BECOMING A NURSE FACULTY LEADER: DOING YOUR HOMEWORK TO MINIMIZE RISK TAKING

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Risk taking is an important aspect of academic leadership; yet, how does taking risks shape leadership development, and what are the practices of risk taking in nurse faculty leaders? This interpretative phenomenological study examines the meaning and experience of risk taking among formal and informal nurse faculty leaders. The theme of doing your homework is generated through in-depth hermeneutic analysis of 14 interview texts and 2 focus group narratives. The practice of doing one’s homework is captured in weighing costs and benefits, learning the context, and cultivating relationships. This study develops an evidence base for incorporating ways of doing one’s homework into leadership development activities at a time when there is a tremendous need for nurse leaders in academic settings. Examining the practices of doing one’s homework to minimize risk as a part of leadership development provides a foundation for cultivating nurse leaders who, in turn, are able to support and build leadership capacity in others. (Index words: Nurse faculty leaders; Leadership; Risk taking; Academic leadership; Homework practices) J Prof Nurs 30:26–33, 2014. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Risk taking has been identified as a major component of leadership (Grossman & Valiga, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; McGowan, 2007; National League for Nursing [NLN]/Johnson & Johnson Faculty Leadership and Mentoring Program Cohort III and Project Director, 2011; O’Neil & Morjikian, 2003; Reardon, 2007). Risk has been defined as “a situation involving exposure to danger” and the “possibility that something unpleasant or unwelcome will happen” (Risk, n.d.). If taking risks is a significant aspect of leadership, how is it exhibited and defined by nurse faculty leaders? What factors influence the nurse faculty leader to take risks? How does taking risks shape leadership development, and what are the practices of risk taking in nurse faculty leaders? These questions underpinned this interpretive phenomenological study, which explored the experience of taking risks among nurse faculty leaders.

Taking risks has been interpreted as trying something new with nursing students and as speaking up to challenge the status quo with colleagues (Young, Pearsall, Stiles, Nelson, & Horton-Deutsch, 2011). The purpose of this study is to further explicate the meaning of taking risks among formal and informal nurse faculty leaders, whether enacted in the classroom, among colleagues, or within institutions. The aims of this research are to identify the practical know-how utilized by nurse faculty leaders when taking risks and to contribute to the surprisingly sparse literature on risk taking in nursing
education leadership. This article reports how nurse faculty leaders minimize their risk taking by doing their homework.

**Design and Method**

In 2008, an 11-member research team invited attendees at the NLN Nursing Leadership Conference to participate in an interpretive phenomenological study exploring how nursing faculty become leaders. Approval for human participants’ research was obtained from the institutional review board at Minnesota State University, Mankato. Twenty-four attendees provided informed consent to describe their experience of becoming a nurse faculty leader and were subsequently interviewed via telephone, their narratives recorded, transcribed, and analyzed hermeneutically by the 11-member team using a reflective, reflexive, circular approach. This method is described in detail elsewhere (Young et al., 2011). Three themes were identified in this initial leadership study: taking risks, being thrust into leadership, and facing challenges (Young et al., 2011). In an effort to further explore the specific phenomenon of risk taking in leadership, 7 of the original 11 members of the research team reconvened for this follow-up study.

In 2010, the reconstituted research team reinterviewed six participants from the original study whose first narratives made direct reference to taking risks and who consented to be reinterviewed. Upon reinterview, respondents were asked to describe in detail a specific situation in which they took a risk as a leader as well as the context for taking a risk and what it meant to their development as a leader. In the process of hermeneutic analysis, research team members found themselves in resonance with the stories of risk taking, making comparisons to their own experiences. The research team decided to interview each other in two small focus groups and analyze their experiences of taking a risk and what this meant for their leadership development. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and de-identified with the use of pseudonyms, and the narrative texts were used as data for interpretive analysis. Thus, the theme of doing your homework is generated through in-depth hermeneutic analysis of interview texts from 14 participants including two focus group narratives.

