

RESPONSES

Janetta MacPhail

In her article on "Orientation to Academia: The Socialization of New Faculty," Professor Mills addresses a very important topic. In recent years a great deal of emphasis has been placed on orientation of new staff in health care agencies, which has certainly become an expectation of the majority of new graduates from nursing programs. Many articles have been published in nursing journals and books have been published on the topic of staff development, of which orientation is one component. The importance of orientation for new staff is reflected in the fact that it is bargained for in collective agreements, which suggests that administrators in health care agencies may not place as much importance on orientation as do staff nurses. A good deal has been written and stated by nursing service administrators and hospital administrators about the cost of orientation that is being assumed by health care agencies.

While most deans/directors of basic nursing programs and most faculty undoubtedly expect that their new graduates will receive a proper orientation to the health care agencies in which they choose to practise, similar emphasis has not been placed on orientation of new faculty in university nursing programs. At least this is not reflected in the literature or in programs presented at educational conferences. Nonetheless, it is possible that nursing facilities have placed more importance on orientation of new faculty because of their service orientation than have faculties in other disciplines within the university.

Professor Mills's study was designed to determine whether an orientation program could be expected to contribute to socialization into academia. More specifically, she endeavoured to determine the relative importance attached to various aspects of orientation, as perceived by deans/directors of university nursing programs in comparison to the perceptions of new faculty appointees. Her further question was whether an orientation program can contribute to socialization of new faculty.

Janetta MacPhail, Ph.D., F.A.A.N., is Professor and Dean of Nursing, University of Alberta, Edmonton.

Professor Mills states that her study was a "descriptive survey". A questionnaire was designed based on statements derived from literature on socialization. The respondents were asked if the content in relation to each of the seven categories was part of their orientation and to rank order the importance of the categories in relation to an orientation program. The investigator acknowledges two limitations of the questionnaire; namely, (1) that it was presented only in English and yet French speaking faculty were included in the sample; and (2) that the questionnaire was "reviewed by colleagues for face-validity prior to its use" but was not previously tested in a pilot study.

These limitations place definite limits on the findings of the investigation. If a questionnaire is not tested for validity and reliability, there is no way of knowing the degree to which the questions measure what they intended to measure. If a questionnaire is not determined to be reliable it cannot possibly be valid (Polit & Hungler, p. 434). The investigator notes that presenting the questionnaire in English only may have "limited responses from Francophone colleagues." In addition to limiting responses, it is possible that the questions elicited incorrect responses if the questions were not understood or were misinterpreted.

The investigator states that "a non-random purposive sample" was used. Purposive sampling is not a highly recommended approach as it "provides no external, objective method for assessing the typicalness of the selected subjects" (Polit & Hungler, p. 457). If a purposive sample is used, the data must be treated with extreme circumspection.

The investigator states that "descriptive statistics were to be calculated, as appropriate, for the new questionnaires." She then proceeds to delineate inferential statistics that were selected for analysis of the data, namely, the t-test, the Mann-Whitney U-test, and chi-square. "Inferential statistics are based on the assumption of random sampling from populations" (Polit & Hungler, p. 538). It is difficult to determine if the investigator had planned to use the inferential statistics as stated and then changed the plan, because the statistical analysis used is indeed descriptive statistics, using number and percentages for the most part. The chi-square statistic was attempted but found not to be appropriate and the Mann-Whitney U-test was used. Since an inferential statistic was used inappropriately, one cannot place confidence in these findings.

In addition to data collected by the questions in the questionnaires, the investigator collected data from open-ended questions or comments that were added by the respondents. She stated that the comments made by faculty members recognize the need for help with the

teaching/learning process. In addition, she stated that many indicated a need for more orientation to the clinical areas and to the health care system in a new province. It is encouraging that the faculty themselves recognize the need for orientation to clinical areas, to the community, and the system. It is distressing to note the low ranking assigned to orientation to the community by the deans/directors. Do not faculty need this kind of orientation if they are expected to provide meaningful supervision of students in practice, to practise themselves, and to be involved professionally in the community in which they choose to work? It is also dismaying to note that two schools provide no orientation for new faculty. It is difficult to imagine how a dean/director would expect new faculty to assume the faculty role in a responsible manner if no orientation is provided to role expectations and the academic environment.

The investigator states that comments about orientation were related to its usefulness to increase efficiency and effectiveness in the teaching role. It would seem logical that a well-planned orientation would be perceived by faculty in academia as increasing efficiency and effectiveness in all aspects of the academic role. An orientation to research and other scholarly activities and the service responsibility are as important as orientation to the teaching role, which unfortunately has been the only role perceived important by many nursing faculty.

