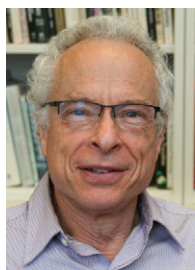




EVIDENCE FOR IMPROVING PREPARATION, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION OF NURSE FACULTY: FINDINGS FROM EIN-FUNDED STUDIES



MICHAEL J. YEDIDIA, PhD*

PROFESSOR, CENTER FOR STATE HEALTH POLICY,
INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH, HEALTH CARE POLICY, &
AGING RESEARCH, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

Educating sufficient numbers of nurses to meet future health needs will require effective strategies for addressing the nurse faculty shortage. Evaluating Innovations in Nursing Education (EIN), a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was established to support research to further our understanding of the underlying causes of the shortage and generate evidence of the effectiveness of promising interventions. A compendium of findings from earlier EIN-funded projects on increasing teaching productivity in undergraduate education has been published elsewhere (*Nursing Education Perspectives*, 2014). This issue of the *Journal of Professional Nursing* features findings from five recently completed studies aimed at providing evidence for improving preparation and retention of nurse faculty.

A key demographic reality underlying the faculty shortage is that nurses generally assume faculty roles at an older age than their counterparts in other academic fields (Joynt & Kimball, 2008) and typically retire at an early age resulting in short faculty careers (Berlin & Sechrist, 2002). Several of the EIN-funded studies reported in this issue generate insights into reasons for late entry into academic careers. Regarding early exit, a recent national survey of full-time nurse faculty conducted by EIN program staff identified factors associated

with intent to leave academic nursing and occupational burnout, both contributing to early retirement (Yedidia, Chou, Brownlee, Flynn, & Tanner, 2014). Among the sample of 3,000 respondents, representative by program type and location, one third expressed an intent to leave academic nursing within 5 years and nearly 4 of 10 reported high levels of emotional exhaustion, exceeding the frequency reported in studies of nurses in clinical roles (McHugh, Kutney-Lee, Cimiotti, Sloane, & Aiken, 2011). Intent to leave was explained not only by age but also by several potentially modifiable aspects of work–life including dissatisfaction with workload, salary, and availability of teaching support. Notably, the contribution of aspects of work–life was greater than that of proximity to retirement age. Major contributors to burnout were dissatisfaction with workload and perceived inflexibility to balance work and family life.

Findings from the five studies reported in this issue add depth and scope to our knowledge of faculty preparation and recruitment and propose varied approaches to increasing faculty teaching capacity. A case study comparing an early-entry doctoral program to traditional programs addresses the prospects of preparing faculty members to assume their roles at an earlier age and have a longer and more productive teaching career (Nehls, Barber, & Rice, 2016). Overall, the findings reflect positively on the early-entry strategy, although graduates shared a concern about their relative lack of clinical expertise. Tellingly, in the past, gaining a mastery of clinical skills has been a factor in delaying entry into doctoral programs. Two other studies focus on doctoral students and recent graduates, addressing

*Professor, Rutgers University Center for State Health Policy and national program director of EIN, which closed in 2015. The research projects reported in this issue and the national survey of nurse faculty referenced in this editorial were funded by grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
8755-7223

factors in choosing an academic career. A national survey of doctoral students (Fang, Bednash, & Arietti, 2016) found that several factors that generate dissatisfaction among current faculty (e.g., poor financial compensation and aspects of work–life) also serve as deterrents to deciding on an academic career among students; the study also identified several positive facilitators that attract students to academia (e.g., interest in teaching, perceived contribution of nursing research to patient care) and may moderate the impact of negative perceptions of faculty roles. Similar in focus, a study of current students and recent graduates of doctoral programs (Dreifuerst et al., 2016) provides valuable information on similarities and differences among doctor of philosophy (PhD) and doctor of nursing practice (DNP)-prepared nurses with respect to considerations in choosing an academic career, with particular attention to the importance of financial and time considerations. Providing symmetry, a fourth project addresses the academic market in nursing, surveying deans and directors of nursing programs on their hiring plans (Oermann, Lynn, & Agger, 2016). Findings highlight differences in plans with regard to PhD- and DNP-prepared faculty and provide much-needed illumination of issues confronting DNPs in meeting expectations regarding teaching roles and criteria for promotion. The fifth project studied those who are most involved in preparing future faculty, surveying faculty members teaching in doctoral programs with the aim of understanding the relationship between teaching demands and research productivity (Smeltzer et al., 2016). Findings confirm that the strongest predictor of scholarly productivity is amount of time devoted to conducting research; insights were generated on strategies and resources for protecting time for this function in the face of other compelling demands.

