

# Using communicative and creative technologies to weave social justice and change theory into the tapestry of nursing curriculum

June Kaminski, RN MSN PhD(c)

CNIA President-Elect

Nursing Faculty, Kwantlen University College, Surrey, BC

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# Presentation Outline

- Mandate to teach students to be active agents for social justice, societal change, equity, rights
- Theory is not enough to spark activism – need praxis
- ICT provide rich medium to promote praxis (reflection on action) and social action
- Many social action initiatives incorporate ICT to engage, inform, petition participation, lobby, campaign, build coalitions
- ICTs incorporated into 4<sup>th</sup> year nursing course on influencing change to provide preparatory content, enrich learning activities, and assess student learning
- Focus on Nurses as Active Inspirational Change Agents who address critical societal issues

# Role of Technologies in Change

- Media can be used as both a vehicle for change AND for maintaining the status quo
- Mass media is any method of communication that reaches large groups of people quickly and effectively
- TV, radio, print media (magazines, newspapers, journals, pamphlets, flyers, books, letters), the world wide web, email, chat rooms, advertising, marketing, publicity, photography, documentaries, video, theatre, movies, songs, dance, art, storytelling, and so on can all be categorized as mass media
- The central criteria is that any of these mediums can be used to get messages out to thousands, even millions of people.

# Critical Context

- The Code of Ethics that informs nursing in Canada includes a provision related to social justice. “Nurses uphold principles of equity and fairness to assist persons in receiving a share of health services and resources proportionate to their needs and in promoting social justice.” (CNA, *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. 2002, p. 8).
- Canadian nurses are expected to “be aware of broader health concerns such as environmental pollution, violation of human rights, world hunger, homelessness, violence, etc. and are encouraged to the extent possible in their personal circumstances to work individually as citizens or collectively for policies and procedures to bring about social change, keeping in mind the needs of future generations” (CNA, *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*. 2002, p.15).
- The CNA further identified social justice as a priority for nursing practice and education, with a focus on the foundational values of cultural respect, collaboration, equity and capacity building at jurisdictional, national, and international levels (CNA hosts social justice session. Access. August, 2003).

# Role of the Social Determinants of Health

- Provide a context for social change and justice
- These determinants identify income inequality, social inclusion and exclusion, employment and job security, working conditions, contribution of the social economy, early childhood care, education levels, food security and housing as key factors that shape health and well-being in individuals, families, communities and society at large
- Students are taught to regard these determinants as the root of most health inequalities and that it is their role to work actively to reduce the effects of a lack of social determinant maintenance
- Students learn to question how health policy and practice is initiated and to brainstorm and plan ways to influence health reform

# Point to Consider.....

- “What narrative will capture the imaginations, feelings, intellect and will of political decision-makers and the broader public and inspire them to action?” (World Health Organization's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, 2005, p. 44).
- This is a critical point for nursing educators to consider in the context of education students to engage in social justice and societal change



# Linking Theory to Praxis & Engagement

- Mere regurgitation of social justice and health reform theory is not enough to spark activism in students: instead it often becomes mere rhetoric
- To make a real impression, actual praxis is needed. Praxis refers to reflection applied to action, meaningful and intentional activity grounded in theory and knowledge yet expressed through activity and purpose
- Common means used by various groups to promote social justice activism includes the use of the media and digital action alerts as well as lobbying and coalition building but very little is done by nurses





# The Web as Social Justice Medium

- Since the advent of the world wide web, many media initiatives include an on-line component, often offering information about selected social justice issues, action kits, and methods for interested individuals to join the initiative and easily send letters to appropriate politicians and decision-makers, as well as share the issue with others.
- Creative technologies such as Adobe Flash animations, digital video and audio presentations, and web blogs have been developed by some to provide multi-sensory ways to stimulate interest and support in various social justice campaigns.





# Nurses Influencing Change curriculum

- Taught since 2005 to 4<sup>th</sup> Year Nursing Students
- The use of information and communication technologies has become a strong thread woven through out this course, with the premise that the “media” is a powerful force in both preventing and initiating social change
- Students are taught how to apply various change theories within the context of social justice and to organize coalitions, to lobby, and initiate on-line activist campaigns
- Assessment includes a) social change projects, b) group presentations about influencing social change and c) web-based digital media projects to present a selected social issue and apply a known change theory to create a viable action plan to elicit nursing and public support

# Driving Question ....

- The question that continuously guides this course:

“How can communicative and creative technologies be used to stimulate meaningful social justice and change praxis in nursing curriculum?”

