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Preparing Faculty To Lead Doctor of Nursing Practice Projects: A Faculty Development Pilot Project.

Janice Lazear

East Tennessee State University, lazear@etsu.edu

Jean C. Hemphill

East Tennessee State University, hemphilj@etsu.edu

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Abstract

Faculty expressed a need to improve knowledge and skills related to leading DNP projects. A questionnaire was developed and administered to measure faculty self-perception of confidence and competency in components related to DNP projects, including: (a) the written proposal and quality of writing and formatting as well as writing literature reviews, (b) project design, (c) protection of human subjects, (d) data collect and evaluation (e) discussion, limitations and conclusions. Educational and mentoring strategies were developed based on the results, this included synchronous educational sessions and one on one mentoring. The questionnaire was administered before and after the intervention. Four of the six elements were improved from baseline, with two statistically significant ($p < .05$) Project Analysis ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .88$, $p < .041$) and Project Dissemination ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .89$, $p < .046$). This pilot project was a first step in assessing strategies for education for faculty leading DNP projects.

Introduction and Purpose

The number of (DNP) programs has continued to increase yearly, with 348 in 2019 and close to 100 new programs in the planning process at that time (AACN, 2019). The rapid increase has posed challenges for nursing faculty. Data regarding faculty mentoring and outcomes of DNP curricula and projects are limited, However recent studies provide insight into challenges related to DNP projects, which have been found to lack appropriate rigor (Dols, et al, 2017; Root et al., 2018; Roush & Tesoro 2018).

The purpose of this pilot project was to provide a faculty development intervention to promote faculty confidence and effectiveness when leading DNP projects.

The objectives of the study were:

- to assess faculty self-perceived confidence and competency regarding the knowledge and skills needed to lead DNP student projects,
- to create and implement a faculty development program based on the responses, and
- to evaluate the faculty perception of confidence post-intervention

Questionnaire Example

The following questions are focused on your confidence level with various components of DNP projects. Please check the answer that most describes your confidence level for each of the below components.

	Not at all Confident	Somewhat Confident	Confident	Strongly Confident
Differentiating PhD dissertations from DNP projects.				
Ability to recognize an appropriate topic for a DNP project				
Ability to recognize a feasible topic for a DNP project				
Principles of quality/process improvement				
Guide students in the use of quality/process improvement methodologies to develop DNP projects				

Method

Context

The intervention phases

- Participants completed investigator developed questionnaire evaluating perception of their confidence leading students' DNP projects pre- and post- intervention.
- Key skills emphasized areas participants rated less than confident
- Online educational and guidance sessions over 10 months
- Individual mentoring sessions with participants corresponded with translation and project courses.

Key Skills

- Project identification and evidence evaluation
- Background and theoretical framework
- Effective evidence critiques
- Development of processes and methods
- Data analysis and dissemination

DNP Project Feasibility Checklist: A Key Skill

General Considerations	Yes	No	N/A
The problem/PICO is clearly articulated.			
There is sufficient evidence to support the project.			
The projected timeline is realistic, and the complexity of the project is appropriate for the allotted timeframe.			
The intervention planned is appropriate for the problem/PICO.			
The complexity of the intervention is appropriate and feasible.			
The methods are appropriate for the PICO and intervention.			
Statistics are appropriate for the project and of appropriate complexity.			
The project is focused on translation of evidence or knowledge synthesis (i.e. clinical guidelines or clinical tools) not primary knowledge inquiry.			

DNP Prospective Project Chairs Questionnaire

38 item Likert scale questionnaire developed for the project administered pre-and post- intervention.

Setting and Sample

Convenience sample graduate faculty prepared at the doctoral level from two state universities in the Southeast. Eight of twenty eligible faculty members chose to participate. The 8 participants were DNP prepared.

Ethical Considerations

Approved by East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board

Results

Pre-Intervention Questionnaire Responses

Sum of somewhat confident plus not at all confident.
Topic frequencies > 50% (n>4)

- knowledge and application of change theories
- translation science
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) process
- developing a budget
- choosing appropriate statistics
- all elements of project analysis
- student assist with findings, results, limitations, conclusions, and recommendations

Analysis

- Questions were grouped conceptually and organized into concepts and subthemes due to small sample size.
- Analyzed for change between pre- and post-intervention. Wilcoxon signed rank test was used to evaluate significance using the subgroup variables.

Six Subgroup Variables

Median post-intervention scores that were significantly higher than pre-test scores ($p < .05$):

- Project Analysis ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .88$, $p < .041$)
- Project Dissemination ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .89$, $p < .046$)

Median post-intervention scores that improved without reaching statistical significance:

- Knowledge ($M = 1.86$, $SD = .86$, $p < .08$)
- Implementation ($M = 2.0$, $SD = .92$, $p < .075$)

Median post-intervention scores that were not significant:

- Project Understanding ($M = 1.95$, $SD = .80$, $p < .35$)
- Project Development ($M = 1.88$, $SD = .92$, $p < .16$)



Conclusion

- Pairing participants with a mentor and sharing real-time feedback on each component of students' proposals enhanced learning
- Participants observed their mentors providing guidance to students while meeting to discuss student progress.
- Final DNP Project course was revised to focus on creation of a manuscript, may explain significant improvement in dissemination.
- Limitations included the small sample and questionnaire tested for face validity, not reliability
- Future study: repeat with larger sample and evaluate rigor of projects before and after the intervention

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