

A philosophy of leadership

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According to Welford (2002), leadership is identified as a characteristic of a person in a certain situation. A leadership philosophy is "a theory or attitude held by a person or organization that acts as a guiding principle for behavior" (Mertz, 2014).

Influenced by the theory of transformational leadership, which is known for its positive impact on work performance and nurse satisfaction (Krepia, Katsaragakis, Kaitelidou, & Prezerakos, 2018) traits, values and beliefs are touched on through my experiences as a nursing student.

With this in mind, a philosophy of leadership should be created by all nurses as they undertake leadership roles throughout their careers as instructors, experts and educationalists. The intention of this paper is to expand on the leadership qualities I possess, how they relate to my role as a nursing student and communicate my philosophy of leadership.

Leadership Theory

The transformational leadership theory is a style of leadership that motivates employees to make independent decisions and advances in their field of work (Nielsen & Munir, 2009). This theory seeks to fulfill the needs of the follower by involving the whole person and their thoughts, leading to a mutual relationship with the leader (Welford, 2002).

Based on the trust and respect employees feel about their leader, they are empowered to do more than expected of them (Krepia et al., 2018).

Transformational leaders are known to have a vision for improvement, seeking change while being challenged by their followers (Krepia et al., 2018).

These leaders are considered quiet leaders, as they lead by example, influencing their followers' self-efficacy and independence (Nielsen ; Munir, 2009). Their style tends to use rapport and empathy while possessing their confidence and courage to make changes that are needed. (Spahr, 2014).

Based on an article by Welford (2002), the transformational theory is one of the most favourable theories for nursing in the clinical setting because it is the most appropriate theory for empowering nurses. The empowerment of nurses is essential for delivering high quality patient care and making informed choices on the quality of the care provided (Goedhart, Van Oostveen ; Vermeulen, 2017).

Transformational leaders know that nurses like to personally exert influence within their work and of these nurses who are able to apply their skills at work, assess their level of empowerment higher than others (Kuokkanen, Leino-Kilpi, Numminen, Isoaho, Flinkman ; Meretoja, 2016).

Leaders who display transformational leadership can also influence followers to go beyond their self-interests for the overall benefit of the group (Effelsberg, Solga ; Gurt, 2014). Being able to understand the relationship between the transformational theory and empowerment advances the thought of why nursing students are drawn to leaders who follow this theory (Goedhart et. Al, 2017).

The transformational theory was chosen because it inspires followers to achieve remarkable results while giving them autonomy in their work and the authority to make decisions (Spahr, 2014). From experience, nursing students tend to draw more towards leaders that lead by example,
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empowering them to reach success, without tearing them down for their lack of familiarity in situations.

Transformational leadership is an advantage in collaborative practice because these types of leaders are excellent at communicating new ideas (Spahr, 2014). Due to their high emotional intelligence and integrity, they can empathize with others, establishing a mutual trust relationship with their followers (Spahr, 2014).

With these leadership traits, nurses tend to have an increased willingness to rely on the leader and will share sensitive information as needed (Masood ; Afsar, 2017). Also, using these traits to empower nurses allows them to foster new innovative work behaviour which can lead nurses to share their knowledge about best practices and mistakes with co-workers and nursing students (Masood ; Afsar, 2017).

Having the ability to enhance followers behaviors, and being able to empower them to do more than expected, shows the success in transformational leadership (Effelsberg et al, 2014).

Traits of Nursing Leadership

As a nursing student, leadership may seem unimaginable due to the lack of knowledge we seem to perceive. However, with every experience, students are becoming more equipped with the essential foundation skills to behave as leaders (Zilembo ; Monterosso, 2008). As future leaders, we strive for excellence. Leaders shape their environment for success by attempting to improve others' lives, by motivating, persevering and sharing the path to self-discovery (Ward, 2002).

Most leaders have visions to invent the future and nursing leaders vision for the future of nursing practice (Ward, 2002). In order to reach these visions, leaders need to have traits which foster development to encourage nurses to succeed (Anonson, Walker, Arries, Maposa, Telford ; Berry, 2013). As a student, the traits of an effective leader I currently obtain include those of integrity, collaboration, and communication. As for further development, I hope to continue to grow in change and critical-thinking.

Integrity in nursing is all about being morally accountable for your own judgements and actions (Lasala, 2009). As a nursing student, I demonstrate this by taking accountability for my actions and choices, while being unbiased with the decisions I make. In addition to this, I demonstrate collaboration as a member of the healthcare team.

Being able to communicate with different disciplines in the hospital allows me to be an active participant in the healthcare team. According to the Canadian Nurses Association (2010), collaboration is when multiple health workers provide wide-ranging services by working with patients, their families, caregivers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care. Although I practice this on a smaller scale, I use active listening and understanding to ensure decisions are made with everyone's opinions in mind, adapting needs to try to accommodate all.

In addition to the traits I possess, change and critical thinking are those I want to continue to develop. Being able to adjust to change is something I need to work on deeper in the future. We learn in school that the nursing profession is always changing. Although this is a benefit for our patients, it can be

difficult to adjust to change when it has not been experienced for some time. However, being able to adapt to these changes and think on the spot further develops our critical thinking, a trait to which I hope to further develop, and one day identify with.

The values I possess commend my traits to my overall belief of a leader. I value trust, self-respect and loyalty. Trust is a mutual relationship that needs to occur between a leader and the followers in order for the follower to rely on and share information (Spahr, 2014; Masood ; Afsar, 2017). This mutual relationship cannot be obtained without trust from all parties. Establishing this trust can begin to foster a community of loyalty. As a nurse, we are expected to be loyal to the profession the employers and patients as well as our own values (Cleary, Lees ; Sayers, 2018). This loyalty and trust ensure that nurses are supported.

Philosophy of Leadership

I believe that leadership is a privilege that carries the responsibility to inspire others. Being able to make and maintain loyalty, integrity and collaboration fosters a trusting relationship. Trust is the foundation of a healthy workplace and positive patient outcomes. I am always fair in the principles I use to guide my decisions, being able to focus on the positives, even in difficult scenarios.

Positive thoughts change the outlook towards a difficult situation to allow you to progress. I will motivate those who doubt themselves, by using words of recognition and encouragement. Recognition allows others to find their motivation and build personal development. I will listen with both my

eyes and my ears – supporting my followers through their challenges and experiences.

I expect to believe in myself and others in challenging situations. I will aim to inspire by being the best example every day, sharing the consequences of poor choices and the rewards of good ones.

Conclusion

Leadership traits and values including integrity, collaboration, communication, loyalty and trust, self-respect and recognition influence me in my role as a leader in the nursing profession.

These qualities imitate transformational leadership which has demonstrated high levels of success for leaders in the nursing profession. Overall, these characteristics help determine my philosophy of leadership to influence my role as a leader.