

High Performing Public Health Teams in a Complex Health System

Shannon Sibbald, Malcolm Steinberg, Anita Kothari, Beverley Bryant

Canadian Public Health Association Conference: Public Health 2018

Oral Presentation Session 18

May 30, 2018

Region of Peel – Public Health
Workforce Development



 **Region
of Peel**
working with you



Take a moment to think

..... of a highpoint experience in working collaboratively with one or more persons (from another discipline, profession, sector or system)

- What made that experience a highpoint?
- What are the aspects that you valued in that experience?

What about a time you were a part of a team that didn't work so well?

- What didn't work well?
- What was missing?



The value of high performance teams

- “The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime.” (Babe Ruth)
- “Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare.” (Patrick Lencioni)



Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health
3. Common challenges experienced by teams
4. Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams and methods to assess, evaluate and improve team effectiveness
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health
3. Common challenges experienced by teams
4. Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

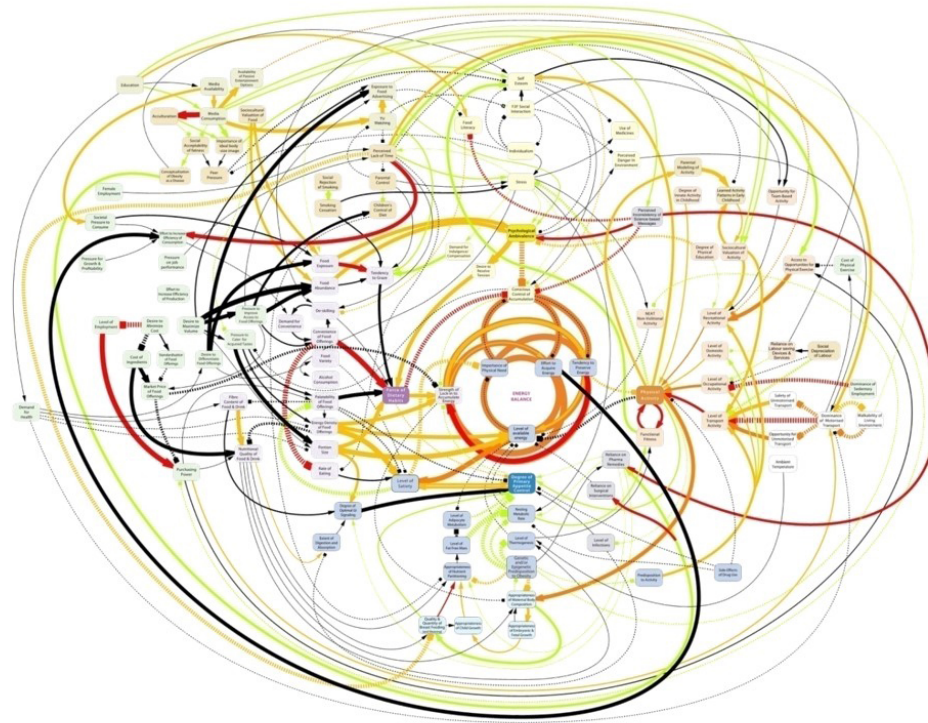
‘Wicked’ problems

- These are “a category of public policy issues, not with moral wickedness, but with a high level of complexity. Wicked problems are characterized as policy issues that: are continually evolving; have many causal levels; have no single solution that applies in all circumstances and where solutions can only be classified as better or worse, rather than right or wrong (Rittel and Webber, 1973)

Public health is presented with many 'wicked' problems

"The causes of **obesity** are extremely complex a bold whole system approach is critical will require a broad set of integrated policies including both population and targeted measures.."

UK Government Office for Science, 2007



Obesity systems map

At: Graphic obtained from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reducing-obesity-obesity-system-map>.

Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
- 2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health**
3. Common challenges experienced by teams
4. Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

Terminology

- **Collaborative public health practice** happens when multiple practitioners work together to deliver effective policies, programs and services in an **intradisciplinary** or **interdisciplinary** way.
- **Interprofessional / interdisciplinary public health practice** is a collaborative practice involving practitioners from varying professional backgrounds and disciplines working together in an interactive way to integrate knowledge and methods using a synthesis of approaches.
- A work **group** is a number of individuals who routinely function like a team, but work interdependently in achievement of a common goal. The performance of a work group is merely the summation of each group member's individual contribution.
- A **team** is a collection of people working together through coordinated effort and individual and mutual accountability, with a commitment to a common purpose and collective output.

Principles of high-performing teams

- **Shared goals** that reflect shared priorities, and that can be clearly articulated, understood, and supported by all team members
- **Clear roles** that provide clear expectations for each team member's functions, responsibilities, and accountabilities
- **Mutual trust** creating strong norms of reciprocity and greater opportunities for shared achievement
- **Effective communication** achieved through consistent channels for candid and complete communication, which are accessed and used by all team members across all settings
- **Measurable processes and outcomes** assessed through timely feedback on successes and failures in both the functioning of the team and achievement of the team's goals.

Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health
3. **Common challenges experienced by teams**
4. Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

Reasons why teams might fail

1. Lack a clear and compelling vision and purpose
2. Do not hold each other accountable for their work
3. Do not have shared leadership
4. Operate with processes that are ineffective or not well established
5. Have too much or too little autonomy
 - Within teams, poor listening, domination by individuals or subgroups, negative (destructive criticism), hidden conflicts, divisive arguments, and absenteeism also present major challenges.
 - Teams need to also be aware of the potential for 'hidden conflicts' which can undermine team efforts.

