

UNDERGRADUATE HEALTH POLICY EDUCATION: IMPACTING THE FUTURE OF NURSING



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Objectives

The participant will:

1. Implement health policy education across the curriculum to prepare nurses for the future.
2. Utilize information to construct meaningful assignments with their respective courses to reflect health policy immersion.
3. Create an environment of lifelong learning and ongoing health policy participation to prepare nurses to impact health policy.

Issue

- There are over 3.1 million nurses in the United States, and over 20 million nurses worldwide (American Nurses Association, 2013; BBC, 2015).
- Despite these numbers, nurses historically are glaringly absent in the health policy and/or political arena.
 - *Lewenson (2102) noted that the political involvement of nurses is marginal at best in comparison to the health policy gains from the past by noted nurses such as Nightingale, Wald, and others.*
- As a result the impact of nursing's voice and their expertise related to healthcare and professional practice is lost.

Significance of the Problem

- Professional nurses are in a pivotal position to address critical issues that jeopardize the current health care system and our professional practice; yet they are hesitant to do so.
- Research demonstrates the need for targeted health policy education to increase nursing's awareness and involvement in the political arena (Byrd et al., 2012; Primomo, 2007; Rains & Barton-Kriese, 2001).
- Des Jardin (2001) attributed the lack of nursing professionals taking an active stance in health policy and politics as the absence of essential knowledge of the political process.
- Few nurses acknowledge or have awareness of health policy as a component of nursing practice (Taft & Nanna, 2008; Ennen, 2001).

Literature Findings

- Research, albeit rare, repeatedly points to the absence of educational preparation and immersion regarding health policy and political involvement in undergraduate nursing course work as the major factor for the lack of political, professional, and organizational health policy/political presence and activity (Byrd, et al., 2012; Primomo, 2007; Rains & Barton-Kriese, 2001; Conger & Johnson, 2000).

Nurse Power Politics Course

- Introduction to health policy and legislation.
- Impact of nurses direct involvement with health policy and political participation.
 - *Lost potential without nursing's voice to promote practice, patient care, and best practice*
- Effect on organizational policies and change.
- Professional organizations impact
- Identification of current legislation, trends, and issues.
- Methods of political and health policy involvement.
- Course assignments:
 - *Local government meeting attendance and participation (group/faculty).*
 - *Letter writing (individual).*
 - *Legislative lobbying experience (group/faculty).*
 - *Weekly discussion and student presentations.*

Research/Purpose

- The purpose of this phenomenological research was to determine the impact a mandatory, standalone undergraduate nursing course in health policy and political involvement had on registered nurses political astuteness and involvement.