The research team engaged in cycles of interpretation, meeting every 2 weeks by telephone conference call to reflect on written interpretations of the interview texts. The research team was divided into a group of three and a group of four—the individuals in each group were responsible for generating a written interpretation for half of the interview texts. Each text was analyzed for themes or common shared experiences that stood out to the researcher, and written interpretations of the meaning of the experiences were offered. The whole team clarified interpretations by returning to the texts when disagreement arose. Subsequent interpretations were enriched by understandings generated by previous discussion. After all texts were analyzed in depth once, the team reread all texts to identify themes that threaded across the narratives and also brought the extant literature to bear on the interpretations to extend, challenge, or overcome them. This cycle of reading the texts, writing interpretations, rereading, reflecting, and rewriting to generate a thick, rich understanding of the phenomenon is characteristic of hermeneutic (interpretive) analysis. Several themes related to taking risks in nurse faculty leadership practices emerged including doing your homework, following personal belief with action, and being willing to fail. This article explicates the first theme, doing your homework, and provides exemplars for readers to validate the research findings. When themes and interpretations resonate with the reader’s experience, the study is considered rigorous (de Witt & Ploeg, 2006).

**Findings**

The stories from nurse faculty leaders revealed many situations in which they took risks, including acting to make unpopular decisions, doing the right thing, innovating, or moving one’s career forward. The risks taken involved personal risk—toward one’s reputation, credibility, or finances—and collective risk to the institution or to student learning. What was perceived as risk taking by one leader might not necessarily be considered so by another. Nurse faculty leaders described weighing, considering, and looking inside themselves in determining what constitutes taking a risk for them. A common practice of taking risks in these situations was doing your homework—weighing benefits in relation to costs, marshaling resources or people to support action, gathering information, assessing the environment, or unfolding risks in manageable increments. The findings are organized and presented around the following themes that emerged about leaders “doing their homework” to minimize their risk taking: weighing the costs and benefits, learning the context, and cultivating relationships.

**Doing Your Homework: Weighing the Costs and Benefits**

In this study, the importance of doing your homework was shared by many as a way to assess and potentially minimize risk. Participants recounted stories of how they carefully considered and approached a situation before deciding how best to respond. Florence shared how as a dean with tenure and professor rank she carefully weighed costs and benefits when deciding whether to risk a career change because she would need to reapply for full professorship and tenure in the new position.

When I’m going to make a big career decision, I try to do for myself a cost/benefit analysis. So I’ll make a little chart and I’ll put the cost on one side and the benefits on the other side and, you know, in that case one of the costs was I might not, it may take me awhile to recapture my tenure and my professorship but on the benefits side my salary doubled. That’s a big benefit. On the one side I had a longer commute into the city. I had a faculty that was really associate
degree oriented. I knew I would have to clean house. I mean I had a whole list of things on each side and then I look at it and make a decision and that's how I calculate a career risk. So in that case there were too many strong positives for me to say no [to the job offer] and of course one of the biggest positives was I would have new problems to solve because I like to solve problems. I actually, we've been talking among the associate deans in our college about we ought to have a course called problem finding not problem solving.

Similarly, Alan, concerned whether faculty would accept him in a new leadership position as associate dean when he had yet to be awarded tenure, developed a pros and cons list. His narrative reflects his pensive deliberations in making his decision.

You know, I did kind of a pros and cons list for not doing versus doing it and finally came to the conclusion I would probably, those kinds of opportunities don't come along very often and I would always wonder well what if, what if I had done that, what would have happened. So that was kind of like the tipping point for me was like gosh, you know, great opportunity, I was really scared to do it but knowing that I had great support to come into the role then that made it doable for me....it was such a huge career change for me that I hadn't planned on. It really did take me a longer than usual time to figure that out because there were a lot of implications. I'm not tenured. There had been no associate dean before me who had not been tenured in the position so I'm clinical track. So I had some things to think about and concerns about how faculty would accept that. Would that hinder me in the role? So, actually I did do a pro and con list if I didn't take it and it's like it gives me different facets of the same issue. So in doing that discernment exercise it helped me to really get a handle on the kinds of issues that I'd be dealing with.

These participant narratives show how faculty leaders saw the risk as a challenge and an opportunity for growth. When facing challenges, nurse faculty leaders engage in the practice of reflecting (Horton-Deutsch, Young, & Nelson, 2010), which Alan called a “discernment exercise.”

Florence and Alan’s narratives illuminate leader reflections about the pros and cons of one kind of challenge—taking a risk. Both Florence and Alan convey the importance of weighing benefits against the potential dangers of taking a risk in a very deliberate manner. This measured approach to risk taking is a homework practice validated in the literature. McGowan (2007) describes “considered” risk as a distinct component of leadership, characterized by taking stock of risks and benefits before making a decision. Reardon (2007, p. 60) also notes that leadership requires calculated risk taking, describing a process of “courage calculation” that involves six elements to ensure success. One such element, deliberate appraisal of the risks and benefits, involves evaluating trade-offs and assessing what one may be willing to lose.

