

# Global Perspectives on Transformational Leadership in Nursing Education: Advancing Maternal and Child Health Practices

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*A passionate mentor and advocate of evidence-based practice, Dr. Macaraeg is a sought-after speaker at national and international conferences, including the Asia-Pacific Congress of Pediatric Nursing. Her scholarly contributions include published works and the development of instructional modules, such as the Course Module for Birthing Clinics for Nurses, and published health education resources for nursing students under PANACCEA (Philippine Association of Nursing Authors for Community, Clinical, Education, and Administration). She currently serves as Vice President for Plans and Programs and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Mother and Child Nurses Association of the Philippines (MCNAP), Secretary of Ang Nars, Inc., and was the 2023 COMELEC Chairperson of the Philippine Nurses Association, where she played a key role in promoting professional ethics and transparency.*

*In recognition of her exemplary leadership and service, Dr. Macaraeg was honored with a **Certificate of Recognition** and named among the **PNA Zone 2 CAMANAVA Hall of Leaders** during the 50th Anniversary celebration of PNA Zone 2. With a leadership style grounded in humility, vision, and service, Dr. Macaraeg continues to inspire students, educators, and healthcare professionals to transform nursing education and advance maternal and child health both locally and globally.*

## Introduction

Transformational leadership inspires and motivates both instructors and students, encouraging them to exceed their own expectations and capabilities. By establishing a community of learners, transformational leaders foster an environment that supports collaboration, innovation, and personal development. As such, transformational leaders create an environment that promotes continuous improvement.

Furthermore, transformational leadership will remain an integral aspect of future healthcare practice related to maternal/child health issues. Transformational leadership will lead to a growing emphasis in nursing education on developing critical thinking and flexibility to adequately address the diverse patient needs of today's healthcare system.

Nursing education's global perspective reflects how different cultures have shaped the development of nursing educational models and leadership styles. In Sweden and India, for instance, the development of their respective nursing program curricula is deeply tied to the cultural environment of each country. In Sweden, for example, there is significant emphasis on nurturing egalitarian leadership and empowering students, whereas nursing education in India requires students to defer to authority to maintain a hierarchical relationship, which often discourages them from actively participating in discussions.

A review of case studies from around the world reveals that differences in leadership and educational models affect the success of the nursing profession and the progress made in improving maternal and child health. In Brazil, for example, the Maternal and Child Health Program emphasized community interventions by integrating communities into nursing education and focusing on transformational leadership principles. As a result, the students who graduate from this program will benefit from an understanding of how to work with families and communities to gain insight into health-related issues and develop solutions to address them.

The continued progress of the profession of nursing globally will require nursing education programs to develop a future nursing workforce



capable of addressing urgent health care needs through transformational leadership education models. Nurses educated in transformational leadership principles will possess the skill sets needed to apply critical thinking, adaptability, and cultural competence to improve maternal and child health. The connection between nursing leadership and nurses' roles in transforming how health care providers interact with mothers and children will be described in the following sections. First, transformational leadership is about creating a positive influence on maternal and child health through empowering nurses. As advocates, nurse educators work to create an environment of teamwork and partnership among health care professionals, so that all can communicate openly with one another and make decisions together. By doing this, nurses, as empowered professionals, will possess a greater ability to address the diverse and complex needs of mothers and their children.

When nurses have confidence in themselves, they are more confident as advocates for their patients, which ultimately results in better health outcomes. An example of this is when nursing professionals share their personal experiences and insights with their peers, enabling nurse leaders to create new and innovative ways to provide culturally relevant care to the communities they serve. Not only does this type of collaboration enhance the nursing profession, but it also affects maternal and child health in a much broader way than if only one perspective were taken into account.

Despite the many benefits of transformational leadership, there are some barriers to its implementation. Barriers include differences in *communication styles, institutional barriers to change, and the lack of support from some leadership*. Understanding these barriers will allow for the development of strategies to create a more unified and better-connected health care system. The resolution of the barriers listed above will create conditions that allow nurse leaders to enable their nursing teams to participate collaboratively to the fullest extent possible, thereby increasing the quality of care for mothers and infants (Cipta et al., 2024).

## Barriers and Challenges to Implementing Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership faces many challenges when applied in Nursing Education, especially in Maternal and Child Health. One of the biggest challenges is the resistance toward change. Many Nursing educators and institutions have well-established habits and beliefs that make change difficult. Often, this resistance occurs because of fear of the unknown or simply a lack of understanding of the positive outcomes associated with Transformational leadership. Without an open mind, there will be limited potential for innovation and improvement in Nursing Education.

