

# Participatory Action Research: Learning About Work Environments Among Baccalaureate Nursing Faculty

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# Statement of Disclosure

Lisa A. Ruth-Sahd and Norma H. Beyer disclose no conflict of interest and have received no sponsorship or commercial support for this research.

# Presentation Objectives

- ▶ Define healthy work environment (HWE) according to the AACN guidelines.
- ▶ Recognize Participatory Action Research (PAR) as an appropriate research methodology.
- ▶ Understand that academic work environments, like other work environments are influenced by many factors.
- ▶ Recognize how collaborative initiatives may improve the work environment.

# Purpose of the Study

- ▶ Explore and identify issues related to (healthy) work environment (HWE) within a baccalaureate department of nursing, according to the guidelines set forth from the American Association of Critical Care Nursing (AACN, 2005) and the National League for Nurses (NLN, 2006).

# Healthy Work Environment (HWE)

## AACN (2005)

- ▶ Skilled Communication
- ▶ True Collaboration
- ▶ Effective Decision-making
- ▶ Appropriate Staffing
- ▶ Meaningful Recognition
- ▶ Authentic Leadership

## NLN (2006)

- ▶ Salaries
- ▶ Benefits
- ▶ Workload
- ▶ Collegial Environment
- ▶ Role Preparation for Professional Development
- ▶ Scholarship
- ▶ Institutional Support
- ▶ Marketing and Recognition
- ▶ Leadership

# METHODS

## Design, Participants, Procedure

- ▶ Design- Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Stringer, 2007)
- ▶ Participants- Department of Nursing (DON) at a private college in South Central PA. ( 8 of 18 FT faculty)
- ▶ Procedure- Over a three year period of time as a department, faculty co-researchers led the PAR study and instituted various activities.
- ▶ Theoretical Framework- AACN (2005, 2012) and NLN (2006).

# Participatory Action Research (Stringer, 2007)

- ▶ Self-experimentation backed up by evidential reasoning, fact-finding and learning
- ▶ A way of gathering information to understand and improve the world that honors, respects and reflects the particular beliefs and experiences of a group of people
- ▶ Not so much a set of procedures to follow as it is a process based on reflection, data collection, and action
- ▶ Draws on critical theory and constructivism and employs mixed methods approaches such as qualitative and quantitative inquiry
- ▶ Used frequently in all types of research and has diverse applicability

# Stages of PAR

1. Look (gather data),
2. Think (hypothesize), and
3. Act (plan, implement, evaluate and review).



# Data Analysis (Mixed Methods)

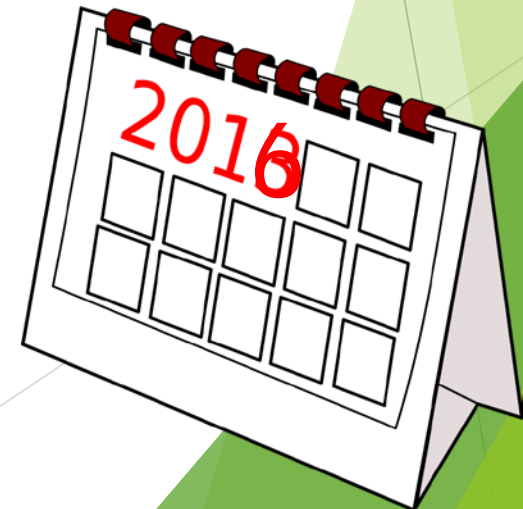
## ▶ 2 Qualitative Surveys-

- 1) Pre intervention Survey Spring 2013
- 2) Post intervention Survey Fall 2016

## ▶ Quantitative Survey - Fall 2016

# Timeline of Events within the Department

- ▶ Activities occurred April 2013 through November 2016



# Themes

1. Creating a Space to Share through PAR
2. Using Precious Time
3. Transforming Values to include HWE principles
4. Recognizing and Respecting each other as having an impact on HWE

# 1. Creating a Space to Share through PAR

- ▶ “Monthly lunches bring everyone together in the same space to share and just talk”
- ▶ “Because courses are so segregated, which makes our work environment ‘cliquish,’ [the monthly lunches] bring faculty together in the same space and not just passing one another in the hall or sitting next to each other in meetings, where the agenda is of more importance.”

