

Personal Leadership Skills and Development

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Introduction

Nurse Managers have a great responsibility to ensure occupational health and safety as well as patient satisfaction in health service delivery. All nurses have to cultivate the element of “The leader within” that helps them optimize their leadership skills, encourages personal and professional responsibility and enables them to work professionally in their careers. Nurse Manager Competencies, as described by the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE), are essential in guiding nurse leaders to be efficient, effective, and better performers. This model set by AONE is very elaborate since it captures most areas of leadership, including professionalism, knowledge management, communication, business skills, and management.

Truthfulness

Truth encompasses the value of integrity in leadership practice; it entails standing for the right thing despite any situations that might hinder you from doing so. Every healthy being has a conscience that makes them able to differentiate right from wrong; hence, the development of integrity enables the building of trust. Integrity is made up of different elements, such as staying true to one’s commitments, honesty, selflessness, consistency, respect for all, and morality.

Although people might judge a manager according to their understanding of integrity, managers need to stand by the organizational values and goals to ensure that they are relevant to the roles the organization has given them. When establishing values, principles, and policies, managers also need to live by them and be an example to those they are leading. Lack of integrity will leave people living in falsehoods that would later cause management challenges. Simons et al. (2016) explain that role modelling is one of the greatest tools that could be used to develop culture, hence the need for managers with integrity to work towards it.

Managers have a great role in shaping the ethical values as well as the culture of an organization. We are in a generation where anything is litigated; hence, managers need to avoid instances where personal and organizational liability could arise. Integrity needs to be integrated into the day-to-day activities of an organization to develop a good organizational culture and prevent ethical failures. Although not managers, individual nurses are also leaders in themselves and future managers; hence, they need to nurture a character of integrity that would enable them to obtain confidence from their colleagues, the organization, and the clients. In building beneficial relationships both within and outside the organizations, behavioural integrity is one of the greatest pillars (Simons et al., 2016).

Appreciation Of Ambiguity

It is common for humans to want to be in control of their environment, hence the tendency to resist ambiguity or uncertainty. It is for this that we come up with structures and systems, such as laws and procedures, that make us feel in control. Ambiguity may be a cause of confusion and chaos in the working environment. However, Nurse Managers and Leaders (NML) need to appreciate this state and work towards lessening them. NML needs to strive to be productive and learn from any state of ambiguity. This transformation will be established since normal patterns and procedures can be broken and shifted into a new approach to doing things.

Ambiguity should be embraced because, for as long as we live, things will always remain uncertain. This should be the reason why ambiguity is regarded as a home of innovation and creativity that caters to the unexpected. Ambiguity has been the reason why leaders become miserable trying to find solutions that may be dynamic in nature; however, sometimes leaders need to move with the current since the outcomes could be better than the set solutions.

In embracing ambiguity, NMLs need to understand that they can learn from different people and organizations. However, they must understand their organizational culture in order to make effective decisions. All decisions made should take ambiguity into account since we work in a state of many possibilities; hence, understanding them would make better choices. There should be freedom in the workplace where NMLs are free to take suggestions and solutions from their colleagues and juniors. NMLs should never be afraid of seeking advice or feel afraid of juniors who look smarter than they do since, through collaboration, they improve productivity (Nelson, 2015).

Maintaining A Global Perspective

Health and nursing, in particular, is a wide field, hence the need for NMLs to maintain a big picture in handling certain matters. As a people, we shall never be the same. We will always have differences. Therefore, as a leader, you will have to lead people from diverse opinions, beliefs, cultures, genders, and a variety of different backgrounds. Productivity will be achieved when diversity is maintained since creativity and new ideas will be injected into a situation. In their work, NMLs come across diversity, hence the need to embrace it to promote organizational development. Synergy can only be achieved when there is an interaction between two or more things of diverse nature.

In bringing all the diversities together and maintaining the connectedness, a state of wholeness can be achieved. As a leader, wholeness is essential because it means that things are working in a collaborative manner to create a system. Approval of diversity in an organization should not entail tolerance but rather the inclusion of different backgrounds and perspectives. Encouraging diversity will enable people to establish meaningful relationships that will help in growing an organization.

Learning And Development

In my view, learning and development is one of my best leadership practices, and it would turn an individual into an effective leader and performer. Learning and development are essential to maintaining the sustainability and vigour of an organization. The significance of learning and development is that it helps improve an employee's skills, increases productivity and effectiveness, encourages motivation and satisfaction among employees, enhances employee retention and informs workers on the new developments in the profession. Learning is not exempt for leaders in an organization; leaders and managers need to be updated about their organizations and how to improve them. This can be achieved when they learn and put new skills into practice.

One always has the opportunity to learn from oneself in an approach described as reflective learning. Reflective learning is a significant component of effective nursing leadership since it encourages professional, personal, and organizational growth. Reflection incites learning since it encourages one to see things from a different perspective rather than one that is considered normal. Reflective learning and practice are vital for the development of new skills, improving self-awareness, enhancing decision-making, and generally making a positive difference in one's environment (Knott & Scragg, 2016).

