



NLN VISION: TRANSFORMING RESEARCH IN NURSING EDUCATION
A Living Document from the National League for Nursing

NLN Board of Governors
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Purpose

The health of the nation through improved patient care is the ultimate goal of nursing education. Evidence-based nursing education – like evidence-based clinical practice – is essential and the imperative to build a robust community of nursing research scholars is stronger than ever. It is critical to study the nature of our teaching-learning challenges within the context of practice. In response, the NLN has developed new priorities for research in nursing education.

Introduction

The NLN’s 30-year commitment to advancing the science of nursing education has inspired a renewed interest in pedagogical research, giving the science of nursing education increased visibility. We are proud of that legacy. These next steps build on the League’s historic platform and its mission to promote excellence in nursing education to build a strong and diverse workforce to advance the nation’s health.

The new times for nursing and health care engendered by health care reform require partnerships, collaboration, and systems integration. The NLN’s new “Priorities for Research in Nursing Education” call for building linkages between practice and education; advancing the science of nursing education through the development of more rigorous and robust research designs and evaluation protocols; identifying and developing effective emerging technologies to transform pedagogical approaches; and creating leadership opportunities for faculty and nursing education research scholars.

The National League for Nursing is well suited to lead efforts to create linkages between research in nursing education and clinical nursing research based on its stated mission, its long history of leading the national and international nursing community in building the science of nursing education, and the broad base intellectual capital embedded in the NLN’s members and leaders. Over the years, the League has dedicated its strategic initiatives and its resources to advancing the science of nursing education and building a strong community of nurse educator scholars that complements the development and refinement of programs to prepare clinical nurse researchers.

Background

In the early 1980s, the NLN created the Council for Research in Nursing Education and committed funds to support small investigator research projects. In the Position Statement, *The Preparation of Nurse Educators* (NLN, 2002), the NLN was the first national nursing organization to assert that the nurse educator role requires specialized preparation and that nurse educators must be involved in the conduct of pedagogical research and contribute to the ongoing development of the science of nursing education. The NLN called for educators who choose to focus their programs of research on pedagogical issues to be “encouraged, supported, and rewarded for this contribution” (NLN, 2002, p. 3). In 2005, the NLN extended its support for the science of nursing education by declaring that nursing education must be research based and is best taught by individuals prepared for the faculty role who demonstrate competence in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Further evidence of the NLN’s commitment to pedagogical research was the establishment of the NLN Foundation for Nursing Education in 2002. An independent, nonprofit, and tax-exempt organization, the NLN Foundation has dedicated itself to developing robust funding streams to build a pool of future scholars who can establish full programs of research focused on nursing education. Over the past decade, the NLN has committed operational funds to support research in nursing education and joined with the NLN Foundation to fund more than a half million dollars in nursing education research grants.

In 2012, the NLN partnered with Sigma Theta Tau International to host the first national conference on research in nursing education. Scholars from the US and Canada gathered to share robust, multi-method studies in nursing education and to bring recognition and voice to the growing and rigorous body of research in nursing education. And at the 2012 Education Summit, the NLN launched the first national center for the advancement of the science of nursing education in partnership with Chamberlain College of Nursing, a critical step in meeting the NLN strategic goal to advance the science of nursing education.

The global nursing community is now calling for a new approach to nursing education research in support of a transforming health care system. Since 2010, significant national initiatives have placed new emphasis on research in nursing education and the essential link between education and practice. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded Institute of Medicine report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (2011), calls for additional funding to shape improvements to nursing education. These include ascertaining the efficiency and effectiveness of approaches to nursing education, advancing evidence-based teaching, and developing interprofessional education models to improve quality and safety in varied practice settings.

Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard & Day, 2010), issued by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, recommends the development of approaches to teaching and learning that lead to good nursing practice and attainment of sound clinical inquiry skills in nursing students. Furthermore, the study called for all master’s and doctoral nursing programs to include clinical practice competencies as well as teacher education courses, and for schools, federal and state governments, and philanthropies to increase support for faculty to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

The NLN's Response

The NLN's new priorities for research in nursing education are based on consideration of these key emerging challenges and opportunities, and our renewed dedication to creating stronger links between practice and education. The NLN is committed to leading the national and international dialogue about advancing the science of nursing education and promoting educational research while maintaining the focus on patient-centered care and safe nursing practice.

These priorities, which will direct future funding for NLN grants and guide the development of relevant programs of research, call for:

- transforming nursing education research to create greater linkages between education and practice
- advancing the science of nursing education through the development of rigorous and robust research designs and evaluation protocols
- evaluating new curriculum models related to inter-professional education and practice
- studying the use and cost-effectiveness of technologies (e.g., online, simulation, tele-health) to expand capacity in nursing education
- developing leadership programs for research scholars to build educational research capacity
- co-creating a more diverse nursing faculty workforce

Conclusion

The NLN advocates for stronger collaborative partnerships between education and practice to enhance patient outcomes. **The NLN's Priorities for Research in Nursing Education** call for a renewed focus on links between practice and education. We must pursue nursing research in nursing education and in clinical practice. Both are necessary to the creation of a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the nation's health.

Recommendations

For the Nursing Profession

- Transform the cultures of nursing, education, and clinical practice to promote collaborative partnerships; build a robust community of pedagogical and clinical research scholars who share a commitment to advancing health care for the nation.
- Devise national, multi-site pedagogical studies to determine suitable measures for the assessment of learning outcomes, particularly those relevant for a practice discipline.
- Increase the number and quality of master's and doctoral programs dedicated to the development of faculty who are schooled in the science of situated teaching and learning. Increase programs committed to development of research by nursing education scholars.

For the Nursing Education Community

- Facilitate discussions among faculty, graduate students, practice partners, and other stakeholders across the nursing education and health profession communities about co-creating linkages to advance the science of nursing education.
- Partner with practice colleagues to design interprofessional collaborative initiatives to share evidence-based teaching strategies that deliver quality, patient-centered care in a variety of settings.
- Provide professional development opportunities to help faculty embrace the scholarship of teaching and learning and advocate for innovative models of curriculum design.
- Allocate resources (e.g., mentoring programs, funding sources, knowledge and skill development, protected time) to both new and mid-career faculty scholars who want to further their research in nursing education.
- Advocate hiring practices that value diversity of persons and thought to create an inclusive nursing research environment.

For the National League for Nursing

- Lead national and international efforts to seek broad bases of funding that support scholars in the development of sustained programs of pedagogical research.
- Engage with national and international nursing organizations to promote collaborative models of nursing education research that link educational research with clinical practice outcomes.
 - Establish guidelines for faculty and administrators to accept the opportunity and challenge of keeping undergraduate and graduate nursing curricula current and research based.
 - Work with education and corporate partners to create opportunities for faculty scholars to study emerging issues in nursing education and health care delivery that increase the quality and effectiveness of nursing education and practice.
 - Provide opportunities for the development of scholars in research in nursing education through the NLN Chamberlain College of Nursing Center for the Advancement of the Science of Nursing Education.

Continue to call for diversity of thought and persons within the nursing research community to create inclusive learning environments, reduce health disparities, and promote affordable health care access.

References

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