Interprofessional Nursing Teamwork and Collaboration

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Introduction:

Reflection is considered the noblest method of learning according to scholars. In this assignment, I was given a task to write a reflective account of my experience, which I obtained while working as a part of an inter-professional team. It also required me to focus on areas such as the formation of the team, the roles of the team members, and finally, how the team members worked to achieve the desired result while keeping in mind the necessary concepts provided by Gibbs, Tuckman, and Belbin. I was required to give words to my experience, which I witnessed as a part of an inter-professional learning set. It allowed me to observe different stages and the learning processes that a group might go through while working together and how they connect on the same page to achieve a particular task as a team. The learning set comprised five people, where two members were students from mental health nursing, two were from child nursing, and I was representing Adult Nursing. We were given a group assignment where we were supposed to select a topic from the list of topics provided, and we were required to work on it collectively and present it on the assigned date. We also had to discuss and analyze the details of the roles and responsibilities that each one of us had executed while preparing for our group presentation. Research conducted by Embo (2015) found that reflection is a process in which a learner analyses what his or her past experiences are and what had caused these experiences to occur (i.e., how learning took place). He also finds out the links between his ideas and beliefs and the knowledge he had been taught.

Further, according to Biesta (2002), professionals use reflection as an opportunity to review and evaluate their practice. Thus, this essay shall also allow me to discuss and narrate my experiences and how the whole process contributed to enhancing my level of understanding and to performing a personal SWOT analysis of myself. Also, the significant role of teamwork cannot be denied in an organizational setting. It helps those working in teams to develop a coherent culture where they can establish collaborative practices (Hughes and Jones, 2013).

Gibbs's reflective learning cycle is an essential tool for conveying an accurate reflection of one's experiences (Goodman and Clemow, 2011), so I will use the same to comprehend my circumstances in a better way. The most important advantage of using the Gibbs model is that it provides clarity on what the flow of the description shall be. It includes six stages that guide throughout the process, known as description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. Moreover, Tuckman's

theory of group formation (1965) and Belbin's theory of team role shall be consulted and incorporated into the study. In compliance with the rules and regulations provided by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Data Protection Act (1998), and professional code of conduct, the names of the students have been kept confidential, and instead, numbers have been assigned to them (Student 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 is me).

Description:

For group formation, Tuckman (1965) provides a model that includes five stages such as forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. The model suggests that as the members of the group move from one stage to the other, they also develop relationships among themselves and reflect maturity in their teamwork. Further, the model gradually moves from its first stage, where it requires directions, and thus progresses through participation, guidance, completion of the tasks, and finally to the point where it detaches and the members join new teams. On the other hand, Belbin's theory highlights nine categories of team roles, as reflected in the figure.

Source: "Belbin – The Benefits." Leadership Solutions.co.NZ.

Thus, seeing through the lens of these two frameworks available to me, the overall structure of my experience lies within the domain of these group formation stages from the first stage till the end, the way we performed teamwork together, and the roles we assumed while working in a team environment. We all agreed on the nine roles. However, it was not necessary to assume all the roles, and the theory of Belbin also allowed us to consider more than one function as a secondary role in the team.

Forming Stage:

At the beginning of our group formation, a random selection was made by the management by selecting students from different branches of nursing; all were novices and were at the beginning of their learning journey. The purpose of this group assignment was to provide an opportunity so that we, as students, could experience what challenges professionals face in their professional environment and understand that success only lies in teamwork. Researchers such as Spouse et al. (2008) define group work as a process in which individuals are selected to perform interdependent work to perform an integrative action in a given period. My group was formed with other students from the different branches of nursing to follow the same spirit, and as a whole, we formed an inter-professional team. One of the important characteristics of an inter-professional team is the inclusion of individuals who have different backgrounds as they belong to different departments (Hall and Weaver, 2001). Research studies also suggest that interprofessional teams are proven to be more effective in aligning the work of individuals who are working in different departments within the same organization. It is because, while working in inter-professional teams, individuals tend to make

effective working relationships that help them produce better results at work and enhance their level of productivity as well (Reese and Sontag, 2001). Initially, when the group was being formed, I was a bit reluctant as I was going to be the only member who belonged to Adult Nursing, as other members belonged to mental and child nursing; adding to this, there was also anxiety about being uncertain about the other members of the group.

