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# Need of Leadership Development for My Career

## Leadership Concept

Leadership has been an ever-changing notion for me. When I was younger, I've always thought that being a leader was simply obtaining power over another individual but as I got older, I came to the realization that a true leader is someone who inspires others, helps them to achieve their full potential, sets realistic goals and achieves them, promotes values and visions, and someone who is able to see and identify when a change is needed. The idea here is to see the bigger picture that there is more to being a leader than just looking out for your team and being there with them when they need someone to talk to about their concerns. As per CNO Professional Standard, "leadership requires self-knowledge, respect, trust, integrity, shared vision, learning, participation, good communication techniques and the ability to be a change facilitator". In this paper, I will be discussing leadership qualities, behaviors, and the styles which are predominantly autocratic, democratic and transformational along with how this clinical experience influenced my growth and development as a nursing student.

From a young age, children learn from the individuals that surround them in their life. In educational institutions, teachers model leadership inside and outside of the classroom and can greatly influence students to become leaders in the future. Moreover, a time in clinical that made me realize what leadership truly entails was when I met my clinical supervisor this semester. Looking back, we were advised on our first day of clinical to bring all the documents that the facility needs from us but unfortunately, two people in our group forgot to bring their papers. Although, I was expecting my clinical supervisor to get mad at them for being irresponsible, I was surprised when she remained calm and said, "I will try my best to look for printers in the facility so I could print the forms for you but remember that your papers that you forgot today are as important as documenting or even giving your patients medications. This is because in nursing, we have to be ready and cautious all the time. In one small mistake, we have the ability to ruin everything in that one moment". It was in that very statement that it hit me on the impact that our actions have on other people's lives in nursing. Since then, I have come to realize that being proactive is vital as it helps us to be more prepared for unexpected situations. For instance, my instructor didn't dwell on the problem but instead, she shifted her focus in order to find a solution to the problem. I now know that great leaders know what to focus on and prioritize at any given time. As Whitehead, Weiss & Tappen said, effective leaders are able to help people to identify the problems and to work through the problem-solving process to find a reasonable solution.

Moving forward to the end of the day, we formally introduced ourselves and from there she asked us about our plans after graduation. When we responded with "to become an RN", she smiled and said, "I know that nursing is tough but learning does not stop when you leave school, instead it only prepares you to continue learning throughout your career, so if you love what you're doing and if your heart is set on nursing, do the upgrading and become an RN". In addition to this, Whitehead outlined that effective leaders do not only continue to learn but also encourage others to do the same. Throughout the day, my clinical supervisor reiterated what the College of Nurses of Ontario expects from us and that is to provide and promote the best possible care to the public by using our knowledge, skill and judgment. So as weeks went by

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and as I get to know my instructor better, I came to realize that she wants the best for us and she wants us to be ready when we go out into the real world. Although nurses have their own ways of demonstrating leadership, I consider my instructor as a nurse who exemplifies effective leadership because she believes on the capabilities of her students, she sets a good example to us, she inspires us, she is responsible, and most of all you can see throughout her eyes that she is fully committed and passionate on what she does.

## Qualities of a Leader

In addition to the qualities and behaviors that a true leader must possess, it is both equally important that nurse leaders use leadership styles to maintain a high quality of care in order to improve patient outcomes. My instructor's leadership style varies from autocratic to a democratic leadership style. She displays autocratic leadership whenever she gives us our shift assignments - she gives orders and directives to which we follow whatever we are asked to do. In most cases, the group members under this leadership style tend to be unhappy and express hostility as the leader does everything including decision-making by its own. Although it is believed that autocratic style is an efficient way to run things, nurses should understand when to use this style of leadership as it fails to promote communication, trust and teamwork resulting in an overall decrease performance of an organization. Conversely, Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube outlines that "a leader who uses participative (democratic) leadership, rather than making all the decisions, seeks to involve other people, thus, improving commitment and increasing collaboration, which leads to better quality decisions and a more successful business". In this leadership style, democratic leaders share leadership as they take the input of others into account. For example, when we were scheduling our break times at clinical, my instructor didn't decide everything for us, instead she encouraged everyone to share their ideas and then she synthesized the information into the best possible decision. This allowed us to give our own input in order to come to a consensus. Thus, I believe that having a democratic leadership in nursing is crucial because it creates communication and a sense of empowerment.

Undoubtedly, a true leader is someone who inspires and motivates others, someone who is committed and passionate on what she/he does, someone who knows how to trust others, someone who is approachable, someone who sets an example to others, and someone who is respectful to others. I think what makes me a leader is that I know how to listen to my group members, I acknowledge others' perspectives, I am supportive of new ideas and new directions suggested by others, I share what I learn to my teammates, I understand my own emotions and know how to manage and channel them, and most of all I am committed and passionate on what I do. I affirm that being committed and passionate are essential for nurse leaders to possess to motivate their followers to do the same in order to achieve their common goal and that is to provide patients with safe and effective care. Above all, I considered myself as a transformational leader because I always encourage my group members to give their best at their work and motivate them to be positive instead of being negative. As an example, I know two first-year nursing students at Seneca who got overwhelmed when they first saw their courses for the first semester and their words to me were "we think we're going to failed this semester". Although I know that having 8 or 9 courses is stressful, I told them not to be discouraged by the number of courses that they have, instead they should use it as a learning opportunity in order to prepare themselves for the upcoming semesters. Amanchukwu describes that "transformational leaders are those who help group members to see the importance of higher good of the task and at the same time, they are the individuals who also focus on each

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person to fulfill his or her potential". Apart from what I have mentioned above, I want to improve my time management skills and I want to become a leader who welcomes constructive criticisms and can juggle workloads without losing focus.

## **The Role of Mentoring**

Although, it is known that preceptorship is among the most stressful student experiences, I would rather recognize this as an opportunity to perfect on the skills that I have already learned and to add new skills in order to be a successful and competent nursing student. Having the skills, knowledge and judgment are essential to leaders, however there is no such word as "perfect leaders" because "true leaders never stop learning and growing". So as a student going to preceptorship, it is important to seek guidance and support when needed to maintain quality care and to ensure that the patient safety and well-being is maintained. In addition, it is also important that nurses should support one another, respect each other's roles, trust each other's expertise and share their knowledge to one another in order to enhance job satisfaction, better patient satisfaction and better patient outcomes.

Since the occurrence of this experience, I have gained a new insight that being a leader isn't always to make the right decision, rather it is to make a decision in order to keep your team together. It is how you inspire, empower and motivate other people. Hence, leadership is based on how we choose to carry out ourselves in our everyday lives and it is how we treat other people around us. To summarize, a true leader is someone who makes choices not only for his or her interests but it is for the good of those who will be affected by his or her decisions.

In the future, I aspire to be like my clinical instructor who approach her job as not just a task that has need to be done and I will use this experience regardless of my position to share my expertise and knowledge in order to motivate and empower other people to excel in their chosen careers.