Innovative Learning Activity: Pragmatic Application of Leadership

Students often enter leadership courses with the false belief that leadership is limited to only extraordinary people with unique innate traits, and therefore, they doubt their ability to learn and apply constructs of leadership. As recommended by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2011), the aim for educators is to instill within students the conviction that leadership is an integral function of nursing practice and based on a collaborative relationship. A leadership model developed by Rost (1993) reflects a collaborative relationship perspective in which leaders work together for a mutual purpose (Raffo & Clark, 2018) by combining their personal skills acquired through knowledge learned from education, experience, and expertise to initiate a change.

Learning Activity

During an online leadership course of 20 graduate nursing students, an activity based on Rost’s (1993) leadership model was developed with the goal to increase self-confidence in their capacity for leadership. The objective was for students to pragmatically apply concepts of the model in a hypothetical scenario and initiate a change by using their personal skills to influence administrators to implement music therapy as a new nursing intervention.

An in-class group activity emphasized leadership as being a collaborative relationship, rather than one individual acting alone without input from others. A realistic scenario was provided in which students could relate to the roles for a meaningful association between leadership and nursing practice. It also enabled students to immediately apply personal skills acquired previously as being valuable resources for leadership.

Prior to the activity, students studied the defining constructs of Rost’s (1993) leadership model through lectures, scholarly readings, discussion, and Socratic questioning. A rubric was used to evaluate the activity with criteria to identify previously learned personal skills and to rationalize how the skills would assist in the change effort, as well as how each skill was acquired. Following the activity, students were asked to share feedback.

Results

Students enthusiastically engaged in the activity and were pleased to discover personal skills that they were unaware they already possessed as being important and applicable for leadership. Throughout the process, students formed a collaborative relationship and worked together to brainstorm, combine, and dovetail on the personal skills of each other. Skills identified included knowledge learned from experience and expertise in networking, communication, assertiveness, and music appreciation.

References


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