

Essay

Critical Reflective Essay on Group Leadership, Communication, and Inclusive Practice

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Introduction

Leadership plays a critical role in group work in that it facilitates communication, collaboration, and unity. Good leaders have to listen to others, manage time and honour other opinions. Reflective practice assists in establishing strengths and weaknesses and enhancing performance in the future. In this essay, I critically reflect on my experience as a group leader in a role-play exercise using the experiential learning cycle as developed by Kolb (1984). It focuses on active listening, time management, personal values, and style of leadership and includes means to promote inclusiveness among members, who have varied cultural backgrounds.

Critical Reflection on a Skill That Went Well: Active Listening and Communication

Concrete Experience

In the group leadership role-play, I wanted to speak successfully, share the purpose of the discussion, and discuss the ideas with other members. I was attentive to other arguments and tried to find some ground to agree cooperatively and with understanding.

Reflective Observation

Active listening was one of my strengths as I managed to comprehend other points of view and establish a respectful space. It is important to listen and get to know what others are saying. Psychological safety is also identified by Gallo (2023) as crucial towards team learning. Nonetheless, I became aware that not everything through silence means that people agree. Certain members will not feel comfortable expressing their views. Consequently, I would have to review comprehension as opposed to assuming.

Abstract Conceptualisation

Kolb's experiential learning cycle (1984) also enabled me to relate my experience to the leadership theory. Leadership is the act of influencing individuals towards shared interests. Good leaders ought to promote participation and not dictate all discussions. Gardi et al. (2021) also show that communication is crucial in the establishment of effective group relationships.

I was taught that active listening should be even-handed with decision-making. The lack of summarising ideas and control of the discussion during listening might prove to be wasteful and decrease productivity.

Active Experimentation

I will carry on practising active listening and advance my communication skills in future group work. I will sum up the ideas of members, ask questions to make sure that my understanding is perfect and encourage everyone to share their ideas. I will also give chances for respectful disagreement, thus enabling the members to raise any opinions fearlessly. These plans will assist me to gain trust, lessen misunderstandings, and make balanced decisions. Through effective time management and listening, I hope to become a more confident and inclusive group leader.

Critical Reflection on a Skill That Did Not Go Well: Time Management and Equal Participation

Concrete Experience

Time management, where there is equal participation in all areas, is one area where I have to work on. When there is a discussion in a group, there may be members who talk more than others do (Abdurashidova, 2023). As a leader, prioritising getting the job done can minimise the chances of allowing the quiet people to air their thoughts.

Reflective Observation

I realised that good leadership must involve balancing between task accomplishment and inclusion. There are no time restrictions, and the discussions can take a long time without hurrying or delaying (Barnes & Todd, 2021). Also, decisions can be made hastily, making members feel disregarded. Individuals are members of teams with a variety of strengths and roles. Checking on the low-profile members, they might be providing worthwhile ideas as well (Bodie, 2023). I also discovered that although I am trying to save time by giving attention primarily to those speakers who are confident, this could lead to unequal participation.

Abstract Conceptualisation

The learning cycle by Kolb (1984) enabled me to realise the essence of balancing efficiency and participation. The necessity to change leadership behaviour in accordance with group conditions. It can also apply to shared leadership, as the members may have their responsibilities shared (Brownell, 2023). To promote participation, it might be necessary to delegate tasks and give members the opportunity to lead discussions. Nevertheless, I should also take into account various levels of confidence and preferences towards communication. A deadline in conversations should be clear without denying members the opportunity to raise vital issues (Cheng et al., 2025).

Active Experimentation

When I undertake a role play in the future, I will have a discussion plan that has specific goals to be achieved and time points. I will leave room to present the task, brainstorm, analyse alternatives, and generalise conclusions. I will welcome all members to make oral or written input in the form of suggestions. Provided that one takes the lead in the discussion, I will nicely compel other individuals to express their opinions. I will also delegate responsibilities to promote shared leadership. Lastly, I will assess the likelihood of the group accomplishing its own task within the deadline, and also whether the group members have an equal chance to participate. These plans will ensure I am a better, more systematic and involving leader.

Critical Reflection on My Values, Beliefs, and Leadership Style

Concrete Experience

Such values as responsibility, respect, cooperation, and doing things right influence my approach toward leadership. I suppose that a leader should be a guide, keeper, and facilitator who assists the group in reaching its goals. These ideologies can help me stay on track and be responsible where a group requires direction (Dutta et al., 2021). Nonetheless, they can also mislead me into the view that I have to find a solution swiftly or manage when the talk gets out of order.

