Leadership

Introduction

Leadership is necessary for the functioning, development and success of all organizations, especially in healthcare. It can be defined as the ability for an individual or team to lead and influence others towards achieving shared goals and objectives. Leadership aims to improve the quality and safety of healthcare and is directly linked to the standard of care delivered to patients. Good and effective leadership produces successful outcomes for patients while poor leadership has catastrophic consequences.

Management and Leadership

When thinking about leadership it is important to remember the role of management which is equally necessary for the functioning of healthcare organizations. While leadership focuses on establishing direction, aligning people and motivating and inspiring, management concentrates on planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, controlling and problem-solving. Good leadership produces positive outcomes and dramatic change and effective management creates order, consistency and predictability. Recruiting leaders with good overall leadership *and* management skills will lead to better healthcare outcomes.

How to Think About Leadership?

A helpful way to approach the understanding of leadership is by using the Warwick 6 C Leadership Framework. This framework uses six categories to organize the different aspects of leadership: concepts, characteristics, capabilities, context, challenges, and consequences.

Concepts

Using the Three "Ps" of leadership can be a practical way to think about leadership. Each "P" offers a different conceptual approach with its own definitions and features. The "Person" concept focuses on the personal qualities of leaders including personality and behaviors. The "Position" concept focuses on formal organizational positions and associated authority. The "Process" concept focuses on leadership practices that define their relationship with others (followers) and how they influence them through motivation, coaching and empowerment.
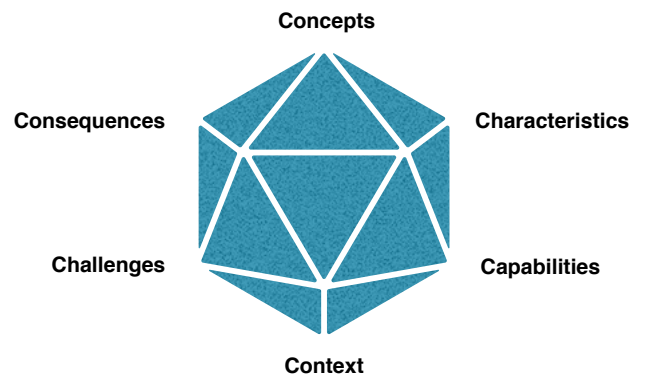
The Three "Ps" can also shape how leadership development is viewed. A focus on "Person" will mean particular emphasis on selecting and developing individuals. A focus on "Position" may mean that only particular positions in the organization are given certain types of training and development in leadership skills. A focus on "Process" will mean some development emphasis on working in groups and teams.

Characteristics

The characteristics approach realizes that leadership can be expressed in different forms of influence. Formal leadership expresses itself from the top through the legitimacy of authority. Whereas, leadership beyond authority can be realized from below from clients, citizens and communities or horizontally from peers and partners. The latter derives its legitimacy from respect, experience, and wisdom rather than pure authority. Within the healthcare system such characterization can be seen with clinical and administrative leadership.

Capabilities

There are many frameworks for leadership that define the required capabilities (competencies) of leaders or acts of leadership. These frameworks also offer an approach to leadership development for staff irrespective of their position or role. The NHS Leadership Framework emphasizes personal qualities such as self-awareness and acting with integrity, working with others especially within teams, managing and improving services, setting direction and managing change, creating and communicating vision, developing and implementing strategy.

Reading Material

- Leadership and leadership development in health care. The King's Fund. 2015.

- Recent trends in leadership. The King's Fund. 2011.

- Leadership Framework. Leadership Academy. NHS. 2011.

- What is leadership. Center for Leadership Studies. University of Exeter. 2004.

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Context

In the era of globalization and open communication, organizations are required to work in a participatory and collaborative manner within a network of stakeholders. This evolving interconnected system requires leaders to be able to acquire different approaches specific to each situation and its specific stakeholders. It can be helpful to think of these approaches as a set of directions, each focusing on a different part of the system and requiring distinctive leadership actions:

Looking upwards towards national policy to engage healthcare teams and organizations towards effective participation in solving national problems through locally developed solutions thus creating a strong sense of ownership and commitment. **Looking downwards** towards healthcare users and their engagement in maximizing service delivery and redesigning it to better fit with their needs and preferences. **Looking outwards** towards other organizations to partner with to address complex problems and share resources for the public good. **Looking inwards** towards staff development, ethical use of resources, and alignment of all organization activities towards achieving public value.

Challenges

Organizations face three types of challenges that require different forms of authority to address them. **Technical problems** which may be complicated or have occurred before but are resolvable with a limited degree of uncertainty. These require competent managers to provide the appropriate processes and resources to solve them. **Wicked problems** which are complex and often intractable with no apparent solution. In other words, there are no right or wrong answers just better or worse alternatives. These require leaders who ask the right questions rather than provide the right answers as they may not be self-evident and are likely to require collaborative processes. **Critical problems** that demand urgent response as time is not available for conventional decision-making processes. These require a commander to provide decisively the answer to the problem.

Consequences

The ultimate goal of healthcare leaders is to generate public value. Therefore, it is important to study the effects of leadership on the people and systems both within and outside healthcare, such as patients, communities and other organizations. A helpful tool to do this is public value stream analysis which allows decision-makers to assess each stage of healthcare (inputs, activities, co-production, outputs, user satisfaction and outcomes) and determine whether public value is added, subtracted, or stagnant, thus giving the opportunity for corrective action to be taken to increase public value or at least not to minimize it. See ABC of Governance on Public Value.

The Future of Leadership

As societies change so too will the challenges healthcare leaders face. For example, as technology develops, citizens will expect their healthcare to become more advanced and digitized. As the nature of work adapts, becoming more flexible and remote-based, leaders will be expected to change their workplace policies. In the face of this change and uncertainty, quality leadership will determine whether organizations succeed or fail. Leaders can prepare for change by conducting forward-looking research, scenario planning and future analysis. In addition, listening to stakeholder feedback and involving them in leadership will ensure healthcare operates in their interests.