I had so many questions in my mind about them because I did not know anyone. However, I realized one thing beforehand while being a part of Adult Nursing: in this cohort, I have been in interactions with individuals who have remained independent for a long period in their lives, and when they get ill, they become more vulnerable. Thus, being able to support such kinds of people was a big contribution that I might be able to make while working in my branch. Further, I knew that my exposure could add value to the group. Group members tend to be strangers at the start, and there is a high chance that they may not be on the same frequency and are not united in the beginning when the group is formed (Goodman and Clemow, 2011). However, in my group, we all knew that we had a purpose to execute, and unless we cooperated, we would not be able to perform well for the final presentation. For this purpose, excellent communication skills were required. One thing that I observed when we met for the first time was that all the group members were very responsible. They were very clear about the sensitivity of the job and the requirements of the assignment for which we connected in the group. This made it easier for all of us to move ahead toward the preparation and execution of our tasks. Thus, in our first meeting, my group did not take much time to progress toward the next stage.

Storming Stage:

According to Tuckman (1965), while working in a group, various issues may arise at the storming stage. It is because you tend to know a person when you interact with him/her for some time. Thus, issues may arise from the behaviors of the group members and differences in the level of understanding of the group members about the group task. It is essential to bring all the members on the same page so that an optimum level of coherence may be reflected in the outcomes of the group work. The guidance of a leader is required to resolve these issues. In my group, there was also a need for such a leader so that the tensions could be resolved and the difficulties could be removed on time so that we would be able to deliver what this group assignment required from us before the deadline. My group decided that we would conduct a regular meeting, and the venue of the meeting was our school library. The first and foremost agenda of our meeting was to appoint a leader for our group and to develop skills that are appropriate and pivotal to preparing ourselves for performing the group task efficiently and effectively. According to Endacott (2015), leadership and teamwork go side by side. Leadership cannot achieve any superior results unless the entire team follows the vision of the leader and the team works together with the same zeal and zest that the leader has to achieve the goals. Further, leaders are considered to be the most influential factor that can shape the team (Spouse et al., 2008).

For this purpose, Belbin's theory of team role guides the assignment of team roles and contributes to the successful selection of the team leader. We also took help from this theory and executed a group exercise on the Reflective Role Questionnaire (Kember, 2000). It helped us to appoint our team leader. The leader of our group had a perfect record of being outspoken and making organized contributions. It was necessary to choose such a kind of leader because it contributes to energizing and activating the group so that they follow a common goal with agility and efficiency (Fowler, 2016). Thus, by performing the exercise, our group was able to identify the most suitable leader for our group. We chose five categories of team roles out of nine provided by the Belbin model. We concluded that these five roles were sufficient for our group to achieve the desired results. The roles assigned to the group members included: Student 1 was assigned the role of Plant, Student 2 was a coordinator, Student 3 was the shaper, Student 4 was the implementer, and I was a completer-finisher. For me, it was very suitable to assume this role as the completer-finisher is the one who works to supervise the work for any errors and modifies the tasks so that quality could be ensured, as described by Belbin (2004). Further, the perfectionist tendencies and the difficulties that people in this role face while delegating the work, as described by Spouse et al. (2008), resembled my personality to a great extent.

