Make an impact with transformational leadership and shared governance

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Transformational leadership is an action-based leadership style that recognizes the need for change, which is guided by admirable influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized attention. Shared governance is an empowering process designed to achieve organizational goals by promoting shared decision making and accountability. Both transformational leadership and shared governance work harmoniously to advance the nursing profession and have been recognized as key elements in the development of successful, healthy work environments.

A look at the past
Transformational leadership theory was developed in 1978 by historian and political scientist James MacGregor Burns. Burns was influenced by Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, basing his theory on the premise that individuals require a certain set of “needs” to be met in order to be productive. Burns theorized that transformational leadership theory encompasses Maslow’s higher levels of needs, which elevate self-esteem and promote self-actualization: (a) achievement, (b) confidence, (c) respect, (d) problem solving, (e) creativity, and (f) acceptance.

Shared governance was initially introduced into nursing as a means of recruitment and retention during the nursing shortage of 1970. Nursing advocate Luther Christman first introduced the concept of shared governance in 1976; however, the term shared governance wasn’t utilized until 1978 by Virginia Cleland. Shared governance evolved over the next 20 years, becoming one of the top leadership phenomena of the 20th century. The concept of utilizing shared governance to achieve excellence was heightened when the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) announced the Magnet Recognition Program®; shared governance and transformational leadership were listed in the core criteria. Because healthcare is ever-changing, successful transformational leaders must continue to utilize shared governance to achieve organizational goals.

The implementation hurdle
With the number of hospitals striving for Magnet® recognition, the adoption of transformational leadership and shared governance models has been amplified. In order for shared governance to be successful, leaders and staff members must be fully committed to the process and willing to put forth the effort required to effectively and consistently utilize this approach.

Transforming a negative environment into a positive culture is a large hurdle to jump when implementing a new leadership style. In order for nurse managers to be successful, employees must feel valued by the organization. The healthcare environment is a competitive market; the management model or approach chosen by nurse leaders plays an important role in attracting and retaining talent, ultimately making a significant impact on the overall effectiveness of an organization. Successfully implementing both the transformational leadership and shared governance approaches fosters nursing leadership at the front line of patient care and encourages all staff members to...
strive to work toward their fullest potential.

Nurse managers often face challenges when it comes to motivating staff to function beyond self-interest. A general lack of knowledge regarding the shared governance model can be a contributing factor to why an employee refuses to participate in its implementation. It’s the responsibility of the nurse leader to address this knowledge deficit and provide staff members with a solid foundation of knowledge about the shared governance model, allowing for an adequate time frame for successful transitions. Positive outcomes that result during the implementation phase will strengthen staff members’ trust, loyalty, and vested interest in the system.

**Framework for managers**

The theory of structural empowerment directly correlates the level of employee power within the workplace with the quality of job performance, loyalty, and attitudes; this theory laid the foundation for the development of the shared governance approach to management.

The first generation of the shared governance model focused on empowering frontline personnel to make decisions at the point of care. Second generation models expanded the focus to include the development of teams and committees to take on the responsibility of ensuring that goals are achieved.

Today, there are three general models for implementing the shared governance approach—congressional, councilor, and unit-based—all focusing on a participatory management style that incorporates practice standard accountability, quality delineation of care, and educational standards of employed personnel.

In the congressional model, all staff members are leaders within the organization and belong to one organizational council. In the councilor model, there are appointed members from each department who are represented at various coordinated meetings to discuss and devise solutions to specific issues related to the delivery of patient care. The third and final approach is a unit-based model that allows appointed leaders within each department or unit to tailor the governance, roles, and empowerment of employees within the service area. This is the most effective and widely used shared governance approach for the provision of optimal quality care.

Transformational leadership incorporates the same principles of shared governance to restructure the delivery of patient care to provide flexibility, empowerment, and a collective commitment toward meeting the challenges of a continuously changing healthcare system. In order to be an effective transformational leader, a manager must:

- be a role model
- have an optimistic vision of the future
- encourage teamwork
- set lofty goals
- challenge team members to think outside the box
- validate improvement ideas
- be supportive of each individual’s needs within the group
- support shared power

Transformational leadership, using the shared governance approach, creates a work environment that empowers staff members to be part of a collective effort to meet organizational goals. All employees are stakeholders and have a vested interest in the organization’s success. Utilizing this leadership approach has been shown to decrease employee turnover rates and improve overall job satisfaction.

**Organizational support**

The American Nurses Association recognizes the shared governance models established by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN), the Magnet Recognition Program, and the Institute of Medicine (IOM).