Commonly, for nurse faculty leaders in this study, the ultimate question was to ask themselves, what was the worst thing that could happen? Chelsea described her process of doing a cost–benefit analysis.

I think when I do [take a risk], I weigh the benefits, you know, the advantages to disadvantages, the ‘what's going to happen if this doesn't work out’ approach. And what's the worst that can happen and if the worst happens, can I deal with it. How would we deal with it?....I was at an institution where it looked like we had an opportunity to form a partnership with a county jail and to deliver primary care to the inmates of that facility. And that we could probably do that and receive HRSA funding in order to make that happen. The reason this was risky, in my opinion, was first of all it had never been done. We did not have those relationships. We did not have them in any kind of formalized way. Working with the individuals within that political, it's a very political situation. There were people within the school who were adamantly opposed to doing this. But it looked like it was an excellent opportunity for interdisciplinary learning, a good opportunity to bring some federal funding in that matched our institution's mission; it would warrant wonderful learning experiences for the students, undergrad and grad, and cultural sensitivity and underrepresented population, you know, all of that was just so clear to me as being benefits.

Trying to envision the worst-case scenario is an exercise recommended by Kouzes and Posner (2007) that perhaps reflects the practice of the nurse leaders in this study asking themselves “What have I got to lose?” By doing one's homework and identifying in advance what personally or collectively could happen, a leader prepares to avoid the pitfalls or deal with the consequences of the risk. This anticipatory activity captures the preparatory nature of doing one's homework in academic leadership.

**Doing Your Homework: Learning the Context**

Once Florence concluded that the benefits of a career change outweighed the costs, she continued to see the tenure review process as her greatest risk should she accept the new position. She described the steps she took to learn more about the context in which tenure decisions were made at that institution.

I happened to know that my best friend was very close to one member that was on the tenure committee. So I called and asked her if she would introduce me—his name was Joseph Amandez—would she introduce me to Joseph because I know he sits on the tenure committee; I looked all that up. I was getting ready to accept the position but I would like to meet him informally to see what he
was like. So she had a dinner and I met him and he told me he knew I was considering the position, that my name was out there as a final candidate and I said “well,” I said, “you know, I am considering it but there's only one thing that, you know, was kind of making me hedge my bets.” And he said “what?” And I said “tenure review” and he kind of waved his hand at me and he said “what are you worried about that for?” He said “I've seen your vitae and it's comparable.” He said, “Florence, my god, I mean it's above and beyond a lot of things that others at full professor have done.” And that was it. I made my decision. And it was true, in my CV, you know, you kind of keep adding to your CV. I had 70 articles, books, book of the year, and all but I didn't know if that would fly because you don't know context. So I think you have to, the way I mitigate [the risk] is I try to learn about the context in which I'm going to be moving and understand it better so I can, you know, I can be realistic about whether or not this is the right thing for me.

Florence describes how she networked to get information about what to expect in the new situation—information that helped her finalize what she perceived as a risky decision. Her story shows the deliberate nature of learning the context and how knowing contextual nuances mitigated the risk undertaken.

Similar to Florence who described how she “looked all that up” to learn more about the context, Anh, a doctorally prepared chief nursing education administrator, “investigated” a situation. She described how she was able to take the risk to terminate a faculty member before the faculty member's contract was up.

I had a faculty member that was not always meeting her classes, and I was hearing some student complaints, but I investigated and found that oh, no, we didn't always show up for class, and so I made the decision that we could not tolerate that kind of behavior and terminated her at the end of the semester. Now granted, she wasn't tenured but she did have a full year contract and just based on, that was not new behavior evidently, but nobody had ever acted on it before. So, I mean that's kind of risky too I guess.

Learning more about the situation enabled Anh to act in a way that no one at the institution had acted before, which in itself was taking a risk.

Unlike Anh, Florence, and Alan, not all nurse faculty leaders described themselves as being successful when they undertook a risk. Soledad, an associate dean, reflected on her experience of failing when she risked gathering nursing education directors from the region to explore the idea of sharing simulation scenarios, and the idea never got off the ground. She described the importance of context in the practice of taking risks.