Moreover, after the selection of the team leader, she took responsibility for leading and assigned responsibilities and functions to the group members. Student 2 was asked to compile all the researchers' material. Students 1, 3, and 4 were required to lead the research process, and I was assigned the task of presenting the project on the final day. This brought clarity of mind to the group members about their roles, and all of us began to work as a team. However, one of our group members, Student 4, during our work, went off track and started making excuses for her negligence. She claimed that the level of respect in the group was not on equal footing, and the group members discriminated against her due to her cultural background. This caused momentary conflict within the group. It was a challenging task for the leader as well to sort out her grievances so that the work could be resumed, as conflicts among the group members restricted performance (Weidmann, 2009). The leader of our group asked her to choose a different task from what she was assigned, but she declined. Further, it is affirmed by Kleiner et al. (2014) that conflicts cannot be avoided in a team. To sum up, the other members of the group, along with the team leader, attempted to clarify the misunderstanding in the mind of Student 4 about the mistreatment or discrimination. They also tried to make her realize the fact that teamwork is important and that her participation in the group task was important to get it completed. This approach suggested by the leader helped us to diffuse the situation, and we resumed work. This act of our leader proved the findings of Doody (2012) that a transformational leader motivates the members of a team. Also, conflict resolution is important to boost cooperation among the group members. Finally, after sorting things out, we embarked on our journey toward the norming stage.

Norming Stage:

So far, we were accustomed to each other's behaviors. We also gained an understanding of each other's strengths and weaknesses. This helped us in getting the best output for our final project. The leader of our team continued to guide and motivate us so that we could remain in a position to perform our tasks enthusiastically without being demotivated. We collaborated and helped each other so that we could complete our tasks on time and remain on schedule. Thus, every member of the team completed the delegated tasks, and we were ready for our presentation.

Performing Stage:

This stage was about actual performance. So, all of us arrived well ahead of time to prepare for the presentation. This was also important because our turn was to present in the beginning, so it was important to remain conscious until execution. Finally, we presented, and it went well. After this, we had a question-and-answer session where all of us contributed.

Adjourning Stage:

This stage was a bit emotional for all of us as, during our project, we got a sense of attachment toward each other. However, we aimed to utilize it productively and decided to conduct a peer review so that we could gauge the overall performance of our team during this tenure. While conducting the review, we identified that the leader of our team had shown fantastic communication and conflict-resolution skills. She had been able to delegate the tasks appropriately and executed all the duties with due ownership. After this, we greeted each other and went our separate ways.

Feelings:

During the whole process, I felt that it was a cumbersome process because one gets reasonable autonomy while working alone as compared to working in groups. In a group setting, each member has his/her point of view, and reaching a point of consensus is sometimes very stressful and takes time. Further, I was a bit uncomfortable realizing the fact that I was the only one who belonged to Adult Nursing and the other members were two from the same department, so I had an apprehension that they would form a duo and I would be left alone in the group. However, all my confusion was removed when we appointed the leader of our team. She understood the exposure I could bring to the group and the expertise I had. Thus, I felt respected. I also felt overwhelmed by the fact that my team chose me for the role of completer-finisher and the final presentation as well. They worked hard and contributed to the final presentation.

Evaluation:

The team faced challenges due to multiple factors. Firstly, the diversity in the group caused confusion and misunderstandings among the group members. Secondly, the lack of communication also hampered the adequate level of understanding among the group members. The main reason behind these challenges lies in the delay in the selection of the team leader, as it can be observed that the team leader was successful in resolving conflicts and delegating roles. Delegation by the team leader is beneficial for the completion of the tasks and for maintaining harmony in the group (Curtis et al., 2016). Further, a leader who is efficient in delegating a task and who seeks to promote collaborative practices is a good leader (Choy et al., 2016). Further, one of the qualities that a good leader possesses is that he can be easily approached in case of any conflict (Bolman, 2017).

