Complexity Leadership in the Nursing Context
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Abstract
Consolidation through mergers and acquisitions is occurring across health care as a strategic move to address the disruptive forces of complexity. While consolidation is improving the overall fitness and viability of health care organizations, it is having the opposite effect on the professionals working within them who are reporting increasing rates of burnout from ongoing complexity in the health care environment. This happens in all organizations that try to respond to complexity with traditional bureaucratic leadership approaches. What is needed is to replace bureaucratic leadership with the networked approach of complexity leadership. The idea is not to "do more with less" but to "do things better." In this article, we show how to do this by applying complexity leadership to the nursing context. Complexity leadership is a framework for enabling people and organizations for adaptability. It views leaders not as managerial implementers of top-down directives but as collaborators who work together to enhance the overall adaptability and fitness of the system. From a complexity leadership perspective, the role of nurse leaders should be not only to help the system run but also to help it run *better* by increasing organizational adaptability.

Discussion guide for either faculty or practice leaders:

1. Complexity leadership is the process of facilitating adaptive processes that help the system evolve to a new state. As healthcare systems merge, entrepreneurial leaders must create new networks and processes where operational leaders generate a new order. This process of adaptation is facilitated by enabling leaders.

    a. Who are the entrepreneurial and enabling leaders in your organization?

    b. How do enabling leaders create conditions that promote creativity and adaptation in your organization?

2. What organizational structures or activities promote creative space needed for networks to form and innovate?

3. What non-value added processes exist in your organization that detracts from innovation?

4. The authors suggest that DNP prepared leaders are ideally positioned to promote creative adaptation. How are you using DNP prepared nurses to drive systems innovation?