Hmm, I think that philosophically, I do believe timing is everything and when you said why do I think that it didn't work, I just believe it was the wrong idea at the wrong time. I think because the timing of what we're doing right now is so consistent with what the literature is saying and what our president is hearing and all these, you know, yesterday was the Institute of Medicine report on nursing. I mean I listened to the Webinar and it was all about quality and safety and interdisciplinarity. I think when you're a risk taker it's usually important to put your idea within the context of time and place and what's happening in the world around you because I think that elevates and minimizes your risk. If you're doing something that really is consistent with all the forces and the context around you chances are it probably isn't that risky at all but if you're doing something that's really kind of out of the bounds of what most people are thinking about then I imagine that that elevates your risk and also enhances the likelihood that this might not be as successful or it might not turn out in a way that you're envisioning.

Soledad illuminates the significance of doing your homework and learning the context of the situation in which you are taking a risk: it enhances the likelihood of success. Her narrative has implications for nurse faculty leaders to stay abreast of and knowledgeable about contemporary issues in nursing education and suggests that the practice of being well read and well informed supports risk taking. This is validated by O'Neil and Morjikian (2003) who describe scrutinizing the internal and external climate for emerging developments and trends as an important leadership practice.

Uniting the knowledge of contemporary issues with a keen awareness as to the nuances of the environment and the uniqueness of participants additionally serves to address risk. This was the case for Anh, who saw her way to making a decision to terminate an employee after becoming more knowledgeable about the situation. After Anh did her homework, she felt compelled to move forward with the termination despite the risk. Soledad learned that to minimize risk, the context of time, place, and current events must be considered. Both narratives raise questions for researchers: What is the relationship between knowledge of the situation and perceived risk in the situation? What is the relationship between innovation and perceived risk? What is the relationship between the context of time and risk?

**Doing Your Homework: Cultivating Relationships**

After deciding on a course of action that involves risk, participants continued to do their homework in order to mitigate the risk and increase the likelihood of success. Coleen described an instance of doing her homework after being elected to chair a university-wide general education committee. Reducing the number of general education credits students are required to take is a goal Coleen acknowledged she could easily fail to accomplish
because the committee is heavily composed faculty who teach general education courses. Coleen described how she mitigated her risk of failure and increased the probability of achieving her goal:

We're going slowly. We're not just bringing it up to a vote and saying hey, this is it. We're working through the processes. We're also, because assessment is now a part of this we also are gathering information. I'm going to be attending a national conference on reframing general education. So, I mean, I'm doing my homework basically and I have been networking with some of the other people too—that was why I was elected is I had been networking with people and kind of forming that cadre that is going to be behind me. The core group that's going to be behind me and feel the same way I do. So, I mean, that's what I'm doing to kind of minimize my risk of failing. I think a lot of times to minimize the risk of failing it's a case of doing your homework.

Coleen recognizes the importance of preparedness when engaging in a risk-filled undertaking. She works through processes, attending a conference to become more knowledgeable and networking with key people who can form “that cadre that is going to be behind me,” ensuring that she has people on her team who are thinking the same way she does. For Coleen, minimizing the risk of failing is a “case of doing your homework.”

Heather, an associate dean, described the process of bringing other people “on board” with her ideas as a way of shifting personal risk and distributing it to the collective. She related:

I said I think we should create an inter-professional curriculum and I'm willing to be the individual to do that. And that felt enormously risk-taking to me in that A, it causes me to really push myself outside the domain of nursing that I'm really familiar with and try to begin to see interdisciplinarity and quality and safety and teamwork and all the other attributes that we're working with from the eyes of different professionals and that felt unfamiliar. It also made me very visible in terms of okay, Heather said she would do this now let's just watch Heather do this. And so I really needed to work very hard to get a lot of buy in and a lot of cooperation and support because if we're really going to make an interdisciplinary curriculum then I can't go sit in the closet and write it. We have to do this in an interdisciplinary sort of a way. So I had to convert some of the naysayers or at least get them on board enough that they would participate and help and it's, at times it feels like herding cats but we just said we were going to do it….Perhaps the risk goes down because I feel the more invested everybody is in this, the less individual or personal risk I have and the more collective risk we have as an institution because I really want to put it out there nationally that our students, if you go to this University you'll get a really exemplary disciplinary education in whatever your major is but you're also going to get an unusual, a novel or an innovative, inter-professional or interdisciplinary education that has a curriculum of its own, has learning outcomes of its own and that that might be a reason that people would choose to come here but in order to really market that or really say that with any level of certainty we need a whole cadre of people on board and championing that.

