

# Leadership styles in professional nursing



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The health sector's success relies mainly on the leadership of the nurses in command; this may be a nurse manager who is in control of a unit or a nurse executive who controls numerous units. To be able to successfully lead the others the nurses need to have the necessary leadership skills that will be employed to solve all the challenges (Mahoney, 2001). The effective leadership skills will be very useful in the decision making process in the health sector.

The senior nurse therefore has the control over all the activities involved which means that he/she must do it diligently and professionally at all times. They need to be visionary and have appropriate strategies to success; in addition they should be dynamic, motivated, and have the desire to achieve greater heights (Mahoney, 2001). This paper analyses leadership styles in professional nursing and how they can be applied to make the health sector effective and efficient. It reviews professional nursing literature that identifies the major leadership skills and gives a clinical application example.

### Review of the Professional Nursing Literature

In leadership, the leader must aim at transformation where the nurses are motivated to transform the industry through proper morals and hard work. There are various leadership styles that can be applied by leader nurses; these include democratic or autocratic leadership. In this regard the nurses who lead can apply such styles depending on the situation and experience of the nurses. According to Cook (2001) in the article " The renaissance of clinical leadership" there are various factors that influence the style of leadership to be applied. They include, the external environment; the

experience of the nurse involved the internal environment, and the understanding. He identifies four styles that nurses can use in their leadership and make it effective. The styles are connected to nursing care approaches and include; transactional, transformational, connective and renaissance.

In transformational leadership the leaders and subordinates are able to lift each other in their work to higher heights. This is mainly achieved through motivation and morality where they are both involved in whatever happens to one another (Cook, 2001). This is more like the democratic leadership where leaders seek the opinion of the subordinate nurses in the decisions they make. The nurses are able to carry out all their duties independently, without interference and to their understanding. They are however free to ask for assistance from others either the leaders or the colleagues in case they need any assistance. This means that the nurses are able to work efficiently and behave well due to the motivation, inspiration, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation (Cook, 2001).

Transactional leadership on the other hand pursues an autocratic leadership style where the nurses are under obligation to perform in view of the fact that they are paid to do so. The subordinates must take strict orders from the leaders; which they must obey without questions or comments. The leaders are able to further their own agendas, goals and whatever they see as effective. They do not take in to considerations the view of the subordinates viewing them as just workers to follow the orders given. The leaders supervise the subordinates very closely and are mainly on duty to

ensure that every nurse arrived to their duty and has performed all the duties as per the instructions.

Thyer (2003) in the article “ Dare to be different: transformational leadership may hold the key to reducing the nursing shortage” gives an account on the contribution of transformational leadership on the issue of nurse shortages that have been experience. On their part, health care has in many occasions been implemented under transactional leadership that has made nurses to quit and leave the industry (Thyer, 2003). This leaves a shortage in the profession as more continue to leave either for retirement or other well led careers. The nurses blame the system in the workplace which they say is dictatorial and does not bring fulfillment to their profession.

Transformational leadership on the other hand when applied will bring motivation and morality in the sector and thus retains more nurses and attracts more others. The nurses become visionary, creative, independent, and engaged in the making of decisions both at the in-patient and out-patient level and this brings fulfillment and individual association with their work. They are able to attach themselves to their work and make it more enjoyable through contributing to the decisions made. The transformational leadership also allows equality in terms of gender, race, and age; what's more is that the nurses are able to contribute to the communication strategies that are needed in the health sector (Thyer, 2003).

Transactional on the other hand will erode the spirit of team work, communication and togetherness in the sector. In view of these facts, transformational leadership becomes an inspirational mode to attract better

terms of reference in the job market and create a notion that inspires even scholars to join in.

Sellgren et al. (2006) in the article “ Leadership Styles in Nursing Management: Preferred and Perceived” aimed to explore the leadership involved in nursing in regard to what managers and their subordinates view as important. It also aimed at exploring the opinions of the subordinates on their superiors’ performance in the work place.

The study was based on the leaders’ styles and their fundamental roles they have to play in their workplace and the view the subordinates have of those roles (Sellgren, et al. 2006). It is also based on the way the subordinates accept and follow whatever the leaders say and the motivation they get from the leaders; and the way they follow the goals and objectives of the manager for the purpose of quality.

#### Application of Clinical Example

When leaders apply the styles they are positive that they will achieve their objectives and whichever style they apply they are guided by the experience and situation. When leading nurses who are managing experience nurses they tend to apply transformational leadership since they know the nurses know their work and don’t need much supervision. In contrast when leading new registered nurses they may apply transactional leadership which will ensure they are supervised appropriately before they are acquitted with their duties (Mahoney, 2001). In situations where the leading nurses want to make decisions such as purchasing equipment then the transformational leader

will seek for the opinion of the subordinates who will be able to give whatever they need to use and find comfortable and appropriate.

The major need for effective and efficient leadership is the success of the health system which requires that the leaders are devoted, strategic, and charismatic (Cook, 2001). In every decision they make they have to ensure that they are not derailed from achieving the final objective.

### Conclusion

Leaders have the opportunity to apply any style they deem fit in achieving their goals and objectives. In addition they have the chance to apply one or both styles or change the style if they see one is not effective. No matter the style they apply or management decisions they make they must be able to ensure growth and sustainability in the health sector, where patients must be positive about everything happening in the sector. Job satisfaction for the subordinates' nurses and the entire society of nurses also depends on the leadership style therefore the leaders should evaluate the style they will apply critically before implementation.