

ABSTRACT

Title: Mandate – Power – Management
A study of how first-line nurse managers' leadership is constructed

Language: Swedish with summary in English

Keywords: Health Care Pedagogics, first-line nurse manager, leadership, mandate, power, management, Social Construction

ISBN: 91-7346-461-9

The overall aim of the study was to describe and analyse how first-line nurse managers' leadership is constructed. Sub-aims of the study were to explore their experiences of: becoming first-line nurse managers, learning and developing leadership and the content of the first-line nurse managers' function. Additionally, these sub-aims were studied in terms of the importance of being women and men, respectively, as well as ongoing changes in the health care sector.

Since an organisation and its operations influence work processes as well as its development, the first-line nurse managers' experiences should be seen in the light of changes in the health care sector, where financial and human resources have been reduced. The health care sector has been decentralized, which implies increasing demands on first-line nurse managers.

This research project has a Social Construction approach and has its starting-point in theories of leadership. To acquire knowledge of the first-line nurse managers' experiences, interviews were chosen as the data collection method. These interviews were unstructured, but a thematic interview guide was used to maintain the focus on experience of leadership. An inductive content analysis was performed with thematic coding of the content of the interviews.

Three themes emerged from the results of the analysis. The first theme, mandate for leadership, describes how the first-line nurse managers receive a formal mandate and how the psychological and instrumental mandate develops during their employment. The second theme, power in leadership, reflects the opportunities they have to exert an influence by means positional and relational power. The third theme, management in everyday life, portrays their daily work, which mainly involves recruiting and allocating staff. Different activities in everyday life contribute to developing strategies in leadership. A synthesis of these themes resulted in a model of the construction of their leadership. The most central component of this construction is co-operation although acceptance, mastering and adjustment are also important components.

The main conclusions from this study are that co-operation between first-line nurse managers and people around them are central for the construction of leadership and essential for acceptance of the function. Co-operation is also needed to be able to master the position and make the optimum adjustments to existing circumstances. There is also a connection between acceptance and mastering in that the managers and their co-workers must accept the function if the first-line nurse managers are to be able to master the function. Adjustment and mastering are also linked as the extent of mastering influences how much activities must be adjusted to existing circumstances. Acceptance and adjustment are also linked since people who have not fully accepted their function are occupied to a greater degree by the present.