Heather describes softening her personal risk, distributing it to a collective risk as she builds support, communicates with others, and involves many people in the creation of an innovative curriculum. Collaborating with others and building community capture an important leadership practice in advancing reform (Stiles, Pardue, Young, & Morales, 2011). Perhaps then cultivating relationships through collaboration, as a style of leadership, has implications for risk taking. According to Scott (2006), we have moved from a time of hierarchical to relational leadership with an emphasis on the relationship between the leader and followers, where the aim is to discern common purpose and cooperation when working together. Leaders who demonstrate a commitment to collaboration and role model highly collaborative behaviors themselves mitigate risk by using these skills to resolve differences (Houston, 2008).

Coleen specifically referred to her leadership style as one that mitigates risk taking. She sees her lack of risk taking as a function of her shared or democratic style of leadership.

Most of the time I don't think I'm taking a risk because I do not just operate on my own. I do try to do a more democratic process of leadership or style of leadership. So I do consult with the people that are involved and so I guess for that reason I don't really feel like I'm taking a risk but that's part of the homework. I mean, I get their opinions and all up front. When I don't then that's usually when there's problems. And I don't always agree with them but in getting their opinions it gives me a chance to also make my case. So I, you know, I mean I think you do have to take some risks but I don't necessarily believe that they are paralyzing risks, that you're paralyzed because of the risks. I mean to me risky is rappelling off the side of a hill or something and I haven't really felt like I'm doing that without a net.

Coleen does her “homework” as a leader by soliciting opinions from the people involved and making her case to them, in effect, creating a safety net for any risk that may be involved. Similar to Heather, she distributes the risk through her democratic approach to leadership. Their narratives pose the question for researchers: What is the relationship between risk taking and leadership style? What are the factors that influence a leader's perception related to the level of personal risk? Through
advancing work slowly and cultivating relationships, Coleen and Heather tip action in their favor, distributing risk among team members, thereby widening their base of support and buffering individual leadership risk (Reardon, 2007).

Darnice reflected on the leadership style of her mentor and what she learned about risk taking from her.

It was the dean of the school...what I learned from her and watching her was her astuteness at reading people and getting their sense of what would be in it for them. The political aspects of taking a risk and just watching her do that and build those relationships so that whenever she did take a risk her chances of being successful were really pretty high because of those relationships she had....We used to have conversations in which she would, my role in the relationship was sometimes to pull her back from the edge a little bit (laughter). So we actually had these conversations where she would be a risk-taker and sometimes would—and this is probably important—would invite people to kind of say what am I not thinking about. And so invite feedback into the risk she was wanting to take and would always weigh the responses. Whether she changed her mind or not was a different story but I always felt when I offered feedback that it was at least being considered and thought about.

Darnice described a dean who took risks but, also, by getting to know people and seeking their views, padded herself with resources and protection. She relied on her skill of “reading people” but also did her homework in terms of obtaining people's input into her ideas, inviting their feedback on her thinking. Perhaps, an implication for nurse faculty leaders inviting feedback on risky undertakings is to elicit it from people who think differently than they do. How important it is to cultivate a relationship with a more conservative risk taker, who can, as Darnice described, “pull [one] back from the edge” if needed? Lencioni (2002), in his classic book on team dysfunction, points to the significance of a safe environment, averring that vulnerability-based trust is essential among a team for members to take risks in offering feedback and assistance. Moreover, Gazza and Sterrett (2011) note that making connections outside the discipline of nursing is important to help leaders view situations from an objective standpoint.

Implications and Recommendations

The narratives of the nurse faculty leaders in this study show that doing your homework when taking a risk is a deliberate practice used to inform the process of risk taking. Homework can be conceptualized as an intentional activity completed by an individual outside the usual realm and scope of day-to-day work. Horowitz (2006) describes the common practices of homework as reviewing what is already known, expanding knowledge by learning new information, making connections, preparing for the future, and organizing material. The actual “doing” of homework upholds a self-regulatory function through which participants enhance personal abilities addressing self-discipline, self-motivation, and independence (Horowitz, 2006). This self-regulatory aspect of homework is an important consideration in leadership and risk taking because self-control mitigates impulsivity and supports thoughtful problem analysis (Corno, 2000).

