

Oral presentation

Developing clinical leadership: a co-operative inquiry approach to evaluate the benefits of an action learning set with nursing consultants in England.

Background: As three new Consultant nurses joined two established consultants on the staff of one District General Hospital in the south of England, it was believed that an action learning set (ALS) would offer peer support to enable them to succeed.

The aim is to evaluate the lessons learned from the ALS focusing on their leadership.

Methodology: Co-operative inquiry is a way of researching *with* rather than *on* people, of working with those who have similar interests and who wish to collectively understand their world and create new ways of exploring it. This approach helps also to learn how to change and enhance our working practices. With all active subjects fully involved as co-researchers in all research decisions, three cycles were completed of four phases of discussion, reflection, analysis and action. The process is planned to last for 18 months. Data were analysed thematically.

Findings: Four themes began to emerge from the data: development of scholarship, responding to changing need, extending networks and empowerment in role. Whilst they had grown considerably in confidence in their leadership role, they did not feel that collectively they fully embraced the four dimensions prescribed by the Department of Health for the role. Nevertheless, the co-operative inquiry helped them realise how much they had gained from their collective learning in the group (ALS) and how, from the group they feel empowered to lead. Their reflections helped them value the importance of the role for the organisation, their credibility within the organisation and were keen to retain their peer support to ensure its sustainability.

Conclusion: The outcomes of the co-operative inquiry included an enhanced understanding of the importance of openness and trust of each other and a willingness to share and learn from each other in a respectful and confidential environment with a receptiveness to change.

Words: 300

References:

Department of Health (1999) *Making a Difference. Strengthening the Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting Contribution to Health and Healthcare*. Department of Health, London.

Drennan V. and Goodman C. (2011) Sustaining innovation in the healthcare workforce: A case study of community nurse consultant posts in England. *BMC Health Services Research*, 11:200 accessed from <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/11/200> on 23.1.15

Heron J. and Reason P. (2001) The Practice of Co-operative Inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' People. In: Reason P. & Bradbury H. (2001) (Editors) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry & Practice*. Chapter 16, Sage Publications, London

Learning objectives: The learner will be able to :

Understand the importance of action learning sets in supporting and empowering self and others in their clinical leadership.

Recognise the value of a co-operative inquiry methodology to learn collaboratively from peers as clinical leaders to enhance their practice.

Purpose of the presentation;

The purpose of the presentation is to share the lessons learned from using a co-operative inquiry methodology to understand collaboratively and more fully the lessons learned from a year's Action Learning Set focused on the leadership development for five non-medical consultants and nursing professor.

Target audience for the presentation:

The target audience is anticipated to be educationalists, senior nurses and nurse researchers.

Key Words:

Nurse leadership, co-operative inquiry, nurse consultants