Introduction

- Advanced practice nurses (APRN) are expected to assume complex leadership roles to initiate and guide changes.
- Building leadership skills and role developments are part of the experiential learning processes for graduate students.
- Effective observation and critical reflection are important skills for students to build professional role formation and development.

Purpose

- A design-based learning activity was used to help graduate students engage in effective observation and critical reflection on leadership skill and role development.
- This presentation summarized students’ reflective discussions of which graduate students identified top leadership skills and challenges faced by their APRN mentors in current complex health systems.

Method

- Forty nursing graduate students completed reflective summaries in a graduate course of health system management.
- Students were guided to explore dialogues with their mentors about (1) What is the most challenging thing in their professional work? (2) What are the three important leadership skills they think are essential for health care practice and management?
- The reflective summaries were analyzed by the content analysis method.

Results

- Forty APRN mentors were identified:
  - 12 directors/nurse managers/assistant nurse managers
  - 5 clinical nurse educators
  - 18 clinical nurse specialists
  - 2 nurse practitioners
  - 1 case manager
  - 1 certified nurse midwife
  - 1 quality improvement officer

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Model of Observational Learning and Critical Reflection (developed by F. Chou, 2018)

Example Student Reflections

- Many different variations on the role of advanced practice nurses.
- There is always more to learn, no matter how far into your career.
- This interaction showed me how useful these skills are when trying to manage and facilitate a large group of individuals.
- It takes a lot of work and practice, and I have a lot of respect for people who are able to do this successfully.
- Nursing is not all about clinical skill, research, medicine ...even if you excel at those, your impact is limited without good interpersonal relationships.
- Being aware your strengths and weaknesses is crucial. Being able to admit and take responsibility for making an error or recognizing areas for growth is the only way to continue to grow.
- It is also crucial to be honest and humble to make a mistake, especially in a line of work where people’s safety and lives are at stake.
- Nursing is a constant exchange between not only our patients but our peers as well. Additionally, leadership skills are hard to come by and to be honest being a manager does not sound fun.
- I learn a significant amount from my mentor every day through her eloquent role modeling but most of all I learn that we must utilize and respect our team members including staff to get the job done.
- The most salient take-home points from my discussion with my mentor was really focusing on accountability and openness.
- Change does not happen overnight, members of committees are constantly pushing out ideas and reforms to help advocate for a better healthcare system.
- Social interaction will help us to become better nurses and prepare us for roles in future settings.
- Self-reflection and encouragement is so important in any job position.

Major Challenges Faced by APRN

- Managing different priorities
- Lack of adequate resource and support Unclear roles and functions
- Making a culture change
- Motivate people who are resistant to change
- Heavy workload
- Managing conflicted values and making right decisions
- Not having enough time to get everything done
- Getting people work together

Top common leadership skills

60 different leadership skill descriptors were identified:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Organizational skills
- Active listening
- Integrity
- Compassion

Recommendations

- In addition to the didactic learning provided in the classroom setting, having students to engage effective observation and dialogue with their prospective mentors in the clinical setting can enhance their affective domain of learning.
- This learning activity provides opportunities for students to be reflective and self-aware about the actual challenges and essential leadership skills that they need to apply on a daily basis when they become an independent APRN in the future.
- More learning programs and activities can be further explored to foster the mentorship and role modeling process and develop the complex roles and functions of advanced practice nurses.

References


Contact
fchou@sfsu.edu