

NURS-FPX4005 Assessment 1 Collaboration and Leadership Reflection

Student Name

Capella University

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Collaboration and Leadership Reflection

Effective collaboration and leadership are fundamental to high-quality nursing care. Interdisciplinary teamwork enables healthcare professionals to coordinate complex care, reduce errors, and improve patient outcomes. In an increasingly complex healthcare environment, no single discipline can meet all of a patient's needs; rather, care depends on the coordinated efforts of nurses, physicians, pharmacists, therapists, and many others. The quality of collaboration among these professionals has a direct and measurable impact on the safety and effectiveness of patient care.

Leadership plays a decisive role in shaping the quality of collaboration. The leadership styles and approaches that guide a team influence its cohesion, communication, and effectiveness. This reflection examines an interdisciplinary collaboration experience from my nursing practice, compares effective and ineffective leadership styles observed during that experience, and identifies evidence-based best practices for strengthening collaboration and leadership within healthcare teams. Through structured reflection, this paper draws lessons that can inform my future practice as a nurse and emerging leader.

Reflection on an Interdisciplinary Collaboration Experience

During my clinical practice in an intensive care unit, I participated in an interdisciplinary team formed to reduce medication errors and improve patient safety. The team included nurses, physicians, pharmacists, and respiratory therapists who met regularly to review patient care plans and reconcile medications. The primary goal was to implement a structured communication process to ensure accurate medication reconciliation across the electronic health record, addressing a recurring source of error that had affected patient safety on the unit.

The collaboration succeeded in several respects. Interprofessional respect and open communication fostered a strong sense of shared responsibility, and team members contributed diverse expertise that improved decision-making. The pharmacists brought specialized knowledge of medication interactions, the physicians provided clinical context, and the nurses offered insight into the practical realities of medication administration at the bedside. This diversity of perspectives enriched the team's understanding of the problem and led to more comprehensive solutions.

However, the experience also revealed challenges. Some team members, accustomed to traditional workflows, resisted the new documentation process, and delays in updating medication orders caused frustration. There were also moments when communication broke down, particularly during busy periods when team members were under pressure. In retrospect, a more structured change management approach—with clearly defined roles, additional training, and proactive communication—would have eased the transition and improved buy-in. These challenges highlighted the importance of leadership in guiding teams through change.

Comparison of Leadership Styles

Two contrasting leadership styles emerged during this experience: transformational and transactional. Transformational leadership proved highly effective. Leaders who adopted this style encouraged open dialogue, articulated a shared vision, and focused on long-term improvement, which fostered engagement and shared decision-making (Ystaas et al., 2023). Team members felt valued and motivated, which strengthened collaboration and commitment to the shared goal of improving patient safety.

Transformational leaders also demonstrated genuine concern for team members' development and well-being. They recognized individual contributions, provided constructive

feedback, and empowered team members to take ownership of the initiative. This approach built trust and created an environment in which team members felt safe to raise concerns, ask questions, and propose ideas. The result was a more cohesive, engaged team that was better able to navigate the challenges of implementing change.

Transactional leadership, by contrast, was less effective in this setting. It emphasized immediate problem-solving, rigid hierarchies, and, at times, punitive measures rather than empowerment. While transactional approaches can be useful for ensuring compliance with established procedures, in this context they generated resistance and frustration among team members and hindered the collaborative culture the team was trying to build. When leaders focused narrowly on enforcing rules without explaining their rationale or engaging team members, motivation and morale declined. The contrast between these two styles underscored that leadership approach materially affects team cohesion and the success of interdisciplinary initiatives.

Best Practices for Leadership and Collaboration

Several evidence-based strategies can strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration. First, leaders should cultivate a shared vision, as teams guided by a common purpose demonstrate higher engagement and collaboration (Ystaas et al., 2023). When team members understand and embrace a shared goal, they are more likely to work together effectively and to persist through challenges. Articulating a compelling vision is therefore a foundational leadership task.

Second, fostering psychological safety—an environment in which team members feel free to ask questions, raise concerns, and admit mistakes without fear of punishment—promotes open communication and innovation. Research demonstrates that psychological safety is a key characteristic of high-performing healthcare teams, enabling them to learn from errors and

continuously improve. Leaders create psychological safety by modeling openness, responding constructively to concerns, and treating mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than occasions for blame.

Third, regular interdisciplinary rounds and structured communication reinforce patient-centered care and continuity. Tools such as standardized handoff protocols ensure that critical information is communicated accurately and consistently. Fourth, continuous professional development equips team members with the skills needed for effective collaboration. Investing in education on communication, teamwork, and leadership strengthens the team's overall capacity. Adopting a transformational or servant leadership approach, grounded in respect and shared decision-making, helps establish the trust and accountability that underpin effective collaboration.

Application to Future Practice

Reflecting on this experience has shaped my understanding of how I wish to practice and lead in the future. I have learned that effective collaboration depends not only on the technical competence of team members but on the quality of their relationships and communication. As I develop as a nurse and emerging leader, I will prioritize building trust, fostering open communication, and cultivating a shared sense of purpose within the teams I work with.

I have also learned the importance of adaptive leadership—recognizing that different situations may call for different approaches, but that a foundation of respect and engagement is essential in nearly all circumstances. While there are moments when clear direction is needed, I have seen that empowering team members and involving them in decision-making generally produces better outcomes and stronger commitment. I will strive to adopt a transformational

leadership approach, balancing the need for structure with the importance of engagement and empowerment.

Finally, this reflection has reinforced my commitment to continuous learning and improvement. Effective collaboration and leadership are not static skills but capacities that must be continually developed through experience, reflection, and education. By remaining open to feedback and committed to growth, I can continue to strengthen my ability to collaborate effectively and to contribute to high-performing healthcare teams that deliver safe, high-quality, patient-centered care.

Conclusion

Reflecting on this interdisciplinary collaboration experience highlights the decisive role of leadership in shaping team effectiveness. Transformational leadership fostered engagement, trust, and collaboration, while transactional leadership generated resistance and undermined the collaborative culture the team sought to build. The contrast between these approaches offers valuable lessons for nursing practice and leadership.

By applying best practices such as cultivating a shared vision, fostering psychological safety, implementing structured communication, and committing to continuous development, nurse leaders can build collaborative teams that deliver safe, high-quality, patient-centered care. As I continue to develop as a nurse leader, I will prioritize these evidence-based strategies to strengthen the teams I work with and to improve the care we provide. Effective collaboration and leadership are essential to meeting the complex challenges of modern healthcare, and the lessons drawn from this reflection will inform my practice throughout my career.

References

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