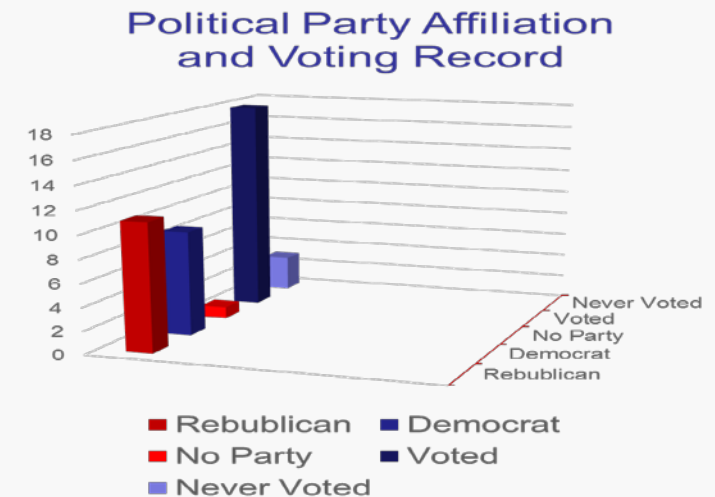
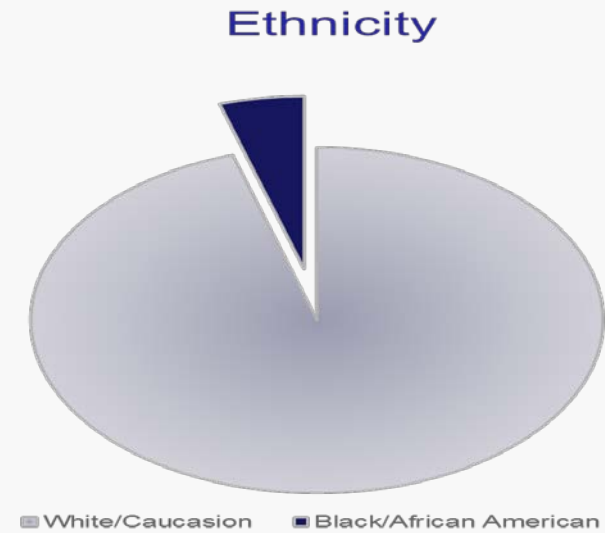
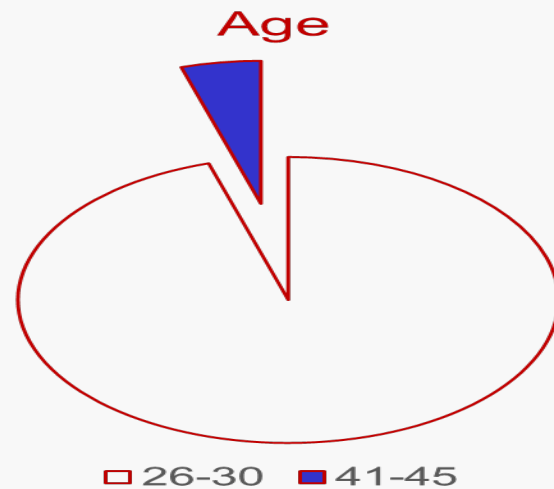
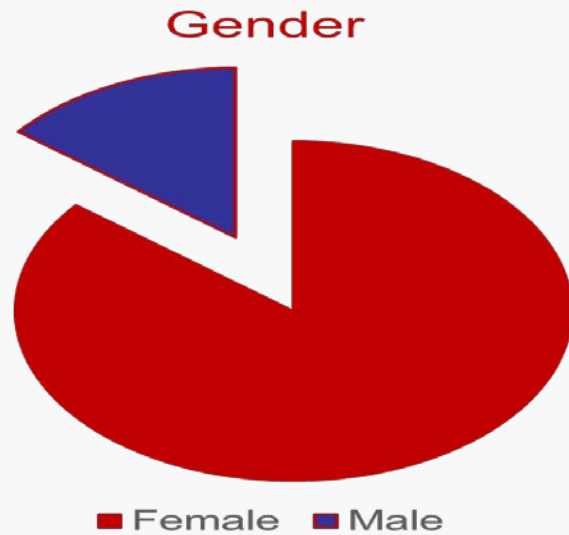
Theoretical Framework

■ Stages of Nurse's Political Development:

- *Stage One - Buy In*
- *Stage Two - Self Interest*
- *Stage Three - Political Sophistication*
- *Stage Four - Leading the Way*

Cohen, Mason, Kovner, Leavitt, Pulcini, & Sochalski (1996)