The misunderstandings that our group faced initially might have been avoided if we had selected our leader earlier, but we took time to do so. We followed a proper procedure that took time. If we had been able to appoint the leader earlier, the situation in which a student felt discriminated against might not have happened, and we could have saved time. Moreover, the leader demonstrated excellent leadership skills in the way she sorted out the conflict, delegated roles, and controlled the lack of communication among the group members. The leader of our team also affirmed the findings of Garland (2016), who found that a good leader is efficient in the delegation of tasks, easy to approach, and promotes collaborative practices. We took help from Tuckman and Belbin's theories, which helped our group to maximize the effectiveness of our team roles and effective working. To sum up, the experience was overall good; we learned to cooperate and collaborate with each other in unity. Although each one of us possessed entirely different traits, we united and did not compromise on the quality of our work.

Analysis:

After going through the whole scenario at this point, I believe that our team spent more time in the storming stage. Although we were new to our team and we needed time to understand each other because we met for the first time due to this assignment and there were individual differences, we could have benefited from the leader of our group because she was competent enough to save our time on these issues. Research studies suggest that it is a transformational leader who motivates a team adequately to enhance the morale of the team players (Mencl et al., 2016). Doody (2012) also found that the transformational leader inspires the group members, and as a result, their performance is enhanced. Every member of the team worked hard to produce the best result in the final presentation. We even helped each other so that we could meet the deadline and not fall behind schedule. I believe that my contribution to the group was also worthy in the sense that firstly, I supported the members of my team to remain on time while completing their tasks, and secondly, I supervised their tasks as well. The reason behind this was that there wouldn't be any irrelevant things left in the tasks, which might cause a problem at the time of the final presentation. I admit the fact

that being a perfectionist, I sometimes become easily irritable, but I learned to remain patient throughout the process as I observed how things work in a group setting. I truly believe that this is going to help me in my professional endeavor as well.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, when working in a group, teamwork is indispensable for achieving the desired results, especially in healthcare settings. It enhances the performance of the team (Valentine, 2015). In the case of our group, we worked with cooperation and collaboration despite all the challenges and hurdles we came across. The role of our leader cannot be denied in this regard. Although there were conflicts in the group, the leader was able to resolve them effectively. The group leader encouraged all the group members and assisted on an individual basis in resolving all the misunderstandings and conflicts. She helped us reduce the communication gap, which was the reason for misunderstandings at the beginning of the group formation. This caused a huge difference and resulted in the excellent presentation of our project. Finally, everyone contributed to the final success of this project. Due to the attitude of our team leader, we were in a position to utilize our potential in the best possible way and to overcome the barriers that came afterward. The success of our presentation was the success of the leader, as it proved that she was able to delegate the roles appropriately so that everyone was able to work efficiently and collaboratively. It also broadened my thinking about how the best outcomes could be achieved. I also gained insight into the issues that might arise in a professional environment of a similar kind and what sort of skill set is required to deal with them in the future.

Action Plan:

It is imperative to understand that inter-professional teamwork and effective communication are crucial, along with efficiency and patient safety, which are emphasized hugely in healthcare practice. Therefore, in my future practice, I will be focusing on these areas as well as another important thing, which is patience when dealing with people and not making prior conclusions. I shall keep on working in such inter-professional teams to broaden my horizon and level of exposure along with my reflective practice so that I can analyze the situation and draw key points to keep under consideration that would require my immediate attention.

Conclusion

To sum up, the reflection of the whole experience while keeping in view the dynamics of the Gibbs Model, Tuckman and Belbin Theory provided an insightful understanding and knowledge about the learnings and the inferences, which are indeed very useful. Gibbs’s model provides a framework and a basis to narrate and analyse an individual’s experience side by side. It also provides an active understanding of all the dynamics of a whole experience an individual had gone through and an

action plan to follow. Further, theories such as Tuckman's talk about the stages of group formation and systematically lead the narrator of the experience to put the pieces of his/her experiences in the right places. Finally, to perform the tasks within the group dynamics and to remain organized throughout the tenure until the group is adjourned, Belbin's theory provides a list of team roles that are assigned to each group member according to the characteristics of the roles similar to that individual. This leads to the smooth functioning of the group. This essay adopted the same strategy to narrate the concept of interprofessional collaboration and completed the tasks.

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