Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MN (University of Victoria, 2015)
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“Exploring the Challenges and Issues Facing Undergraduate Nursing Education in one Canadian Province from an Institutional Theory Perspective: A case study”

School of Nursing

Thursday, April 8, 2021
12:00pm
Remote Defence

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Susan Duncan, School of Nursing, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)
Dr. Anastasia Mallidou, School of Nursing, UVic (Co-Supervisor)
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Dr. June Anonson, College of Nursing, University of Saskatchewan

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Sara Ramshaw, Faculty of Law, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Aim The study aim was to explore the issues and challenges facing undergraduate nursing education in one Canadian province from an institutional theory perspective. The research questions were: What is the institutional field of nursing education? What are the issues and challenges facing nursing education? How is the institutional field of nursing education contributing to the issues and challenges? How are the issues and challenges contributing to the institutional complexity?

Background Nursing education is essential for the health care of society, yet face various issues and challenges at the system level. Institutional theory has been used in higher education to better understand how higher education institutions are structured and operate. Institutional theory has not been used in nursing education. The issues facing nursing education have been examined from a critical or descriptive perspective, but a system-level perspective is missing. Institutional theory could fill this gap and examine the institution of nursing and how its structure, behaviours, and rules influence those issues and challenges.

Methods An exploratory single-case study with embedded units design was used. Theoretical propositions from institutional theory informed the sample, recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. In 2019, representatives from organizations comprising the institutional field of nursing education and senior-level administrators were interviewed and relevant documents were collected and reviewed. The data were analyzed using deductive and inductive thematic analysis, building a case description, and visual analysis techniques.

Findings The findings from sixty documents and seven interviews suggested the institutional field of nursing education is composed of postsecondary institutions, health service organizations, the regulatory body, the ministry for health, and the ministry for postsecondary education. The issues and challenges facing nursing education included demands on curricula, teaching and learning values versus practice, the relationship between education and practice, limiting financial supports, clarity of the RN role, and need for faculty. The institutional field of nursing education is complex and includes dominant organizations and non-dominant organizations.

Discussion / Conclusion The use of institutional theory was beneficial to explore the issues and challenges facing undergraduate nursing education. The institutional field including the influences of structure, dominance, and complexity impact the issues and challenges facing nursing education. The institutional perspective of the issues and challenges diverges from previous examinations. In addition, the use of institutional theory in higher education offers strategies for advocacy in nursing education. Recommendations for nursing education practice, policy, and research include: awareness and acceptance by senior-level administrators of the other organizations comprising the institutional field of nursing education, including the professional association within the interorganizational structures, understanding institutional theory and terminology, and studying the structuralized social network within the institutional field of nursing education.

Keywords: Nursing education, institutional theory, institutional complexity, dominant organizations, case study