Models of Capstone Projects: A Conversation

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Objectives for this session

- Discuss the intent and scope of the DNP capstone scholarly project:
  - Differentiating from the PhD thesis
  - How the project demonstrates competencies

- Determine similarities and differences among multiple forms of DNP projects/capstones in terms of scope and expected deliverables

- Examine the issues that surround the DNP project/capstone
If it Walks Like a Duck and Talks Like a Duck – Is it a capstone project?

- An endeavor by any other name: capstone, practice inquiry, scholarly project focused on practice
- May benefit group, population, or community (NONPF, 2007)
- Scholarly work that translates (is implemented) evidence into practice
  - Sustainability (Ahmed, et al., 2013)
“Rather than a knowledge-generating research effort, the student in a practice focused program generally carries out a practice application-oriented “final DNP project,” which is an integral part of the integrative practice experience (AACN, 2006, p.3)
Project possibilities (NONPF, 2006)

- Translate research into practice
- Quality improvement (care processes, patient outcomes)
- Implement and evaluate evidence based practice guidelines
- Analyze policy: Develop, implement, evaluate, or revise policy
- Design and use databases to retrieve information for decision making, planning, evaluation
- Conduct financial analyses to compare care models and potential cost savings, etc.
- Implement and evaluate innovative uses of technology to enhance/evaluate care
NONPF (cont.)

- Design and evaluate new models of care
- Design and evaluate programs
- Provide leadership of interprofessional and or intra-professional collaborative projects to implement policy, evaluate care models, transitions, etc.
- Collaborate with researchers to answer clinical questions
- Collaborate on legislative change using evidence
- Work with lay and or professional coalitions to develop, implement or evaluate health programs (such as health promotion and disease prevention programs for vulnerable patients, groups or communities).
"Abstract" for DNP Inquiry

- **Aim:** Organizational or institutional evaluation - performance, productivity, quality, utilization of evidence in clinical care, policy, testing care delivery models

- **Conceptual Model:** Donabedian; PICO(T) framework (Population; Intervention/Issue; Comparison/Outcome; Time) (Melnyk & Fineout-Overholt, 2011)

- **Methodology:** Survey, interview, data mining
  - Partnerships with health care organizations, schools, community agencies, or groups (Ahmed, et al., 2013)

- **Statistics:** Organizational analytics; system evaluation and analysis; epidemiology

- **Implementation:** Plan for real time actualization
Systematic Approach and Translation of Evidence into Practice

1. Description of innovation or clinical inquiry
2. Application of best evidence from literature
3. Collection of data using methods or tools that are standard and acceptable
4. Definition of outcomes to be measured pertinent to implementation
5. Implementation outcomes and/or analysis of results

Ahmed, et al., 2013
Faculty-guided scholarly experience that provides *evidence of student's critical thinking* and ability to *translate research into practice* through problem identification, proposal development, implementation, and evaluation.
UIC Synthesis Project

- Identification of problem/issue
- Design and implement processes to evaluate outcomes of practice, practice patterns, systems of care within practice setting, health care organization or community against national benchmarks to determine variances in practice
- Design, implement and evaluate new evidence-based interventions designed to improve quality of patient or system centered care
Final Product Components

- Abstract
- Executive summary of the project
- Introduction to the project
- Description of the problem and how it is defined, the clinical setting or environment and the target population
- Data supporting the existence of the problem
- Development/description of a creative approach to resolving the problem
Final Product Components

- Analysis of the fiscal and systems impact of the project itself (optional)
- Methods/procedures including processes, data collection, use of consultants
- Findings and outcomes
- Evaluation
- Conclusions
- Discussion - Implications for practice
Various DNP capstone deliverables *

- Public defense of the scholarly project
- Presentation of project to constituents
- Development of a 5 chapter report
- One (or more) articles for publication in a peer-reviewed journal
  - Systematic Literature review
  - Report of the implementation project and evaluation
- Portfolio that wraps around the article(s)

*based on review of existing DNP programs
Examples of Practice Inquiry Areas

- Who does/does not have access to nursing services and health care programs, and why?
- How are nursing services and programs being delivered in a timely and cost effective way?
- What types of clinical, demographic, process, and outcome variable data need to be systematically collected and analyzed in order to monitor and evaluate clinical patterns over time and to monitor variance in health care services and outcomes that account for health disparity across subpopulations?
- How can clinical epidemiological benchmark comparison studies yield viable quality-improvement information?
- What system, structural, and technological changes are necessary to capture relevant and critical data?
- What types of evidence-based prevention and treatment nursing clinical guidelines are/are not implemented?
- What are the issues and barriers that prevent implementation of evidence-based nursing clinical guidelines?

(Magyary et al, 2006)
Examples of Practice Inquiry Areas

- What are successful approaches for implementing and evaluating evidence-based nursing clinical guidelines to influence clinical processes and outcomes?
- Who is most/least likely to benefit from certain types of nursing services and programs (differential effects)?
- What types of moderating and mediating variables are linked to nursing intervention processes and outcomes?
- How are nursing interventions appropriately modified for subpopulations?
- How are evidence-based nursing clinical guidelines modified to be culturally relevant for diverse populations?
- What types of relational partnerships with patients, families, and communities are linked to health outcomes?
- How are individuals, families, and populations motivated to engage in intergenerational patterns of healthy lifestyles?
- What types of organizational structures, financial incentives, and health care policies positively or negatively impact how nursing practice and programs are delivered?

(Magyary et al, 2006)
Discussion Questions

1. Is there value to the time and energy expended by both students and faculty for a scholarly project or capstone experience?
2. What are key elements of the DNP project/capstone that contribute to acquisition and demonstration of the core competencies of the DNP graduate?
3. What level of methodological expertise is expected of DNP graduates - and how is this reflected in the project/capstone?
Discussion Questions

4. How do DNP projects/capstones differ between the various functional areas of practice (e.g. clinical executive/ public health/ and APRN roles)?
5. What are the challenges in determining what constitutes an acceptable DNP project or capstone?
6. What is considered an acceptable “deliverable” as a result of the DNP project/capstone?
Discussion Questions

7. What is the prevailing attitude about DNP projects/capstones done in small groups? Could projects be relevant if they are accomplished by an intra-professional team? What might that look like? In the situation of a group project, what is a minimum expectation from each individual?
8. What is the one area that you see as most critical for consensus related to the DNP project as it relates to expected outcomes of the graduate?
References


