

Leadership in Postgraduate Family Medicine Training Programs: A “Steps-Model” Implementation in Eastern Province-MOH Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Leadership in Family Medicine/ Primary Health Care, including training of postgraduates in this discipline, is essential to favorably impact training, as well as patient related health care outcomes.

In the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia, a step model leadership approach has been utilized to achieve targets set for training of postgraduates in Family Medicine training program, in same time it also has been utilized in the primary mental health program in Eastern Province-MOH.

Step model leadership initiative is a transformational leadership that involves three steps. Step one essentially is based on a managerial role where tasks are assigned for the team and desired outcomes agreed at the start of the program. Step two is role model stage that ensures progression of the task. Step three is essentially an evaluator type of leadership role that tries to establish and maintain the continuity of achieving the desired outcomes, it utilizes advocacy as one of its main strategies.

It is important that one in a leadership position in this step model understands their role and contributes effectively in line with the expectations of the step model for leadership initiative.

This Step Model for leadership has been successfully applied in the training of postgraduates in Family Medicine Program in Eastern province, MOH of Saudi Arabia. It is proposed that it should be applied throughout Saudi Arabia and in other countries of the region.

Key words: Leadership, Step model, Family Medicine Program, Post graduate training, Saudi Arabia

Introduction

In one's role as Director of the postgraduates in Family Medicine training program, MOH, effective leadership is important to influence the performance and postgraduate training related and patient care outcomes(1). A new initiative called "Step model" leadership could be considered as a kind of transformational leadership for implantation in Family Medicine programs/Primary Health Care. Transformational leadership was introduced by James McGregor Burns, in 1978. He defined transformational leadership as a process where "leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation."(2)

Transformational leadership style demonstrates as a positive contributor to safety environment(3), and is effective in improving care staff's perception of management support(4). Also, it contributes positively to job satisfaction in healthcare institutions, and in enhancing the empowerment influences among work staff(5). Transformational style generates greater commitment from followers than other leadership styles(1).

Step-model is based on the the leader goal, the nature of the task, and the age of the institution. It has been applied in the Primary Mental Health Program since 2003, and in the Saudi Postgraduate Family Medicine Program in the Eastern Province, MOH since 2010. It has proved to be very effective in building a competent motivated team.

Step-model is based on transformation effectively through 3 levels: manager, leader, and internal evaluator. The person in charge should recognize these levels when he/she transfers from one step into another according to determined factors. These factors are:

- (1) The task nature and complexity
- (2) Age of the task, is it new, in progression, or already established?
- (3) The maturity level of the team members.
- (4) Ability of the person to modify his performance according to each level.
- (5) Assigned person's competencies in leadership, motivation, and building a work-team.

For any new work or assigned task, the person who is assigned as responsible for a team to accomplish a task, should consider these three steps. This person should be able to play these roles correctly and transfer from one step to the next in the correct time according to the maturity of the team and the achievement level.

Step ONE "Manager":

When task is starting.

Manager's goal is "Coaching" to establish an effective and efficient process for the work.

The manager is concerned with setting the rules in order to accomplish a task. So, in this role, the rules must be

clear for every team member. The manager is responsible for directing and coaching his/her team within clear and defined rules.

Manager's tasks:

1. Establish the framework of the work and its outcomes
2. Responsible for selection of the team members who could work in a familiar and safe environment.
3. Choice with the team an efficient process to achieve the proposed outcomes
4. Create the ground rules for the work in the view of the organization system
5. Assess team members' performance
6. Be sure the work is in the planned process
7. Work is on progression
8. Motivate the team members
9. Select a appropriate task-leader and members for a defined task
10. Work in solving the obstacles facing the team work
11. Create proposed work leaders

Manager should assured that, everyone in his/her team fully understand what they're responsible for, and know how one will measure success. Next, help the team to achieve the goal and stay motivated. This type of management links short-term achievement to the organization's longer-term goals(6). In this step clear communication and regular feedback are essential for the successful passing of this step.

Step TWO "Leader":

When task is in progression.

Leader's goal "Model" is guiding work-team for achieving the proposed outcomes.

The leader leads the team by redirecting them toward the goal. The leader delegates the task to the team members. However, he/she follows the task progression as well as facilitates the teamwork in order to achieve the set goals.

Leader's tasks:

1. Guide the team for acheiving the task goals
2. Be a lived model for the team members
3. Support the team members to achieve their tasks
4. Work with team to modify the process, as needed, according to the work needs
5. Share with his/her team the performance assessment
6. Motivate his/her team members
7. Create and maintain a safe work environment

As cited in Bernard M. Bass's book, 1985, this type of leader who is a model of integrity and fairness; sets clear goals; has high expectations; encourages others; provides support and recognition; stirs the emotions of people; gets people to look beyond their self-interest; inspires them to achieve their goals(7).

This step may be the longest period till it is sure that the proposed leaders become competent enough to carry the responsibilities as effective leaders.

Step THREE “Internal Evaluator”:

- When task is almost or fully achieving the proposed outcome.

Evaluator’s goal “Advocator” is to maintain work in effective progression.

The internal evaluator supports team leaders as well as the team members to accomplish the task. Internal evaluator plays also the role of the counsellor for the team.

Internal Evaluator’s tasks:

1. Evaluate the leader’s performance
2. Be sure the work outcomes are desirable
3. Work as an advocator and counsellor for the team members
4. Work as mentor and adviser for the team leaders and members.
5. Supervise the whole work and maintain it in the desired process.
6. Interfere and correct any mistake that can deviate the work.
7. Protect the work from outside distraction

The following Table shows Step-model and the factors that influence transformation from one step to another

Leadership style	Institution level	Task nature	Team maturity
Manager	Small immature	Simple/ complex	Unskilled
Leader	Small mature	Simple/ complex	Skilled
Evaluator	Large mature	complex	Skilled



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