

Enhancement of the Assistant Nurse Manager Core Class

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- By implementing a structured leadership course, assistant nurse managers have more confidence and competence in their role, achieving learning outcomes of 90.2%.
- Having a structured leadership education for assistant nurse managers helps to address learning gaps, which is essential in building leadership skills and knowledge.
- By using a virtual learning platform, education can be accessed throughout a large health system, allowing distance learners greater access, enabling system-wide leadership development.
- Although there can be barriers to overcome, such as technology and staffing, having quarterly offerings of a structured course is essential to training front-line leaders.

Background and Purpose

This quality improvement project evaluated the enhancement of the Assistant Nurse Manager (ANM) Core Class within this health system. Assistant nurse managers serve as frontline leaders responsible for unit operations, including staffing, patient safety, regulatory compliance, team engagement, conflict resolution, and communication (Doupbrate et al., 2024; Krivanek et al., 2023; Motsamai Modise & Masogo, 2024). Many nurses transition into this leadership role with limited formal preparation and rely primarily on unit-based, just-in-time training, which can lead to inconsistent leadership development and reduced competence and confidence in performing essential leadership functions for their new role (Choi et al., 2022; Popalis et al., 2025; Schwatka et al., 2020).

This health system had previously implemented an ANM Core Class to address leadership development needs. Executive leadership and previous participants' feedback show a need to improve the class and expand access for community hospitals. This project's goal was to strengthen the existing program by adding content, enhancing current content, and introducing a virtual participation option for distance learners. In collaboration with executive leadership, a need was identified for a more standardized and comprehensive assistant nurse manager development program across the health system. The purpose of this project was to enhance the ANM Core Class and to evaluate whether the revised program improved participants' self-reported confidence and competence in leadership responsibilities by 65%.

Methodology

The project used the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) framework to guide the planning, implementation, evaluation, and refinement of the course enhancements. The enhancement had three main components:

1. Adding new presenters, which created additional CE credits
2. Updating content based on policies and procedures
3. New applications and use of the virtual classroom for remote learners.

Plan: Identify the gaps in current training, update current and new content, and add a virtual option for distance learners located at community hospitals.

Do: Deliver the enhanced courses and gather feedback through phase self-reported surveys.

Study: Review surveys to assess changes and compare them to the 65% improvement target.

Act: Revise the course content based on findings, offer the course throughout the fiscal year, and standardize it across the system.

Evaluation Methods

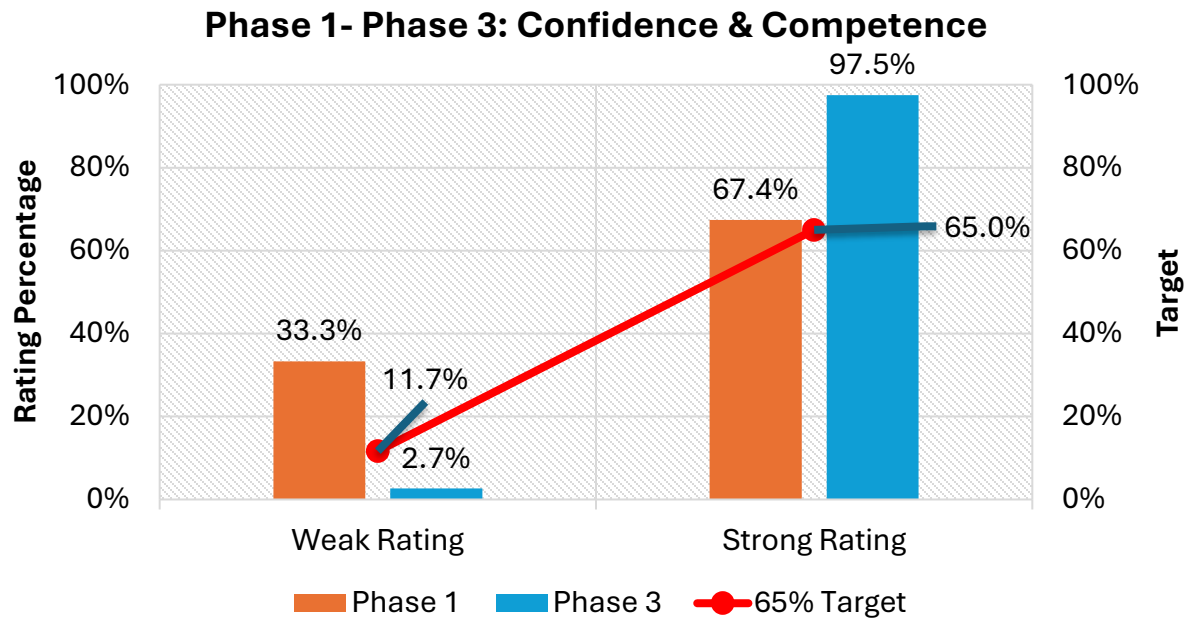
This project was measured using a three-phase self-report survey completed by participants. The surveys used a five-point Likert scale to assess confidence and competence in areas covered in the course. Phase 1 surveys were sent 2 weeks before the class began; Phase 2 surveys were sent immediately after the class concluded; and Phase 3 surveys were sent 30 days after the class concluded. There were nineteen participants in the program; sixteen completed the entire course, while three withdrew due to staffing constraints within their units.

Results

Baseline survey results showed gaps in competence and confidence across several areas. Participants' survey results showed the greatest challenges in budgeting, productivity analytics, visual surveillance procedures, and payroll systems. Following course completion, participants reported increased confidence and competence across nearly all learning domains.

- Phase 2 showed improvement, with a 90% increase in both areas overall, exceeding the established goal of 65%.
- Phase 3 showed overall improvement, with a 92% increase in both areas, exceeding the 65% target.

Figure 1



- Participants reporting below-average confidence on self-report surveys fell from 32.7% before the course to 4.4% after implementation, a 65% improvement.
- Participants reporting below-average competence fell from 33.9% to 1.1%.

These findings indicate that the enhanced curriculum successfully improved participants' perceptions of their readiness to perform the essential duties of this leadership position.

Strengths and Limitations

Challenges were encountered during the implementation phase with technology and attendance barriers. Technical issues with the classroom's computer equipment led to the relocation of the February class on day three. For the April sessions, the equipment was tested before the class started. Staffing shortages at the hospital led to participant withdrawals. Despite the challenges, by utilizing the virtual learning options, participants from regional hospitals had greater accessibility to the course.

Implications and Conclusion

The enhanced Assistant Nurse Manager Core Class showed improvement in participants' confidence and competence. This enhancement also shows that a more standardized leadership development experience across the health system is needed. Based on these outcomes, the project supports continued quarterly offerings of the enhanced ANM Core Class and the integration of the program into the organization's standard onboarding process for newly appointed assistant nurse managers. By investing in structured leadership development (Lee, 2022), this project can strengthen the education of nursing leaders (Lee et al., 2022) and promote consistent leadership practices throughout the system.

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