Some of the conclusions stated by the investigator do not seem to derive directly from the data collected. For example, she concludes that "based on the number of tenure-track appointments the tenured faculty have, in addition to their threefold academic role, a very heavy responsibility. They often carry out some administrative chores, they act as mentors and consultants to their tenure-track colleagues (almost equal in number to themselves) and as resource persons and guides to the large number of short-term and part-time appointees." It is difficult to understand how this conclusion can be drawn from the numbers of tenure-track appointees in contrast to the numbers in non-tenurable positions, which is implied in the conclusions.

Another conclusion that is difficult to understand is that the investigator concludes that the deans are more aware of the need for orientation to the academic environment than are new faculty. Yet, the data indicate that 76% of the deans rate the importance of orientation to the academic environment as a first, second, or third ranking, whereas 83.6% of the faculty rate it within these first three categories.

Despite the inadequacies in study design and interpretation of the findings, this study brings to attention the importance of a planned orientation program in academia. It would be interesting to conduct a comparative study of different approaches used in orienting new faculty to ascertain those which are most effective and efficient in socializing both neophytes and experienced faculty into an academic environment that requires research and scholarly endeavours and involvement in practice, in addition to the usual emphasis placed on the teaching role in nursing faculties.

Polit, D., & Hungler, B. *Nursing research: principles and methods*. Toronto: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1978.

Margaret F. Munro

I found it of considerable interest to read and respond to Mills's paper since I was quite probably one of the "new" faculty appointees who were surveyed in 1981. The topic of faculty socialization is one of concern for me as an academic administrator with responsibility for orienting new members to a nursing faculty. Her results and the discussion of them were informative and succinct.

I would like to respond to the research design, the analysis of the data and the implications for those of us in academia. Although some readers may be concerned about the validity and reliability of findings in a study using non random purposive sampling I would suggest two reasons for reducing those concerns. First, Mills is not conducting experimental research but rather an exploratory survey of the current Canadian scene. The total population of Canadian university schools is so small but diversified that a pilot study is not really necessary to test out a survey instrument and a representative sample would be difficult to define. This brings me to my second point, she is able to quote her results from deans of all Canadian university schools who had new faculty appointed, thus basing her report on population parameters rather than sample data for that segment of the study.

Margaret F. Munro, B.Sc.N., Ph.D., is Associate Dean of Nursing, University of Calgary, Alberta.
--

In relation to the data from new appointees, the ratio of 80 respondees to the basic sampling frame of all new appointees is unknown. From the data on the range of new appointees per school this sampling frame could range from 84 to approximately 120. The addition of one factor, the actual total number of new appointees in all schools combined would provide the reader with the ratio of respondees without jeopardizing the anonymity to any school.

The questionnaire instrument seems to have been designed to reflect the seven major categories of orientation identified in the current relevant literature. Mills cites face validation of her instrument by colleagues. One question I have in this area of the study is that of operational definitions of the categories for response. If such definitions were provided and validated by these colleagues, the reader can gain a greater sense of the validity and reliability of responses obtained from other colleagues, the deans and faculty members who were study subjects.

My reading of Mills's report suggested one additional measure of relationship which was projected but not reported, the use of a Mann-Whitney U-Test to determine the difference in ranking of priorities by deans and by newly oriented faculty members. A rough estimation from the text and the data in Tables 4 and 7 suggests that the difference would not be significant. Differences in perceived focus of content, depicted in Figures 1 and 2 are particularly interesting in the areas of academic, professional and community environments. Her results seem to suggest that the respondents were not receiving as much content in these areas as the deans perceived being provided. One wonders if this results from the information overload and self-concept problems discussed by Conway and Glass (1978).

I would raise only two additional questions in relation to the results and their implications. One question is that of wondering how the distribution of new faculty, the distribution of respondees and the perceptions of orientation might relate. Is there a richer orientation provided for one or two new faculty members or does a larger group serve as a stronger stimulus for planned orientation? Secondly, is there a need to address the proposal of staged orientation discussed by Conway and Glass (1978)? As one who had a careful, thorough and individualized orientation to a new position, I find myself still needing answers to questions which affect my role in a university school — perhaps I always will.

Conway, M. E., & Glass, L. G. Socialization for survival in the academic world. *Nursing Outlook*, 1978, 26, 424-429.