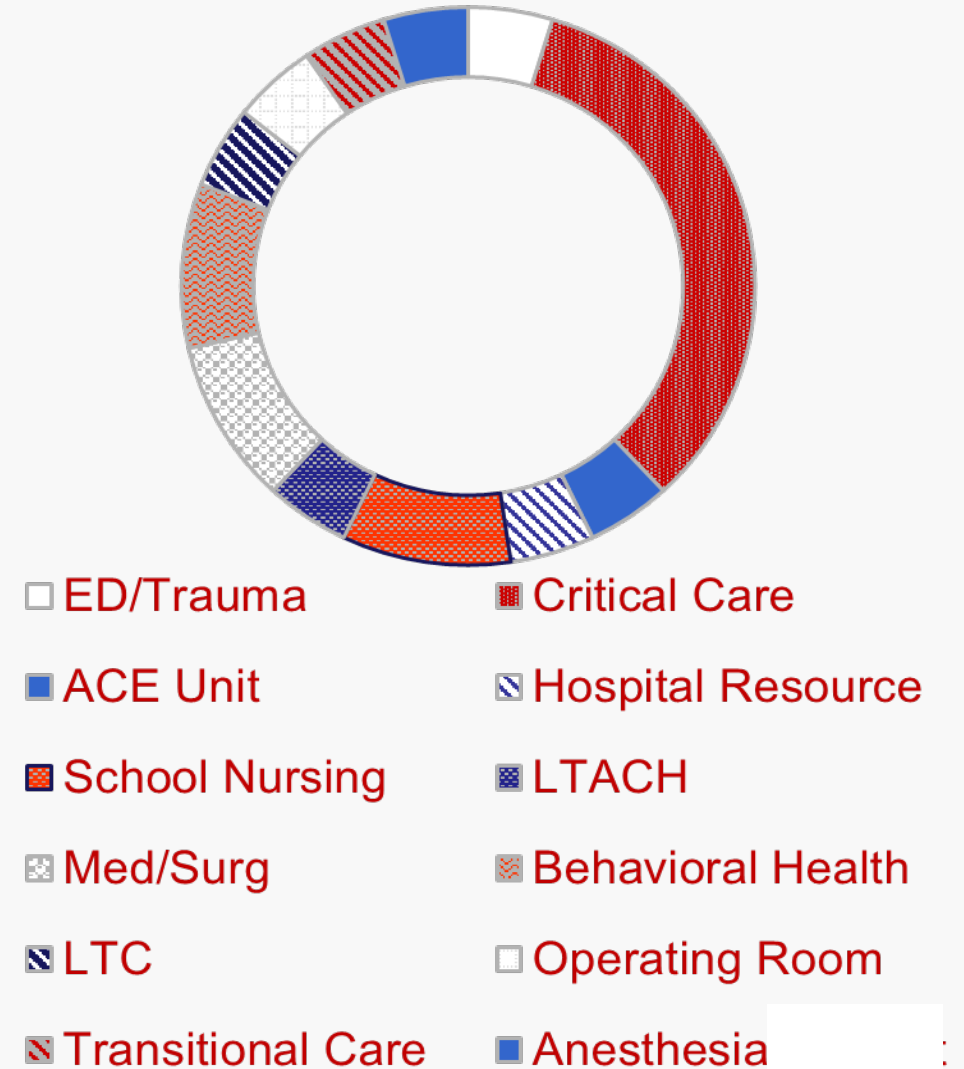
Demographics (N = 21)



Geographical Area



Employment Settings



Guided Interviews

- How would you describe your awareness and understanding of legislative and health policy processes?
- Do you feel prepared, based on your undergraduate health policy course, to be active in health policy and politics? Why or why not?
- Since graduation, describe any health policy related activities you have been involved in?
- What value do you believe there is in taking a health policy course?
- What would you say are attributes of a politically involved nurse?
- How do you feel nurses can best impact health policy?
- Describe any barriers that you feel limit your ability to engage in health policy/political action?
- Who, if anyone, do you believe would be a mentor for you currently in health policy involvement?
- If you were to take the course today, what do you think would need to be included to assist you to be politically active?

Themes

- Education as a foundation to political advocacy.
- Health policy involvement.
- Characteristics of a politically involved nurse.
- Perceived barriers to political involvement.
- Academia to lead the way.

Education as a Foundation to Political Advocacy

■ Political Awareness

- *“Having that in my education prepared me to be confident in making decisions and being a part of nursing politics in my career.”*

■ Significance of Health Policy Education

- *“I would say in health policy and the political side of things is probably the most outside of the clinical teaching approach and its most important, yet sometimes we don’t appreciate that; the development of a whole new skill set.”*

■ Value

- *“When you take your class it kinda was tapping you on the shoulder, like hey you might want to pay attention to this because this is going to be your reality.”*

Health Policy Involvement

■ Organizational/Healthcare Involvement

- *“I am a member of the practice council that reviews policies and implements change throughout the hospital.”*

■ Legislative/Policy Involvement

- *One student has remained active related to a specific course assignment stating:*

