INTEGRATING NURSE POLICY ENTREPRENEURSHIP SIMULATION INTO GRADUATE NURSING CURRICULA

Debra McWilliams, PhD, RN, CHSE; Francine Bono-Neri, PhD, RN, PNP

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- As selected participants for the GNSA Digital Innovators Program, our collective goal was to create a project centered on graduate nursing students' engagement in political advocacy.
- The program consisted of cutting-edge strategies and modern methods to educate the future nursing workforce using Apple Technology.
- The deliverable was an eBook that currently provides essential elements necessary to create graduate nurse leaders, empowered and fluent as political advocates.

BACKGROUND

- Historically, leadership and political competence have been marginally addressed in nursing education, with few opportunities for students to meaningfully engage in the creation, application, or practice of these essential skills
- Despite the Institute of Medicine's call for enhanced health policy education, current nursing curricula continue to lack the depth and integration necessary to prepare nurses for leading transformative changes in population health
- Barriers to incorporating health policy content into clinical training programs include limited curricular space, low perceived relevance, faculty knowledge gaps, and resource constraints.
- Digital innovation and simulation-based learning offer promising strategies to overcome these challenges.
- By embedding health policy education into immersive, experiential learning modules, nursing students can be better equipped with the political acumen and leadership skills required to influence health systems and advocate for policy change.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this planned research study is to examine graduate nursing students' political competence and understanding of nurses' role as advocates before and after a Health Policy Simulation experience.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

- **TPACK Model** (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), which incorporates technical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge, will provide the framework for helping to create the digital tools and strategies necessary for student engagement.
- **Kingdon's Policy Streams Model** (1984) will be used as the framework for students to understand the policymaking process. His model will guide nursing students in making their own agendas and construct their policy briefs to present to their targeted audience and identified key stakeholders.
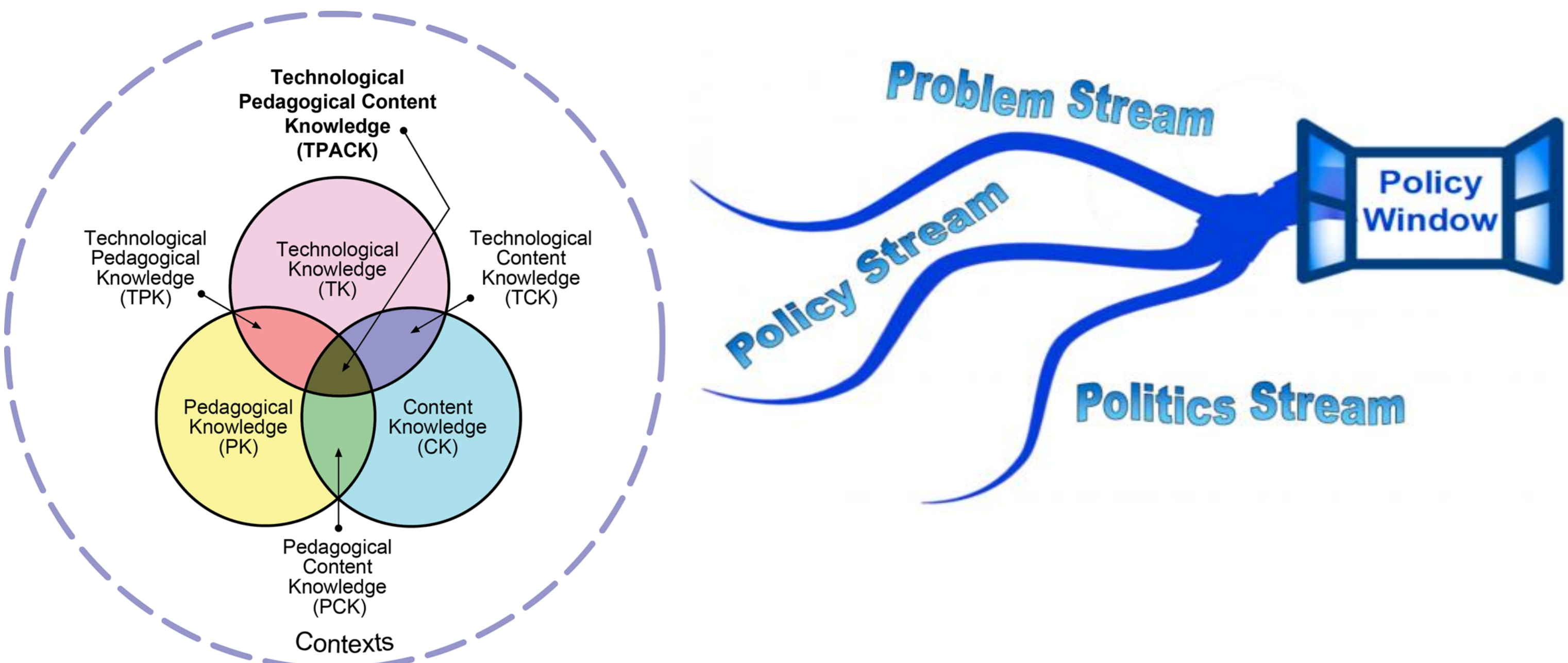
METHODS

- An education-based interventional study was conducted. The sample was 2 cohorts of graduate nursing students attending a local university. Pre- and post-test measures were obtained using a web-based survey before and after the intervention.
- The components of the education-based intervention were an eBook serving as a content-driven tool, completion of a web-based escape room, a prebriefing phase of the simulation experience leading an immersive Health Policy Simulation which consisted of the participants presenting their policy brief and infographic to a mock politician, followed by a debriefing session to discuss the experience and provide feedback as the conclusion.
- The tool to be used for pre-post measures will be a modified version of the Political Astuteness Inventory Tool (Caprara et al., 2009). Descriptive statistics and t-tests will be conducted using SPSS 25 for analysis.

RESULTS

- Total pre-test n = 61 with n = 3 (4.9%) reported policy brief writing knowledge and
- Total post-test n = 61 with n = 49 (80.3%) reported moderate to full confidence on policy brief writing knowledge
- Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to evaluate the impact of the health policy simulation experience on the different variables measured of these participating students. All examined variables, except for 1) degree of confidence to state political opinion openly in hostile settings and 2) promotion of public initiatives to support political programs that are believed to be just, had statistically significant differences noted on post-test at the $p < .05$ level

- Qualitative feedback emphasized heightened political awareness as well as the value of simulation in fostering leadership and advocacy skills:

- *"It made me more vigilant to the laws out there and started to think more about how we can change them to have a better career".*
- *"We need to be more involved, only way to bring about the change we want and need for the betterment of the profession".*
- *"I feel like this Political Entrepreneurship Simulation gives every student hope that they can make a difference in the field of nursing. A lot has changed, and a lot still needs to be changed".*
- *Overall, the responses from the students were positive and they collectively expressed that they should get involved in health policy as leaders and advocates.*

CONCLUSION

- Integrating a simulated lobbying experience into graduate nursing curricula significantly enhances students' understanding of health policy, political processes, and their role as nurse advocates.
- Participants reported increased confidence in communicating with legislators, greater clarity on how policy impacts clinical practice, and improved ability to craft and deliver evidence-based policy briefs.
- The simulation fostered critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world application of leadership and policy competencies.
- These results support the value of experiential learning in bridging the gap between theoretical policy education and practical political engagement, ultimately preparing nurses to lead change at the systems level.