- Course Website:

<http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/>



# Weaving Technology into the Curriculum

- Information and communication technologies were woven into every aspect of this course:
- Assigned readings were entirely web-based, capitalizing on the vast array of available materials that address common issues pertinent to nursing and social change/justice
- All class activities incorporated media in some way, to make it crystal clear that the use of technologies is an important foundational tool that nurses can use to support social change and justice
- Assessment methods incorporated the media in various ways



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# Example: Classroom Activity

- **GROUP ACTIVITY:** Form into small groups and choose one of the mass media mediums addressed in the readings. Write up a one page plan to initiate a media campaign to address one of the following issues:
  - \* aboriginal health issues
  - \* crystal meth usage
  - \* the nursing shortage
  - \* the image of nursing
  - \* homelessness
  - \* female genital mutilation
  - \* sexual assault
  - \* fetal alcohol syndrome
  - \* surgical bed waiting lists
  - \* nurse practitioner or registered midwife roles
  - \* primary health care adoption
  - \* emergency room overloads

# Example: Case Study

- Sunny Valley, a mid-sized rural town, has decided to change one of their three existing traditional health clinics to a nurse-run centre. Two Masters prepared Clinical Nurse Specialists and a PhD prepared Director will run the clinic, with the support of five local RNs. Town Council makes a global announcement about their plan, which causes an outcry of protest, distrust and confusion from physicians and other practitioners at the other two clinics, as well as 40 per cent of the town folk. Common concerns focus on doubts about competency, infringement on professional territory, and potential loss of revenue and funding. The Town Council are firm in their conviction that the nurse-run centre will promote client-centered care, and a more holistic approach to health within Sunny Valley, so they respond by planning a campaign to win people's trust and openness to the new centre. Create a visual model and “story” on how Bainbridge's Organizational Change Model can be applied to successfully implement this change. Explain the role of nurses in this scenario.



# Example: Lesson Introduction

- The current situatedness of health care reflects a very interesting pattern – that people in Canada do demand “tools they need to practice responsible, informed self-care” (NDMAC, 2002, p. 10) as well as access flexible, comprehensive health care services from a variety of providers including nurse practitioners, alternative and complementary providers and reliable cutting-edge health information and consultations via in-person, printed, on-line and tele-health mediums. The Canadian population are more than mere stakeholders in health care reform, they are slowly becoming active participants in the petitioning and planning of health care reform. Nurses are in a unique position to facilitate this new development both as agents of change themselves, and as guides/advocates for individuals, groups and communities working for change.

# Example: Inclusion of Media Clips

- The Corporation <http://www.thecorporation.com/>
- Do Gooder TV <http://www.dogooder.tv/>
- Above the Influence <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/>
- World on Fire <http://www.worldonfire.ca/>
- The Nursing Channel <http://www.nursingchannel.ca/>
- Viral Flash Campaigns:

Conflict Diamonds

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/diamonds/d4.html>

The Meatrix <http://www.meatrix.com/>

Share Power

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/business/sharepower/flash.html>

# Example: Digital Media Projects

- Students create some form of mass media to influence change, e.g. Video, audio, website, PPT
- ARCHIVE:  
<http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/mediaarchives.html>
- Environmentally Sensitive Nursing  
<http://www.environmentalnursing.bravehost.com/>
- The Nursing Shortage in Canada (video)  
<http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/spring2006/alicia.html>
- Aboriginal Community Awareness: FASD Interactive Poster  
[http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/fall2006/FASD\\_LH/poster.html](http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/fall2006/FASD_LH/poster.html)
- Stop Violence Against Women Website  
<http://www.freewebs.com/stopviolencenursingproject/index.htm>
- Anti-Smoking Video  
<http://www.nursing-informatics.com/N4111/spring2007/Sunny.html>

## In the works....

- This use of information and communication technologies to both teach and assess change leadership skills and capabilities and cultivate social justice skills is a first step, but there is much room for further development and planning to afford a supportive, pedagogically sound atmosphere for activist digital design and media application within nursing education.
- Further work is planned to involve students in focused social activist work, such as the development of EcoNurse© – a comprehensive web environment intended to help nursing students and practitioners to develop keen meaningful ecological knowledge, skills and voice. Another web initiative called Nurse Activism is also being researched and designed with the participation of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year Nursing students at Kwantlen University College.

# Intended Outcomes

- Societal change and justice are often the result of careful planning and skilled management. Nurses can become visible and efficient agents for planned/managed change, both in healthcare and society at large.
- The Canadian population are more than mere stakeholders in health care reform, they are slowly becoming active participants in the petitioning and planning of societal changes. Nurses are in a unique position to facilitate this new development both as agents of change themselves, and as guides/advocates for individuals, groups and communities working for change and social justice.
- Nurses can be key change agents to spearhead new and innovative projects for the provision of advocacy for various health and social issues, and the people affected by these issues.

# Final thoughts....

- One of the key distinctions of mass media is that it can affect people's perceptions of social norms. The media play a significant role in forming and influencing people's attitudes and behaviour. Media has a central role in mediating information and forming public opinion. The media casts an eye on events that few people directly experience and renders remote happenings observable and meaningful. It is important that nursing education applies the examination and the creative design of media that can influence the health of Canadians, to prepare nursing students to become active change agents and social justice initiators. The application of information and communication technologies provides a viable and meaningful way to achieve this goal. Further work is needed at a national and provincial level to help educators use technologies to support them to weave social justice and change agent abilities and knowledge into Canadian nursing curriculum.