- *“I don’t know if you remember, but when we did the letter writing regarding a topic of interest to either a legislator or somebody local, and I did mine on the landfill and the contaminated drinking water in the township... I ended up following through with that a little bit more after the class was over, and I still go to township meetings to put a buzz in those supervisors’ ears.”*

Characteristics of a Politically Involved Nurse

■ Self-Confidence

- *“Not afraid to voice your opinion and... not afraid to be wrong; you keep looking for something better.”*

■ Political Knowledge

- *“They would have to be knowledgeable of all the regulations, the hospital systems, policies, and statewide policies. They would have to have a good understanding and basis of what those policies are meant for, what they are trying to do, and why we implement them.”*

Perceived Barriers to Political Involvement

■ Organizational Barriers

- *“You know, every annual review you sit down with your manager and see what you’re interested in getting involved with. I think that it is simply getting the information out there to get more nurses involved. There is just not enough ‘staffertizing’ out there so to speak.”*

■ Fear of Retribution

- *“We need to have empowerment to speak up without fear of reprimand.”*

■ Shortage of Mentors

- *“Well, that would be you, that would be about it. How many times have you heard Carol?”*

Academia to Lead the Way

■ Educator Role

- *“I think that educating nurses that their voices matter and teach them the steps that they would have to go through to make a difference. I feel like people would, I think, that if it is a topic someone is interested in, that would be the first step, but almost all the nurses just don’t know how to take that first step to make a change. I just don’t think there is enough information and education out there that lets nurses know, like HEY, you have a voice and you can be different and you can change policies.”*

■ Academic Inclusion of Health Policy Experiences

- *“We lack appreciation until we have seen it in real life, you know what I mean? It’s like clinical experience. We don’t appreciate it till we are out there.”*

Correlation to Literature

■ Health Policy as a Professional Obligation

- *Those interviewed reported that they felt they had the ability to bring positive changes within their work setting.*

■ Barriers to Political Participation

- *Nurses with political expertise remain difficult to access.*
- *Time remains an issue for involvement.*

■ Health Policy and Political Education

- *Health policy education was shown to spearhead involvement yet the majority of undergraduate nursing programs are devoid of this skill set.*

■ Nursing Characteristics and Political Participation

- *Characteristics for involvement include being knowledgeable, assertive, well spoken, and a leader.*

Stages of Political Involvement Achieved

Stage 1

Buy in was achieved by all participants through shared governance, local, state, and federal involvement.

Stage 2

Self Interest was achieved by the majority of participants through coalition forming with multidisciplinary groups and the creation of committees to impact change within their organizations.

Stage 3

Political Sophistication was achieved by 5 former students who became proactive on nursing practice or health issues through participation with elected officials on a local, state, and federal level.

Benner (1986) Proficient Stage

- Former students were able to look at the broader picture of their nursing practice with 4 years of experience.
 - *One participant acknowledged that during the early years of her career it was impossible to think of political action stating:*
“The overwhelmingness of starting as a new nurse... I know when I was first starting out in the ER it was all I could do to just stay afloat.”
 - *Another participant commented “I think that now I have more confidence in myself as a nurse, whereas 4 years ago I was like such a little baby out there.”*

Recommendations

■ Nursing Education

- *Immersion in health policy/political arenas is crucial to ongoing involvement in a stand alone or existing courses across the curriculum. Each specialty has a vested interest in this!*

■ Mentoring

- *Assist in the development of politically savvy nurses.*

■ Collaboration with Nursing Organizations and Other Academic Disciplines

- *Together nursing organizations, healthcare facilities, and academia can work in harmony to augment learning, spearhead interest to foster active involvement.*
- *Encourage collaboration with political science and international studies students and faculty.*

Future Research

- Comparison study:
 - *Registered nurses who had health policy education versus those who have not, and their degree of political involvement.*
 - *The effects of health policy mentorship on personal involvement.*
- Effects of cultural diversity in health policy to develop an understanding of the needs of the population as a whole.
- Follow-up longitudinal type study of the original cohort as they progress through their careers.

Questions, Comments, Care to Share?

Thank you!