

Kwantlen University College
Collaborative Nursing Program

Nursing 4210: Health: Transitions

Learning Activity #2
Institutional Role Demands on Nurses

Overview:

“Leadership today bears no resemblance to that of the past. The old command-and-control type of leadership cannot thrive in the technically complex, multifaceted, rapidly changing environment of organizations today,” (Frigon & Jackson, 1996, p. 59).

Entering the world of nursing work requires considerable adaptation, confidence, and knowledge on the part of the new graduate. The prevailing organizational configurations in health care, both in acute and community care demand that graduate nurses adapt and learn to function optimally in a very short period of time. Policies, mission statements, and the inherent philosophy of employing institutions must be understood, remembered, and internalized. The structure and routine of the work environment must also be learned and adopted. Professional standards of conduct, behaviour and practice must be internalized. As well, the explicit and implicit culture of the work setting must be recognized and responded to with the expected result that the new graduate will “fit in”.

Current organizational and leadership theory points to more advanced approaches to management, employee empowerment, and collaborative work roles: much different than traditional models of leadership. Over the past two decades, theorists have commented on how organizations are changing from traditional bureaucratic linear entities to more egalitarian, collaborative and supportive environments. This change is slowly beginning to manifest in the health care arena, yet the expectations and limitations still prevalent in the current health care system continue to demand attention. There is a lot of room for improvement. Degree prepared nurses often move into leadership roles once they acquire the necessary experience in the workplace. But the initial adaptation to becoming an organizational member, and functioning as a full time employee continues to be a major challenge for nurses prepared at all levels of education.

Chatterjee (1998) stressed how common organizational configurations and behaviors were in nature. “Organizations are not human inventions. The story of organizations is to be found in Nature’s manuscript - the unwritten book of nature that scripts in vivid detail the fundamental quest of all life forms to manifest their fullest potential for collective action,” (p. 83). Organizational leadership in the global arena, and in health care itself, necessitates a shift toward the inclusion of community, culture, and relationship in all interactions with followers and with the community at large (Morrison, 1992).

The wise leader creates a learning organization where followers are led through the building of the capacity for action and the development of self-knowing (Chatterjee, 1998).

Leadership occurs within the culture of an organization. Culture has been defined by Georgiades and Macdonell (1998) as the traditions, beliefs, values, standards or norms, and patterns of behavior common within a particular organization. Lord and Maher (1991) added that “we define culture as the shared values, schemas, and types of information processing that apply to organizations as a whole and to distinct subunits of an organization,” (p. 221).

A key task for leaders is the building of a collaborative climate within an organization (Bennis & Slater, 1998). An effective collaborative climate consists of, “flexible and adaptive structure, utilization of member talents, clear and agreed-upon goals, norms of openness, trust, and cooperation, interdependence, high intrinsic rewards, and transactional controls, that is, members of the unit should have a high degree of autonomy and a high degree of participation in making key decisions,” (p. 118-119). The intrinsic ingredient within a collaborative climate is synergy, a difficult force to develop, one that requires time, interaction, trust, communication and commitment by all members. A wise and resourceful leader will attend to this development in a devoted and long-range way. In 1985, Bennis and Nanus called such leaders, “social architects”, leaders who understood their organization and made it work. “We believe that we human beings are suspended in webs of significance that we ourselves have spun. We view social architecture to be those webs of meaning. Social architecture is that which provides context (or meaning) and commitment to its membership and stakeholders,” (p. 112).

Ends In View:

This learning activity is intended to give the learner the opportunity to:

1. Explore the prevailing structure and process of adapting to organizations and institutions.
2. Recognize the implicit and explicit forces within organizations that require internalization in new employees.
3. Brainstorm solutions and strategies for coping with institutional demands, expectations, and the culture inherent within the workplace.
4. Envision an empowering mode of leadership within the nursing workplace, vocalizing the forces and needs that would need to be addressed for this style of management to exist and thrive.
5. Recognize their own personal needs and preferences for positive adaptation to the workplace.

In Preparation:

1. Read Scholl, R.W. (2003). *Organizational Culture - The Social Inducement System*. University of Rhode Island. <http://www.cba.uri.edu/Scholl/Notes/Culture.html>
2. Read American Association of College of Nurses. (2002). *Hallmarks of the Professional Nursing Practice Environment Brochure: What Every Nursing School Graduate Should Consider When Seeking Employment*. Washington: AACN. <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/positions/hallmarks.pdf>
3. Complete the online quiz: “*How Is Your Team Spirit*” by Dr. Matt Starcevich at: <http://coachingandmentoring.com/Quiz/teamspirit.html>

In Practice:

1. Participate in class discussion related to the challenges of adapting to institutional and organizational structures, rules, expectations, and culture. Complete the table on page 6 as you participate, and share your insights with your classmates.
2. With a partner, discuss the process of role transition into the current and evolving health care system.. Strategize some helpful suggestions to help graduate nurses ease into their new roles despite the high expectations prevalent within organizations which impact on the ease of this role transition. Share your insights with the class.
3. Four sources of power within an organization are identified as: authority, reward, expertise, and coercion. In small groups, identify how these four sources fit into the institutional climate where nurses work, and how they can impede or empower graduate nurses:

a) Authority:

b) Reward:

c) Expertise:

d) Coercion:

4. Complete the following critical thinking exercise, and share your ideas and thoughts with the class: **“Finding the Right Milieu:”**

Finding the Right Milieu:

Dorothy Winston finishes her nursing education in three weeks. She will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in nursing from a progressive Nursing education program. Her preferred clinical area is adult health nursing and she hopes to become a medical-surgical clinical nurse specialist one day.

Dorothy has received two job offers, both from urban hospitals with large adult populations. Several of her friends are already employed at both of these agencies. Dorothy has used these information sources to collect opinions on what it is like to work at each hospital. Her friends have told her that:

Hospital A is a great place to work. It is a dynamic, growing institution always on the cutting edge of change. Any new idea that seems promising is considered and tried. Her friends enjoy working there.

Hospital B is also a great place to work. It is a strong, stable institution where traditions are valued. Any new idea must be carefully evaluated before it is adopted. Her friends also enjoy working in this hospital.

1. Which organizational climate do you think would be best for a new graduate, A or B?
2. How would each one affect a new graduate?
3. What would you want to know about a graduate before recommending either hospital to them?
4. What else would you want to know about the hospitals, if you were thinking of working there?
5. Would your answers differ if you were considering an experienced nurse?

In Reflection:

1. Write down exactly the type of organizational structure, philosophy, and climate that would suit your personality, learning needs, and personal preferences the best.
2. What will you need to develop within yourself to successfully adapt to the work milieu?
How can you do this? What support will you need?

References:

- American Association of College of Nurses. (2002). *Hallmarks of the Professional Nursing Practice Environment Brochure: What Every Nursing School Graduate Should Consider When Seeking Employment*. Washington: AACN.
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/positions/hallmarks.pdf>
- Bennis, W. G. & Nanus, B. (1985). *Leaders: The strategies for taking charge*. New York: Harper and Row.
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- Chatterjee, D. (1998). *Leading consciously: A pilgrimage toward self-mastery*. Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann
- Frigon, N.L. & Jackson, H.K. (1996). *The Leader: Developing the skills and personal qualities you need to lead effectively*. New York: American Management Association.
- Georgiades, N. & Macdonell, R. (1998). *Leadership for competitive advantage*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lord, R.G. & Maher, K.J. (1991). *Leadership and information processing: Linking perceptions and performance*. London, UK: Unwin Hyman Ltd.
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Challenges in Adapting to Organizations

Structures	Rules	Expectations	Culture