Good nurse leaders always take the front line when the organization is offering learning opportunities. However, other learning opportunities for nurse leaders may include learning from their colleagues, web-based training, and daily procedures. Discovering one's potential as well as that of others is essential in establishing ways of improving an organization. Porter-O'Grady & Malloch (2016) have elaborately discussed the concept of "continuously becoming" through engaging others and self-development. This concept can be achieved by the leader through discovering one self's potential and that of others while tapping into them.

Informed Decision-Making

Leaders are in a position of authority; hence, they will always find themselves in a situation where solutions are needed and decisions have to be made. Great leaders should then know how to make the right decisions that have a positive impact on striking a balance between emotions and reason. Making quality decisions is sometimes a hard task due to the many ethical dilemmas in the health profession involving the profession or nurse-patient relationships. Decisiveness is an important characteristic of leadership; hence, there is a need for critical thinking that results in the best ideas. Ethical decision-making is an important element not only for nurse leaders but also for individual nurses in carrying out their mandate (Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, 2016).

In making decisions, leaders need to understand that the decisions they make could affect a larger population, hence the need for caution, for instance, in the case of NMLs. Decisions can be made in different ways; for instance, a command might be given in emergencies where consultation is not

needed. In other circumstances, collaborative decision-making is vital, and opinions and feedback from others are essential in coming up with effective decisions. Other situations have elicited a consensus approach where the majority have the day in decision-making.

Decision-making is a huge task for NMLs since their decisions affect a huge population, including supplies, employees, and patients. In such a case, making a wrong decision would result in huge conflicts that would be tough to solve. Nurses work under an evidence-based mechanism; hence, there is a need to make informed decisions when dealing with the health of patients. NMLs should understand that the effectiveness of their leadership role is measured by the effectiveness of the decisions they make in an organization.

Coping With Change

Health is a very dynamic field with elements such as treatment, diagnosis, and technology constantly changing. As Porter-O'Grady & Malloch (2016) illustrates, at some point in their profession, nurses will face change, for instance, in patient care, policies and organizational change. To empower the health system, NMLs need to embrace change and consider new developments that encourage organizational development and professional and service delivery improvements. Having change management skills and understanding the dynamics of change is vital for leaders to implement any change effectively.

In this current age, technology is taking centre stage in every aspect of life, including health. Daily processes in healthcare such as diagnosis, information management, treatment procedures clinical decision making are being complemented with technologies, it is appropriate for NMLs to ignite change in their organizations by ensuring that they hold on to the right technologies that improve on their effectiveness and efficiency. According to Goetsch & Davis (2014), technology can help facilitate change; however, NMLs need to take a step further and convince employees to embrace it as well as empower them on how to use it.

When the nurse leaders have the appropriate knowledge about new programs, e.g. technology, then they will have the courage and understanding to support their juniors, who are always on the lookout for clarity and accountability. Change can, at times, be seen as demoralizing or negative, hence the vital role of leaders in smoothening the transition to a level of acceptance. Nurse managers always need to be in a constant audit of change programs to assess their effectiveness since when they do not fulfil organizational expectations, they leave employees in a state of chaos (Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, 2016).

Conflict Management

Conflict management is one of my top leadership best practices that I believe would make a leader effective in his role. In an organization such as a hospital, conflicts will always be there since people

constantly have differences. Different conflicts can arise in the nursing environment, such as bullying, interdisciplinary conflicts, and non-adherence to procedures. Conflicts can be distinguished as either nurse-client conflict, workplace conflict or conflict between colleagues. It is, therefore, inevitable for leaders to come in and ensure an enabling environment where employees would work together for the common good.

Conflicts can arise in different ways, for instance, miscommunication, differences in values and principles, misinformation, poor attitude, and jealousy. Great leaders do not run away from conflicts but rather resolve them to ensure a safe, acceptable working environment. Unresolved conflicts encourage feelings of hostility and resentment, which is a situation where an organization will stagnate in a particular area. It is vital for leaders to understand conflict situations and address them before they turn into violent conditions (Saeed et al., 2014).

Saeed et al. (2014) elaborate on the different ways that a leader can solve conflicts in the workplace, for instance, by encouraging collaboration, improving communication skills, setting goals for each worker and encouraging employees to respect and set boundaries amongst themselves. A career in health is grounded in the collaboration of different health professionals and clients; hence, nurse leaders are essential in ensuring that collaborative relationships are built to take the profession forward.

Management And Commitment

When entering the field of health, one always sees a lifetime opportunity that requires proper management and commitment to one's goals. As a leader or manager, you are entrusted with various resources that need to be properly managed to ensure effectiveness and efficiency. Organizational and professional commitments are vital for a leader to maintain success in his mandate. Chen et al. (2015) write on the importance of non-monetary elements in achieving high performance in an organization. Organizational commitment is one of the elements that could ensure that NMLs take the organization in the right direction. Committing to oneself is also vital since it allows the leader to find ways to help them renew their psychological and physical components.

Conclusion

Although NMLs are essential within the nursing profession, it is proper that individual nurses take responsibility and protect the profession from being leaders in themselves. Nonetheless, leaders are vital in leading the organization on the right track. The leadership best practices outlined here may not be comprehensive; hence, there is a need for nurse leaders to research more and search themselves to find out the areas of leadership that they must build on.

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