These practices of homework are evident in the identified subthemes of weighing costs and benefits, learning the context, and cultivating relationships. The practical know-how involved in each of these includes reviewing what is known about a situation, gathering additional material, and connecting information to a particular context in order to prepare for the future. The ability to engage in these practices employing a disciplined, planful approach further supports risk taking.

Explicating these homework practices provide practical guidance for the risk taking inherent in nursing academic leadership. This is timely counsel because the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Institute of Medicine Future of Nursing report (2010) proposes a bold and action-oriented framework for advancing the profession. Leadership and risk taking is central to the challenges of reconceptualizing nursing's role, redefining nursing education, and achieving full interprofessional partnership with physicians and other members of the health care team.

At the same time that there are national calls for bold, action-oriented leadership within the nursing profession to address complex issues, the profession is also faced with a nursing faculty shortage and the impending retirement of many experienced faculty leaders. In the near future, many of our nursing programs will be formally and informally led by faculty who are relatively new to the academic environment and seeking opportunities to develop their leadership skills. The nursing profession needs to demonstrate the same intentionality in developing the next generation of leaders in nursing education because it has historically and successfully demonstrated in developing a strong cadre of excellent nurse researchers.

This intentionality of leadership development for nurse faculty can be accomplished through a number of strategies. For example, establishing formal programs of leadership development for faculty in various stages of their careers and opportunities for mentorship experiences (Nick et al., 2012) may serve as one means to cultivate leadership capacity. Such experiences foster enhanced exposure to problem analysis and counsel from more experienced leaders, thus nurturing further capability in the homework practices described in this article. Programs such as the NLN’s LEAD Program for Emerging Leaders in Nursing Education (www.nln.org), Sigma Theta Tau International’s Leadership Development Center (www.nursingsociety.org), and the American Association of
Colleges of Nursing’s Leadership for Academic Programs (www.aacn.nche.edu) are but a few examples of national academic leadership programs designed to assist new faculty leaders develop leadership skills within a supportive network. Similar national programs also exist for more established leaders who are ready to step into senior academic leadership roles. Many institutions of higher education also sponsor leadership development activities for their own faculty, designed to foster a pipeline for leadership succession.

Succession planning within one's own institution is a responsibility that each academic administrator must accept by actively seeking out future leaders among the faculty and providing the resources and experiences necessary to support their development. It is through such intentionally provided opportunities that nurse faculty leaders can proactively learn to analyze the costs and benefits of risk taking, grow to understand the larger context of the situations in which they are leading change and taking risk, and cultivate the relationships necessary to successfully navigate the challenges.

Becoming a nurse faculty leader means being able to take risks and interact effectively in settings that extend beyond one's own nursing program. Therefore, seeking opportunities for nurse faculty leaders to interact collaboratively with leaders from practice, interprofessional colleagues, and other academic administrators can help them expand their comfort with risk-taking behaviors. This can be accomplished through developing formal programs of leadership development for faculty in various stages of their careers, establishing mentorship experiences, funding scholarship related to leadership development in academia, and seeking opportunities to build leadership initiatives that bring nurse leaders from practice and academia together to collaboratively share strategies to address their leadership challenges.

The findings from this study have implications for future research. While this study addressed the question of how does taking risks shape leadership development, an equally important question is how does leadership development shape a leader's willingness to engage in risk-taking behaviors? What leadership competencies prepare a nurse leader in academia to take thoughtfully assessed risks, and how does one most effectively acquire those competencies? Is the ability to do one’s homework to minimize risks, and how does one most effectively acquire a learned competency? Funding studies to explore these and other research questions related to the competencies required for successful leadership development in complex academic settings is a priority that ensures the future vitality of the nursing profession. It will be leaders who engage in carefully considered risk-taking behaviors who will successfully lead their programs through turbulent economic times.

The findings from this study may also have global implications. The need for leadership development in nursing education programs is a global concern. Replication of this study in other countries could be beneficial in identifying cultural influences to be considered in developing future leaders in nursing education.

**Conclusion**

Being comfortable with taking well-calculated risks is a desired attribute in nursing leaders and is a competency that will be needed to address the challenges and opportunities facing our nursing programs. Examining practices such as doing one's homework to minimize risk is one means by which nurse leaders can be developed, thus ensuring excellence in the future leaders in nursing education.

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