The research designs of four of the five studies reported in this issue relied upon cross-sectional, survey data as did the national survey of nurse faculty. While they generated rich findings, it is notable that, in all but one, authors posed questions for future investigation that require longitudinal data collected over time on the same or similar populations; one would aim to establish whether reported career plans are actually carried out; another would seek to document scholarly productivity over time; and two others would aim to refine causal relationships and determine impacts as distinct from cross-sectional associations. In addition, authors of the case study recommended conducting multi-site evaluations to increase generalizability of the findings. Longitudinal research and multi-site investigations require substantial funding, however, and sources of support for nursing education research are scarce. It is this realization that has led to the establishment of the National Nursing Education Research Network, organized by leaders in nursing education and endorsed by major educational organizations. Currently in its pilot year, member schools

will commit to surveying their students and faculty annually on a uniform set of items, the resulting longitudinal data base will be available for research to all member schools, reports will be generated for each school comparing their faculty and students to national benchmarks, and workshops and consultation will be available to support users. It is anticipated that schools will use the data to evaluate innovative teaching modalities, develop measures of learning outcomes, measure faculty workload and quality of work–life, pursue quality improvement efforts, engage in strategic planning, and formulate faculty staffing plans. The power and value of the network data for making evidence-based decisions in nursing education will depend upon garnering a large and representative group of member schools that will be the owners and stewards of the data. For information on the network and membership, see: <http://www.nnern.org/>.

References

- Berlin, L. E. & Sechrist, K. R. (2002). The shortage of doctorally prepared nursing faculty: A dire situation. *Nursing Outlook*, 50, (2), 50–56.
- Dreifuerst, K. T., McNelis, A. M., Weaver, M. T., Broome, M. E., Draucker, C. B. & Fedko, A. S. (2016). Exploring the pursuit of doctoral education by nurses seeking or intending to stay in faculty roles. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 32, (3), 202–212.
- Evaluating innovation in nursing education. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 35, (5), 279–323.
- Fang, D., Bednash, G. D. & Arietti, R. (2016). Identifying barriers and facilitators to nurse faculty careers for PhD nursing students. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 32, (3), 193–201.
- Joynt, J. & Kimball, B. (2008). *Blowing open the bottleneck: Designing new approaches to increase nurse education capacity* (Retrieved from <http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2008/rwjf29362>).
- McHugh, M. D., Kutney-Lee, A., Cimiotti, J. P., Sloane, D. M. & Aiken, L. H. (2011). Nurses' widespread job dissatisfaction, burnout, and frustration with health benefits signal problems for patient care. *Health Affairs*, 30, (2), 202–210.
- Nehls, N., Barber, G. & Rice, E. (2016). Pathways to the PhD in nursing: An analysis of similarities and differences. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 32, (3), 163–172.
- Oermann, M. H., Lynn, M. R. & Agger, C. A. (2016). Hiring Intentions of Directors of Nursing Programs Related to DNP- and PhD-Prepared Faculty and Roles of Faculty. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 32, (3), 173–179.
- Smeltzer, S. C., Cantrell, M. A., Sharts-Hopko, N. C., Heverly, M., Jenkinson, A. & Nthenge, S. (2016). Assessment of the impact of teaching demands on research productivity among doctoral nursing program faculty. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 32, (3), 180–192.
- Yedidia, M. J., Chou, J., Brownlee, S., Flynn, L. & Tanner, C. A. (2014). Association of faculty perceptions of work-life with emotional exhaustion and intent to leave academic nursing: Report on a national survey of nurse faculty. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 53, (10), 569–579.