



THE EXPERIENCE OF DIRECT ENTRY NP STUDENTS: A PRELIMINARY EXPLORATION

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DISCLOSURE PRESENTER



Nothing to disclose

OVERVIEW

Research question and objectives

Direct entry programs

Brief consideration of literature

Study sample

Findings

Implications for further study

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the student experience of recent graduates of direct entry/second entry NP programs?

How do direct/second entry programs impact the student experience?

Are there specific habits of learning or attributes that allow for successful transition to the direct/second entry experience?

How do direct entry NP students develop and demonstrate competence during their clinical experiences as students?

OBJECTIVES

Gain insight into experience of direct-entry NP students in the US

Build on my personal experience as a reflective learner to look at the challenges specific to a direct-entry program

Identify areas of concern common to direct-entry NP students

Consider links to the literature

Refine a potential research question for further study

DIRECT ENTRY NP EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Masters/Doctoral programs

Require minimum of bachelors degree in another field

Typically first year is RN training, followed by NCLEX exam

Students usually continue directly to NP education

Some programs allow (or encourage) students to work as RN during NP portion of their education

According to AACN, in 2016

- 69 accelerated or entry-level masters programs in the United States

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE (AND BIASES)

Changed careers to nursing: started a direct-entry NP program age 48

Previously: 27 years in performing arts management and education

Prior education: 3 years in full-time ballet school, BS in Business Administration, MEd in Interdisciplinary Studies

Currently: working as a family nurse practitioner in primary care, in a Federally Qualified Health Center, in rural Vermont, Northeastern United States



THE LITERATURE: **RN VERSUS NP DIRECT ENTRY**

Focus in literature is on accelerated nursing programs that prepare nurses to work as RNs. Less focus on the direct entry/accelerated program experience for those who continue directly to NP training.

Chose not to consider literature comparing new NP grads who are direct entry with those who are post 4-year RN degree.

THE LITERATURE: “GRADUATENESS” AND LEARNING STYLES

“Graduateness”

Imposter phenomenon; anti-intellectualism

Tailoring learning experiences

Aubeeluck, A., Stacey, G., & Stupple, E. J. N. (2016)

Oermann, M. H., Poole-Dawkins, K., Alvarez, M. T., Foster, B. B., & O’Sullivan, R. (2010)

Stacey, G., McGarry, J., Aubeeluck, A., Bull, H., Simpson, C., Sheppard, F., & Thompson, S. (2014)

THE LITERATURE: **CONFIDENCE AND GETTING TO EXPERTISE**

Novice to Expert

Self-perceived competence and confidence

Mentorship

Alligood, M. R. (2013)

Dracup, K., & Bryan-Brown, C. W. (2004)

Faraz, A. (2017)

SAMPLE

Exploratory study

Small convenience sample, N=11

- Public Research University
- Private Ivy League University
- Small Private College

Graduated (as NPs) 2015-2018

Age when starting direct entry program:

- 18-24: 2
- 25-34: 6
- 35-44: 2

PRIOR EXPERIENCE

9 had prior bachelor's degree, 2 had a master's degree

Field of study for highest prior degree:

- Science (3)
- Healthcare (2)
- Arts (1)
- Humanities (1)
- Social Sciences (3)
- Education (1)
- Engineering, Business, Technology (0)

4 had prior healthcare experience

LIMITATIONS

- Convenience sample and small sample size
- Limited amount of personal data – only age and date of graduation
- Did not interview candidates who did not finish program
- Questions were deliberately broad in scope
- Did not compare student perceptions with those of their program faculty and preceptors
- Did not compare student perceptions before, during, and after program

DECIDING TO BECOME AN NP

“Making the decision to completely change careers at age 30 meant accepting that I would be a novice again. It was hard to take that leap and go from being the expert to the inexperienced.”

Private University, now working in primary care

“Starting as a student again was challenging, after being competent in various jobs, especially in a culture like nursing.”

Public University, now working in women’s health

“[It was hard] leaving behind a job that I truly loved.”