The AACN identifies the following standards: skilled communication, genuine collaboration, efficient decision making, adequate staffing, significant recognition, and authentic leadership. In relationship to shared governance, efficient decision making involves nurses who are respected and dedicated as partners in developing policies, implementing and evaluating nursing care, and guiding the operations of an organization. Authentic leadership recognizes leaders who adopt the requirements of a healthy work environment and involve others in attaining it.

The ANCC promotes transformational leaders working in healthy, productive work environments (such as those utilizing the shared governance approach) because it can lead to immense knowledge, innovation, and better outcomes of care within an organization. The Magnet Recognition Program acknowledges organizations that have transformational leaders who empower their staff members to accomplish the goals of future healthcare initiatives. It mandates that Magnet facilities maintain the following standards:

- transformational leadership
- organizational empowerment
- excellent professional practice
- updated knowledge and improvements
- quality results

The IOM report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, emphasizes the importance of nurses as leaders in the healthcare environment. The IOM has
recognized that organizations must focus on people, environment, and tools to improve work flow and patient safety. Transformational leadership is an essential component supported by the IOM.12

The nurse manager’s role
The transformational leadership style encourages employees and leaders to accept change while providing education to those affected by it. Because nurse managers are involved in creating policies, it's crucial that they feel confident in implementing new practices and can effectively educate healthcare workers on how to properly incorporate established changes into daily practice.1

One of the biggest obstacles many nurse managers experience is ineffective communication. In order to properly execute shared governance and transformational leadership, one must be able to clearly communicate new ideas, policy changes, and evidenced-based practice skills and research, all while sharing encouraging words with employees and new graduates. Showing respect to employees is one of the primary ways to earn trust among staff.1 It also motivates staff members to perform their best and accept change. By meeting with staff on a regular basis to discuss concerns and provide feedback, a nurse manager shows a strong sense of commitment and that he or she is reliable and willing to engage employees.1

Not only should nurse managers meet with hospital staff regularly, but they’re also encouraged to regularly communicate with stakeholders. Stakeholders include healthcare providers, organizations, government officials, universities, and patients. They may also include policy makers, the media, religious organizations, and family members. These stakeholders should be able to trust the nurse manager to provide accurate information and inform them of pertinent healthcare changes.1

Finally, nurse managers must be able to enforce change when it’s necessary and (possibly) unpopular among staff. Being able to recognize when change is needed and utilize the appropriate resources is crucial in shared governance. Sometimes change is needed immediately and managers must use transformational leadership to encourage staff in this process. Managers should keep their healthcare institution’s goals in mind when implementing these changes and educating staff about how to fulfill them. Improved patient outcomes and patient satisfaction are the two primary goals for any healthcare institution, and these goals shouldn’t leave the minds of transformational leaders utilizing shared governance.2

Managing healthy work environments
Nursing has a rich history of incorporating the conceptual framework of transformational leadership and shared governance principles into management systems, even before these approaches were formalized in the domain of administrative practices. These leadership concepts are implemented in the human resource aspect of nursing recruitment and retention by improving nursing work environments and empowering frontline nursing professionals to collaborate and participate in authentic leadership.12 Strong nursing leadership and improvements in healthcare quality are linked to greater patient satisfaction.1

The responsibility of the nurse manager is to guide the transformational leadership process by not only navigating new policies and education toward the attainment of organizational goals, but also empowering direct care nurses to be active agents of change.1 Shared governance is a collaborative form of management, and the unit-based model affords high-quality patient-care outcomes and employee satisfaction.9 The components of transformational leadership and shared governance in relation to human resource regulations, the impact on nursing, conceptual frameworks of implementation, and the role of the nurse manager are interwoven to restructure the delivery of patient care, empower nurses, and meet the challenges of a continuously changing healthcare system.3
The standards will be open for public comment this month (October 2012) and are scheduled to be released in early 2013. To review the draft standards and submit a comment, visit http://www.nursingworld.org/Public-Comment-Safe-Patient-Handling-Standards. You can also access safe patient handling standards and information about ANA’s Handle with Care program at http://www.nursingworld.org.

Safe patient handling benefits

Effective safe patient handling and movement programs and policies have the potential to be widely beneficial. Costs will go down as injury rates decrease. Patient outcomes will be improved as mobilization is increased and dignity is maintained. Nurses and other healthcare workers will immeasurably benefit from work environments in which their health and safety are prioritized. Safe patient handling practices will prevent pain and suffering, and will allow experienced, highly skilled nurses to remain in the workforce. ANA-Actions/State-Legislation.aspx.

REFERENCES


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