A Practical Approach to Learning About Healthy Work Environment Standards Within Any Clinical Setting

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Background: Throughout nursing school, undergraduate nursing students are exposed to the role and responsibilities of the registered nurse (RN), administrative leadership concepts used within the clinical setting, and what are aspects of the work environment that will foster their professional nursing practice and development. Previous assignments, used only an assessment of the organizational cultural concept based learning activity (CBLA) that was discussed with students in weekly post conferences by clinical faculty. Since some form of standards were not used as a reference, the student used their own personal perspective and experiences which lead to variability within the student population perceptions. Additionally, using only an assessment without the structure of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis framework, the students were inclined to report observations versus a thorough reflective analysis. Finally, the retention or use of this learning and understanding of the impact of the work environment on patient outcomes and staff satisfaction was shortly lived to the period of the course.

Methods: Introducing the use of standards related to healthy work environment (HWE), using SWOT analysis as a vehicle of analysis and reporting, and linking this learning to the leadership role development as a soon to be RN significantly helped the student commitment to this learning activity and the short and long term impact on their own professional practice and future employment. Through the use of CBLA organizational assessment of a real life clinical unit/area/agency compared to American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) HWE standards, and using the SWOT analysis framework allows the student to develop a thorough review. The activity is under the student’s control for the entire assessment, analysis, and strategy development. The students then creates a class presentation using Powerpoint or Praz as a vehicle to present the analysis of their learning from the clinical work environment, SWOT; congruence with the mission, vision, and values to the day to day staff interaction as well as the work life, and the strategies to improve the unit/area/agency operation.

Results: The students have found this learning activity as both a practical and innovative method to compare a real world clinical setting to a professional nursing organization’s national standards of healthy work environment. This work yields short term learning about leadership concepts as they evaluate a real life clinical work environment. Additionally, long term this learning of how to analyze a clinical work environment becomes a major component of their strategy in selecting their new graduate nursing employment.

Conclusion: The students uniformly voiced that this course assignment was an excellent method to learn about leadership concepts, standards related to work environment, and how this information relates to their own informal leadership role as a new RN, professional practice development, and becomes a major component of their strategy in selecting their first new graduate nursing employment.

Purpose

This learning activity combines the use of theoretical concepts, national standards, several application models with students’ experiences on an inpatient or outpatient clinical setting. This integrated experience outcomes have been student development of their own informal leadership role and use of this learning as they search for their first professional nursing employment.

Poster Learning Objectives:
- Define and discuss purpose of healthy work environment (HWE) standards in relation to the concept based learning activity (CBLA) and impact on patient/client outcomes and employee satisfaction.
- Explore the use of SWOT structure to analyze an organization and other systems/processes.
- Identify relationship of Mission, Vision, and Values with the SWOT Analysis.
- Share examples of healthy work environment standards from clinical leadership setting.
- Learn how SWOT organizational analysis of clinical settings, patients, people, environment, work, and leadership strategies.

Outline of the Learning with this Assignment
- Define the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) healthy work environment and the concept based learning organizational assessment tool.
- Identify the elements of the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis method and process.
- Explain the importance of the congruence between SWOT analysis and Mission, Vision, and Values.
- Describe some of the students examples of learning of unit/area/agency healthy work environment standards.
- Learn how SWOT organizational analysis of clinical settings, patients, people, environment, work, and leadership strategies.

References:
- American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (2016). AACN standards for establishing and sustaining healthy work environments. A journey to excellence (2nd ed.). Also Vejle, CA: AACN.

Example of Student Learning with SWOT Analysis & Strategies:
- Identify the client population served in sufficient detail to understand their needs.
- Describe the Leadership Team and how Staff are involved with decision making for the organization/setting. Do they use a form of shared governance or something similar?
- Identify and analyze the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the Population Practice organization/setting.
- Explain how information found within the analyzes of the setting is consistent throughout the work, staff behavior, leadership action, practice environment including decision making, and effectiveness in client care delivery systems matches the overall mission, vision, and values i.e. coherence.
- Compare the Healthy Work Environment (HWE) standards to the overall work and operation. Since the literature has shown the HWE standards impact the employee satisfaction and the effectiveness if the client care delivery systems.
- Identify three (3) strategies that would enhance the overall analysis including the SWOT and HWE.
- Describe your subgroup learning from Population Practice operation/setting based on this assignment from a personal and leadership perspective.