methods, curriculum design and evaluation (Bartels, 2007; Minnick, Norman, Donaghey, Fisher, & McKirgan, 2010). A recent study indicated that only 20% of doctor of

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philosophy (PhD) programs in nursing required a teaching practicum (Minnick et al., 2010). Although some programs require a “teaching experience” such as working with a clinical group in the skills laboratory, grading papers, or leading a discussion group, these activities are often unstructured and unsupervised resulting in little learning about pedagogy by the doctoral students (Golde & Dore, 2001; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). A study of PhD students in nursing found that the students thought that they were well prepared for their roles as researchers, but they did not think that they were prepared for the role of educator (Hudacek & Carpenter, 1998). Rather, most new professors learn their teaching skills “on the job” at the same time that they are attempting to establish their roles as scholars and launch a research program. This lack of preparation for the role as educator is often stressful for new faculty members (McDermid et al., 2012), and academic institutions are often faced with newly educated PhDs who begin their careers unprepared to teach (Nyquist & Woodford, 2000). The lack of preparation for teaching is especially worrisome in a profession focused on teaching evidence-based practice to the next generation of nursing professionals. Thus, in 2002, both the AACN, (2002) and the National League for Nursing (NLN, 2002) recommended that all doctoral students should have educational experiences that facilitate the student's development as a nurse educator.

The lack of attention to preparation for teaching is worrisome because the majority of graduates from PhD programs in nursing assume faculty roles upon graduation (Fang, Li, Arietti, & Bednash, 2014) and most faculty roles include some responsibility for teaching. Although numerous reports over the last two decades have attempted to reemphasize the importance of the role of teaching in higher education (Council of Graduate Schools and Educational Testing Service, 2010; DeNeef, 2002; Nyquist & Woodford, 2000; Walker, Golde, Jones, Bueschel, & Hutchings, 2008; Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005), there is still not a commitment or recommendation for how best to educate the future nursing professoriate. The lack of preparation for teaching in current curricula sends a powerful message that teaching is undervalued (Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, 2005).

Although some experts have suggested that if doctoral students are “interested” in education they could take courses in addition to the requirements of the doctoral program, such “add-ons” to what is already a protracted course of study is inappropriate (Aiken, 2011). Indeed, adding a requirement for additional programs and certificates is a barrier to entry into the professoriate (Aiken, 2011). Thus, there is a need to integrate fundamental knowledge and skills related to teaching into doctoral programs in nursing. This article proposes a model for developing a nurse educator curriculum within a PhD program in nursing. The curriculum includes essential content and actual teaching experiences.

Curriculum Development

In 2008, the Rush University College of Nursing undertook a revision of the existing doctor of nursing

science program to develop a new PhD in nursing program. Early in the process a core task force composed of administrators, researchers, and scholars established the terminal objectives for the new curriculum. These objectives were derived from national recommendations for PhD programs. Based on these recommendations, the PhD task force members agreed that preparing students for their likely roles as faculty members was an essential component of doctoral education and this outcome was included in the PhD terminal objectives for the program.

The focus on preparing students for the faculty role was designed to include significant content on becoming a nurse educator. The first step in designing the education component of the doctoral curriculum was to invite all interested faculty members to meet and develop recommendations about the content and structure of the education component of the doctoral level curriculum. That group made three important recommendations. First, they recommended using the NLN (2005) core competencies for nurse educators as a guide for the content of the curriculum. Second, they recommended that there be both a didactic and a practicum component to the course. Finally, since many doctoral students already have some teaching experience, the task force recommended that the courses be offered for variable credit so that the content and practicum experiences could be individualized to best meet the needs of students. The PhD curriculum task force accepted these recommendations and also decided that the education courses were an essential component of doctoral education and should be required for every PhD student.

Then, two faculty members with advanced preparation in nursing education were asked to develop the courses. Both faculty members had completed formal coursework in education; one was a certified nurse educator with a doctorate in education with a focus on curriculum and leadership, and the other had completed a master on-line teaching certificate. These faculty members collaborated with a member of the task force who also had formal preparation in education, and with the program director of the planned the PhD program.

Course Development

The course was developed using a simple but comprehensive instructional design model. The model entails a five step approach to course design: analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (ADDIE).

Analysis

In the analysis phase, factors that could influence course development were examined. This assessment revealed several characteristics of the students and program that influenced the course development. For example, since most students planned to seek faculty positions in academic institutions upon graduation, the course content was designed to provide the students with a strong foundation in educational theory and practice. Another consideration was that many of the doctoral students already had some teaching experience. Thus, a decision was made to assess the level of students' teaching

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