Reflective Observation

Considering these values, I understand that responsibility can also be a strength, as it is an aspect which promotes preparation and commitment. Respect may also enable me to listen to various thoughts and disregard input. Still, I should take into consideration that my need to be

orderly at times restricts the autonomy of other people. Should I think it necessary to have an answer clear, I will advantageously prevent the members, by having them seek an alternative solution, which he never has. My favouritism towards the need to engage efficiently in doing tasks might also impact my responses to disagreeableness as well. Before all of us have ventured to present their concerns, I may be enticed to lean towards a decision. This may make it time-saving, but it may deny the group the opportunity to see flaws in its suggested solution. I must hence act wisely between constructive direction and over control.

Reflective practice involves reflection on both the action that a professional is engaged in and on the action that has been taken (Eden et al., 2024). The difference is helpful as I would be able to analyse my behaviour on the following post-role-play, as well as, to get skills on how to change this during the occurrence of a conversation. As an example, when I realise that I am talking more than other members, then I can stop and ask other members to contribute instead of waiting until the end of the activity.

Abstract Conceptualisation

My experience has proven that self-awareness is a key in leadership. Leadership behavioural understanding and reacting to the needs of groups in an appropriate way determine leadership effectiveness. My values are not problematic as such; their impacts are dependent on my application. The responsibility is useful when it happens to back the group, but it may be controlling when I do not want to share the decisions.

Equal respect must not be about only being polite. It demands that I listen to varied views that even exert pressure on my assumptions. I have to acknowledge that the communication style I prefer to use with each of the members may not always be the most appropriate one. Critical reflection will entail questioning, not justifying, my actions but my own beliefs. I also realise that there is an influence of context in leadership. A group with a short deadline might require more structure, and a group with complicated ideas could gain more discussion and making decisions. A good leader must thus change instead of relying on a particular style.

Active Experimentation

I will also train myself to share responsibility and influence the group members to make decisions in future group work. I will pose open questions, consider different points of view, and justify the course of action. I will also ask other members to comment on my style of

leadership since I might not be a complete reflection of how other members feel about my behaviour. After each group activity, I will reflect on three questions: Did I provide sufficient direction? Did I permit members to have an influence? Was my behaviour helpful to the common goals of the group? The questions will enable me to be aware of the times when my values can assist me in being effective as a leader and when I should alter my approach.

Promoting Cultural Diversity and Inclusion

The issue of cultural diversity should be taken into consideration when leading a group of people since people may have a dissimilar approach to communication, experience, language, and expectations of leadership (Kleinheksel et al., 2023). There are those of us who can be comfortable with open disagreements, and there are those of us who can be comfortable with disagreements privately or indirectly. But I must not think all members of a certain cultural centre act alike. Participation can also be affected by individual personality, confidence, past experiences and the situation. I must therefore not consider my own rules on communication preferences as those of the group during group activities. As an illustration, when one has limited eye contact with people, it does not necessarily mean they are uninterested, and a quiet member also may not have anything valuable to say (Roberson & Perry, 2022). These assumptions might cause unjust outcomes and preclude precious insights.

The Equality Act 2010 is a legal framework that protects against discrimination in Great Britain against discrimination based on a protected characteristic which includes race; religion or belief; and disability (Robinson et al., 2021). Despite the specific requirements of the law, depending on the situation, the law strengthens the need to treat people fairly and with respect. This, in a group leadership context, translates to sensitivity to obstacles that might make members not contribute maximally (Steffens et al., 2021). The inclusiveness I can enhance is by setting up respectful ground rules, using clear language, avoiding unnecessary jargon, and ensuring that everyone has comprehended the task. I will give reasonable chances to the members to talk and prevent interruptions and dismissive remarks. On fitting occasions, I can provide other forms of participation, e.g. written recommendations or even short individual input prior to an open discussion. Such strategies can assist members who are not as comfortable talking in front of others, but I would rather consult about preferences and not make assumptions about what other people require.

Cultural intelligence is not an exception as well. Cultural differences must be comprehended and adapted to when people are interacting across cultures (Sumaiya et al., 2022). To implement this principle, one has to be curious, self-aware, and open to call assumptions into question. I have the ability to ask deferential questions and be receptive to constructive feedback, as well as accept that I am not always right about another individual. The learning cycle by Kolb (1984) will be used to examine whether my leadership activities provide meaningful participation opportunities, pinpoint barriers, and work on solutions and implement them into new group activities. I will measure success not only according to the accomplishment of the task but also according to the respect and the possibility of the contributions by the members. Inclusive leadership is not about not disagreeing but managing differences in a manner that is just and constructive.

Conclusion

In this essay, I expressed my thoughts on leadership based on the learning cycle of Kolb (1984). Communication and active listening were strong areas, and time management and equal participation had to be improved. My leadership style was affected by my values since they emphasised the importance of balancing shared decision-making and responsibility. I also realised the need to include culture and the need to respect differences. To be more inclusive, confident, and effective in future, I will promote involvement, be time-conscious, take feedback, and change my leadership style.

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