One of the major barriers to delivering quality nursing education is the limited resources available for program development. Nursing education is usually limited by the amount of funding provided to nursing programs. If funding or financial resources are limited, growing transformational leaders within the nursing profession will also be limited, as nursing institutions are unable to provide effective development training for nurse educators or equip them with the competencies required to develop and maintain transformational leadership.

To assess and evaluate how to truly be effective transformational leaders, nurse educators must receive formal preparation regarding Transformational Leadership; yet many have not received any Formal training or development for this area. As a result, the majority of Nurse Educators lack confidence in implementing transformational leadership in both academic & clinical environments. Thus, the need for Structured Training, Continuing Education, and Evaluation of the Implementation of Transformational Leadership should be prioritized to foster an environment in which transformational leadership can be best fostered, regardless of the level of nursing education. By addressing barriers to transformational leadership in nursing education, nursing education can prepare leaders who will enhance health practices for mothers and children. The following sections outline future directions and recommendations to overcome these challenges, ensuring nursing education continues to evolve and adapt to the healthcare system.

## Moving Forward

Going forward, nursing education must implement strategies to develop leadership training that will prepare future professionals in the maternal/child health field. Strategies may include developing mentoring programs that connect established leaders with emerging nurses and instilling critical thinking, communication, and teamwork skills within nursing students. The development of a supportive network of new leaders will enable them to build their skill sets and gain the confidence to lead in areas related to complex health issues.

Recommendations for policy implementation include promoting transformational leadership principles in nursing curricula. Collaborative relationships among regulatory agencies, educational institutions, and policymakers will result in the establishment of policies that support innovative educational methodologies that enable the effective development of the leadership characteristics necessary for the effective delivery of health care.

Technology can provide significant assistance with these recommendations. Digital platforms may allow nursing students to train more easily and efficiently while enhancing accessibility and flexibility. Virtual courses and workshops provide nursing students with exposure to a broader range of learning opportunities that accommodate individual learning needs, encourage engagement, and employ simulation technology to prepare them for future employment in a safe environment (Assulaimani, 2019).

Finally, with effective leadership training, supportive policies, and the integration of technology, we can help to ensure that nursing education will prepare nurses to meet the various needs of the mothers and children they will work with in the future. Consideration of these three areas of focus will enable the development of a dynamic, responsive educational environment that supports improvements in health practices and health outcomes.

## Reflections

As I think about my professional career, I am inspired by the kind of leadership and dedication of many individuals in this profession. With more than two decades of diverse clinical, academic, and administrative experience, I have come to recognize the importance of transformational leadership in shaping healthcare practices in both local and global settings. Through my accomplishments, I have become aware of the need for nursing education that meets the ever-changing needs of patients and communities through visionary, service-oriented leadership.

With extensive experience leading nursing programs, coordinating clinical education, and mentoring students, I honed a leadership style based on humility, vision, and service to others. This inspires me and reaffirms my belief that leadership is an opportunity to motivate and empower others, not merely a title. My commitment to maternal and child health requires both technical knowledge and compassionate care. These accomplishments emphasize the integration of evidence-based practice, innovative teaching methods, and advocacy to enhance health outcomes. The advantage of having a global vision of transformational leadership in nursing education has helped me to realize that when preparing future healthcare providers to serve mothers and children, our education must include more than imparting information and knowledge; we must develop our graduates' ability to think critically, make ethical decisions, and adapt their knowledge and skills to the local and global environments where they will be practicing only through application will they become a better provider of patient care.

Through my active involvement in numerous professional organizations, including the International Council of Nurses, where I have been instrumental in developing instructional modules and sponsoring international conferences worldwide, my transformational leadership skills have been meticulously honed. As a nurse educator, I serve as an excellent example of how leaders in nursing education can create bridges between theory and practice and influence healthcare systems at multiple levels. My journey provides me with the opportunity to reflect on my own goals as a nurse educator and leader. I recognize the necessity of



mentoring students in clinical competency and humanistic care, advocating for ethical practices, and embracing innovative education to meet the new and emerging challenges in maternal and child health. This profession has inspired me to pursue my life goals, including my motivation to continue motivating learners. This transformational leadership allows me not only to educate but also to positively impact the future of healthcare systems worldwide.

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