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TITLE Empowerment and Leadership Development in an Online Story-Based Learning Community

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OBJECTIVE The goal was to develop and analysis the impact of a online learning community where hospital-based nurse educators could develop their own nursing leadership practices through storytelling within an environment that included the elements of teaching presence, cognitive presence, and social presence.

METHODOLOGY The population consisted of nurse educators from the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC), the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM), and the College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO), from which a random list of 200 registered nurses that met the criteria of being a nurse educator employed in a hospital with education of nurses being their primary area of practice including British Columbia, Manitoba, and Ontario was drawn. Fifty-one subsequently participated in a 12-week online learning community. Pre and post-test questionnaires consisted of the Conditions of Work Effectiveness Questionnaire- II (CWEQ-II; Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian, & Wilk, 2001b), the Psychological Empowerment Instrument (PEI; Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001), and the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI). Participants were randomly assigned to either the facilitated community (N = 26) or the self-organizing community (N = 25). After participant withdrawal during and after the study, a final sample size of 35 was obtained with 19 in the facilitated community and 16 in the self-organizing community. All nurse

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educators in the final sample were female, their modal age bracket was 45-49 years, the majority reported a bachelor's degree as being their highest level of education (80%), worked in full-time positions (77%), worked in an urban tertiary hospital, and had at least four years of nursing experience (mode = 25-30 years).

KEY FINDINGS

Pre- and post-test internal reliability coefficients for the Leadership Practices Inventory were strong: Model the Way (.75 and .81), Inspire a Shared Vision (.90 and .94), Challenge the Process (.81 and .88), Enable Others to Act (.74 and .74), and Encourage the Heart (.79 and .85). Average scores on all five leadership practices significantly increased from Time 1 to Time 2 for both communities. The most frequently engaged in leadership practices were Enabling and Encouraging, followed by Modeling and Challenging, and then Inspiring. This rank order did not change over time. Nurse educators in the facilitated community did not score significantly higher on their perceived leadership practices compared to the self-organizing community. The author reports that: "In reading the nurse educators' best personal leadership stories, and other leadership stories, it was clear that to varying degrees, nurse educators employed the five exemplary practices of leadership in their everyday work lives. Based on pretest percentile rankings, it was revealed that there was much room for improvement, and after participating in the online learning community, it was found that percentile rankings improved, and there were significant increases in all five leadership practices" (p. 151).

Furthermore, the author indicates that:

The fact that all five leadership practices improved provides supportive evidence that hospital-based nurse educators could develop their own leadership practices in an online learning community. Via direct instruction, the facilitator was able to provide the necessary teaching presence for nurse educators to learn about the five practices of leadership. Nurse educators were able to reflect on their own nursing practice and write their leadership stories. Through cognitive presence, they analyzed their own stories and the stories of others. They interacted with each other on a social level that supported learning, and ultimately felt more empowered. Indirectly, through their stories, they revealed empowerment structures in their workplaces and the contributions that they make in creating an empowering work environment for themselves, their colleagues, and the nurses that they work with on a daily basis (pp. 159-60).