## 2. Using Precious Time

- ▶ “We as faculty have to make the time.”

Time is noted to be the primary barrier/challenge in focusing on the HWE initiatives.

- ▶ “We also have to make the time to support each other in publishing and presenting.”
- ▶ “It is wonderful to take the time to celebrate each other.”



# 3. Transforming Values to Include HWE Principles

- ▶ “The department chairs’ vision made it possible to focus on HWE.”
- ▶ “The HWE committee values and encourages a HWE.”
- ▶ “As faculty, we have to know that we can not do it all; while focusing on HWE, I had to let go of publishing and focus on professional development to learn HWE stuff.”
- ▶ “We have to BELIEVE that positive change is possible and it starts with me.”



# Quantitative Outcomes

AACN STANDARD	OUTCOMES			
	Themselves	DON	Classroom	Clinical Setting
1. Skilled Communication	62.5%	87%	62.5%	62.5%
2. True Collaboration	50%	37.5%	62.5%	75%
3. Effective Decision- Making	57.15%	42.86%	57.15%	57.15%
4. Appropriate Staffing	50%	50%	50%	50%
5. Meaningful Recognition	57.15%	57.15%	42.86%	42.86%
6. Authentic Leadership	100%	71.43%	71.43%	71.43%



# Do you believe the overall W. E. has improved over the last 3 years?

- ▶ Yourself- 87.5%
- ▶ DON- 87.5%
- ▶ Classroom- 87.5%
- ▶ Clinical Setting-87.5%



# What have you appreciated the most?

- ▶ Lunches
- ▶ Awareness of what others do
- ▶ Celebrations
- ▶ Genuine interest / leadership support
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ HWE Committee

\* Note: These are not presented in any order



# Barriers

- ▶ Time
- ▶ Funding
- ▶ Funding at college level- not just within the department
- ▶ Cliques of faculty between courses
- ▶ Small inner circle of decision-makers

# Conclusions

- ▶ The aim of this study was to explore and identify issues related to work environment in a baccalaureate nursing department.
- ▶ PAR approach added a deeper and fuller understanding of factors that shape faculty members experiences and performance as a nurse educator.
- ▶ We recognized, for improving our W.E., that we each had to take a vested interest.

# Conclusions continued

- ▶ Faculty recognized the significance of advocacy for ourselves and for one another in creating a HWE.
- ▶ In all areas of the AACN standards, the W.E. did improve, but we realize these initiatives are part of a continual process to which we all must be committed.

# Conclusions continued

- ▶ Validates academic W.E. are affected by a number of complex and interrelated factors such as:
  - ▶ recognizing and respecting each other as faculty;
  - ▶ acknowledging how stressors impact the learning environment in the classroom and clinical setting, e.g., lack of support or respect;
  - ▶ utilizing precious time; and
  - ▶ valuing the efforts of this research.

# Implications for Nursing Education and Nursing Research

- ▶ Faculty realize we each have to take initiative to support and maintain a HWE.
- ▶ We must focus on positive faculty to faculty, faculty to administrator and faculty to student relationships.
- ▶ Identify ways to integrate HWE threads and content into the curriculum.
- ▶ Inform future research on WE in academic settings.

# Limitations

- ▶ Small department - two faculty chose not to participate due to concerns with anonymity
- ▶ Faculty “coming and going” – one faculty member left, one retired, one was on a 9 month maternity leave and three new faculty were hired
- ▶ One faculty member stated, “I do not have time to participate” (despite a deadline extension)



# Selected References

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# Thank you and Happy St. Patty's Day Weekend

- ▶ Any questions / comments or thoughts
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