Public University, now working in acute care walk-in clinic



TRANSFERRABLE SKILLS



NOVICE TO EXPERT

Competent to Expert NP

Advanced Beginner NP

Possibly leaving RN role OR competent to expert RN

Expert non-nurse

Novice RN Student

Novice NP Provider

Advanced beginner RN

Novice/new graduate RN

Novice NP Student

WORKING AS AN RN

- Patient feedback
- Feeling valued
- Helping underserved patients
- Clinical crisis management
- Learning by doing
- Collegial relationships
- Using skills
- Patient relationships
- Clinical decision making

10 out of 11 participants worked in some capacity as an RN during the NP portion of their education.



WORKING AS AN RN

“Working with colleagues and patients as an RN in the emergency department while enrolled in the NP portion of the education...was essential to building a new identity as a nurse.”

Public University, now working in urgent care clinic

“Knowing I could deal with an emergency...gave me confidence in my clinical skills.”

Public University, now working in clinic for the homeless

MOVING FROM RN TO NP

One of the things that complicated the program was starting my job [as an RN] - it was really valuable in many ways but it was essentially learning two professions at the same time...I don't really feel like an RN - I feel in-between...a lot of the time at urgent care I am triaging, and I feel like I am using my NP skills more”

Public University, now working as RN, and applying for DNP programs

CHALLENGES

Most significant challenges:

- **Financial**
- **Time management**
- **Balancing work and family**

Also important:

- Being out of the habit of studying
- Self confidence
- Not connecting with faculty
- Logistics

CHALLENGES

“I felt that I was being prepared to regurgitate facts rather than convey how and why those facts impacted a particular patient situation or pathophysiological phenomenon. Nursing educators are paid at a rate lower than practicing NPs -- how does this makes sense?”

Private University, now working in primary care

“It's a fast program... It would be helpful to have some big picture conversations - what the overall goals are, where you need to be. Having a map, whether through mentorship [or] advising...”

Public University, now working in pediatric primary care

FEELING SUCCESSFUL

Student cohort was selected as most important factor in contributing to success in the program.

Also important:

- Professors and preceptors
- Family and friends
- Having an ultimate goal in mind
- Educational resources



STAYING HEALTHY

Spending time with nursing cohort seen as key to success and to staying healthy within the program.

Other important supports:

- Family and friends

- Having an ultimate goal in mind

- Exercising and eating well

Less important:

- Setting interim goals

- Seeking counseling or professional help

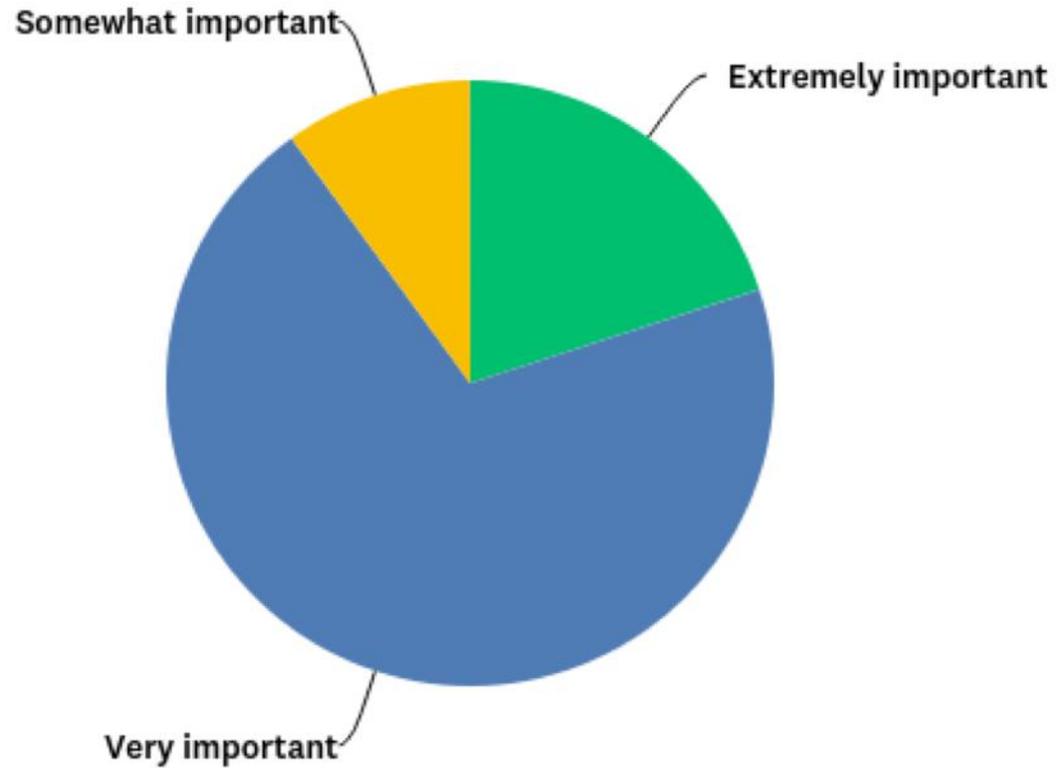


“my classmates were invaluable”

Public University, now working in transgender health

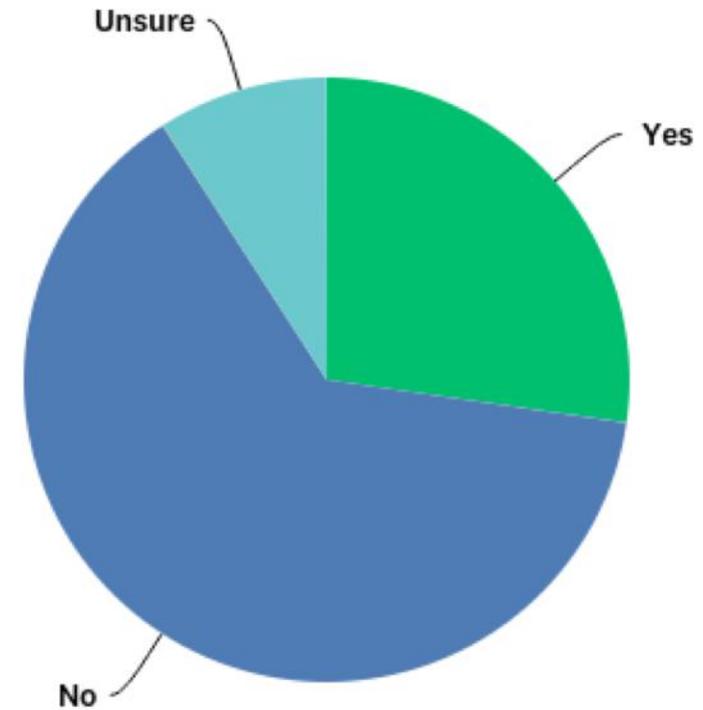
MENTORS

1.



1. How important were mentors to your nursing education?

2.



2. Did your Direct Entry program help you identify mentors to guide you through your nursing education?

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

7 participants would have sought out more clinical experiences

4 would have liked more opportunities for skills development

3 cited lack of confidence as something that held them back

Other thoughts:

- Would have liked better quality of instruction or more faculty support
- Would have asked more questions
- Would have liked to better develop their knowledge of nursing culture prior to starting a program.

AFTER GRADUATION: FIRST NP JOBS

10 are working as NPs

- 5 in Primary Care (1 in pediatric primary care)
- 3 in Specialty Care (orthopedics, transgender health, women's health)
- 2 in Urgent Care

1 is working as an RN and applying for
Psychiatric/Mental Health NP programs



OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER STUDY

- How can direct entry programs help students build both competence and confidence?
- What does effective mentorship look like and who is a mentor?
- How can students build a new professional community and develop their new professional identity?
- What links between initial year of study and NP portion of program are most helpful as students transition to their NP education?
- How does work as an RN during NP portion of education impact professional role identity?
- Is there potential for building on the strength of student cohort relationships to impact learning?

SOME FINAL REFLECTIONS

“the demands placed on direct-care NPs are so extraordinary that it's difficult to find time to teach AND see patients. I would love to teach - but I went to school to provide care to patients and am not willing to sacrifice that portion of my work to educate full time.”

Private University, now working in primary care

“I didn't know what questions to ask, or what guidance I needed, because I didn't know what I didn't know... I felt like we were along for the ride and we were supposed to trust that [the program] would get us there.”

Public University, now working in primary care

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THANK YOU!

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