Characteristics of Collaboration Used in Building Partnership among Academic and Practice Organizations to Increase the Proportion of Nurses with a Baccalaureate Degree to 80% by 2020

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Background

Nurse leaders from academic and practice settings engaging in collaborative partnerships were essential to promote models for seamless academic progression (SAP). New Jersey Action Coalition (NJAC) designed a grant-funded project to create SAP models through a competency-based curricular design aimed at preparing a more skilled, trained nursing workforce.

NJAC held various meetings to inform members of academic and practice settings to consider joining a team for this initiative. Teams were devised based on geographic location and practicality. Each team consisted of representatives from nursing education across different programs as well as nurse leaders from acute care hospitals, home care agencies and long-term facilities (LoGrippo, 2015). Each team collaborated on best practices to be included in their specific curriculum that would help prepare future nurses to meet the demands of a complex healthcare environment.

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the characteristics of collaboration involved in the NJAC work and to better understand best practices for ensuring collaboration and partnerships for future projects.

Collaboration

To understand collaboration, conceptual and theoretical perspectives on collaboration were reviewed in the literature. Various concepts describe collaboration in organizational contexts to include efforts that engage the workforce to optimize resources and to problem solve (Muntean, 2005; O’Leary and Bingham, 2009). Thomson Perry and Miller (2007) defined the collaborative process in which participants come together to work towards a common goal, either formally or informally.

Thomson and colleagues (2007) described collaboration as multidimensional, variable and composed of five key dimensions. The five key dimensions include:

- Governance
- Administration
- Organizational autonomy
- Mutuality
- Norms (Trust)

Incorporating dimensions of collaboration can foster a group’s ability to build an effective collaborative relationship and a mutually supportive work environment, and directly have impact on the success of the initiative. Strong collaborative skills will leverage the effectiveness of the relationship, particularly among team members and between organizations (Thomson & Perry, 2006). As evidenced in clinical environments utilizing multidisciplinary teams, a lack of collaboration and teamwork can result in less effective outcomes (Ndoro, 2014).

Methods

A descriptive design involving survey data was used to describe characteristics of collaboration among academic and practice partners. A convenience sample consisting of 30 eligible individuals engaged in the NJAC work.

Individuals were asked to participate by completing a paper and pencil questionnaire derived from Thomson, Perry and Miller (2007) measurement tool for collaboration. Of the 30 eligible individuals, there were 16 participants who completed the survey across the four teams (Table 1). The questionnaire comprised of four demographic questions along with 57 items using a closed-ended, seven-point Likert scale.

Due to the small sample size, researchers analyzed a 17-point collaboration scale (Thomson et al., 2007) to represent the multidimensional nature of collaboration which had been theoretically and statistically validated for each of the five dimensions. An item included in the questionnaire as suggested by Thomson and colleagues (2009) measured the participant’s overall perceived effectiveness of the collaboration was also used for further analysis.

Results

In addition to the five dimensions, analysis involving the perception of the effectiveness of the collaboration for the NJAC work indicated that academic partners reported slightly higher perceived effectiveness (M=6.22, SD=0.83) than reported by practice partners (M=5.71, SD=1.25).

Table 2. Average means for Academic and Practice Partners on Five Dimensions of Collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Academic Partners</th>
<th>Practice Partners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>3.50 (SD = 0.76)</td>
<td>3.00 (SD = 1.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>3.69 (SD = 0.70)</td>
<td>3.17 (SD = 0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>3.79 (SD = 0.58)</td>
<td>3.29 (SD = 0.82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuality</td>
<td>4.00 (SD = 0.60)</td>
<td>3.50 (SD = 0.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms (Trust)</td>
<td>3.94 (SD = 0.77)</td>
<td>3.44 (SD = 0.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 16 participants, there were nine (9) academic partners and seven (7) practice partners across all four teams. Mean scores were analyzed among academic and practice partners for all five dimensions as well as overall perceived effectiveness of the collaboration.

Analysis

For the collaboration to be effective, all individuals must contribute to the discussion and opinions needed to be taken seriously.

On the dimension of administration, academic participants scored slightly higher, with a mean of 24.11 (SD = 2.42) than the practice participants, mean of 23.42 (SD = 4.69).

Additional key elements include:

- For the collaboration to be effective, all individuals must contribute to the discussion and opinions needed to be taken seriously.
- On the dimension of administration, results depicted on this pilot tool that academic partners identified more with the need to understand roles and responsibilities, felt that meetings functioned well, there were agreeable goals and well-coordinated tasks experienced in the collaboration.

Discussion

The review of the data collected in this study helps to better understand the key features necessary to promote collaboration that involves both academic and practice partners.

Several key elements revealed in this study support continued collaboration among academic and practice partners.

Similar scores identified on four of the five dimensions suggest that there is a shared understanding of collaboration practices necessary to meet an organization’s goals and outcomes.

When analyzing the dimension of administration, academic participants scored slightly higher, with a mean of 24.11 (SD = 2.42) than the practice participants, mean of 23.42 (SD = 4.69).

Additional key elements include:

- For the collaboration to be effective, all individuals must contribute to the discussion and opinions needed to be taken seriously.
- On the dimension of administration, results depicted on this pilot tool that academic partners identified more with the need to understand roles and responsibilities, felt that meetings functioned well, there were agreeable goals and well-coordinated tasks experienced in the collaboration.

Summary

The utilization of this tool does help to provide a framework for understanding essential elements to consider when building collaborative partnerships between academic and practice partners.

References


The work by the New Jersey Action Coalition (NJAC) was supported by a State Implementation Program grant funded through a joint initiative of AARP and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Campaign for Action.

Instrument

Table 1. 17-Point Collaborative Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>The organization provides its members with the information they need to make a decision about the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>The organization helps members to understand the complexities of the collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>The organization involves all members in decision-making processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutuality</td>
<td>The organization ensures that all members are heard and their ideas are respected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms (Trust)</td>
<td>The organization sets the team’s goals and outcomes and all members work towards them.</td>
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