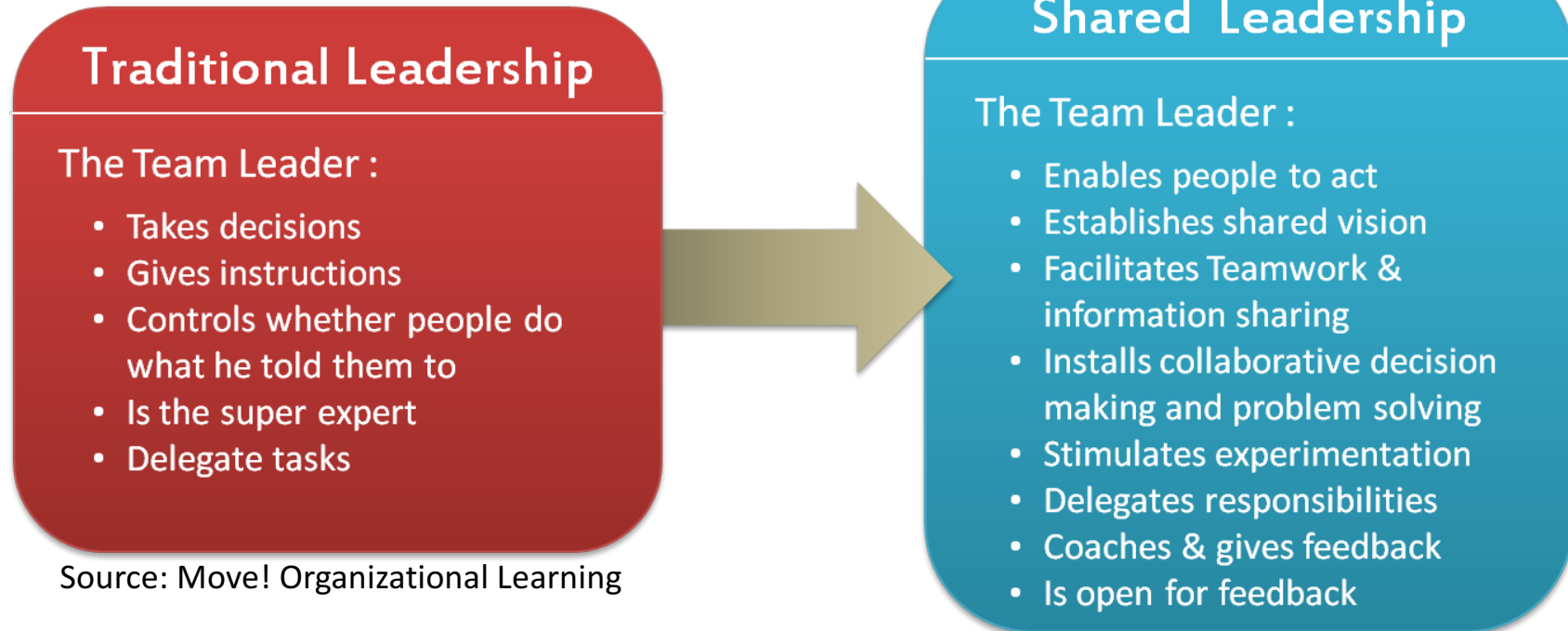
Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health
3. Common challenges experienced by teams
4. **Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams**
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

Strategies for high performance teams

1. Provide an inspiring, meaningful reason for working together for team members and identifying clear, but adaptable roles and responsibilities
2. Make building relationships a primary goal
3. Establish norms of accountability and trust and having team members openly discuss their expectations for one another
4. Create effective team processes
5. Include **shared leadership** in the team vision and purpose statement and include the practice of shared leadership in roles and responsibilities
6. Have measureable performance objectives
7. Establish clear group norms for making decisions as a group and resolving team conflict

Shared leadership



Shared leadership occurs if the initiative, the creative thinking and the leadership in the organization is very much DISTRIBUTED and people behave as 'owners', and feel accountable for what happens in and with the organization as a whole.

Outline

1. Complex population and public health challenges and the need for high performance teams
2. Types, characteristics, and roles of teams in the context of public health
3. Common challenges experienced by teams
4. Strategies to develop and foster high performing teams and methods to assess, evaluate and improve team effectiveness
5. High performance teams: the Peel Public Health experience

Once Upon a Time

- **New Supervisor:** Here's the key points of orientation
 - This is your team (mostly PHNs and Admin)
 - This is your program
 - This is your budget
 - Now, go out and make it happen!

More recently

- **New Supervisor: Here's the key points**
 - This is your area of focus: health issue, population segment
 - These are some staff (PHNs, Analysts, Health Promoters, Coordinators, Epi's, Evaluators etc.)
 - You may add to or change the make-up
 - Now, go, figure out what to do and then do it!
 - Oh, and by the way, be sure to use robust methods

Current State

- Teams asked to address complex population health issues
 - Assess the health status and the community, know the evidence, tackle politics, determine intervention, implement and evaluate
 - Interventions across the population health continuum from education to advocacy to policy

We've developed new types of teams:

- Multi-disciplinary teams
 - Increases supervisor complexity
 - Must match the task, the role and the person
 - Mentor and coach through a variety of processes
- Specialized team, often centralized
 - Ability to interface with clients
 - Prioritization of work

Effective management of these new complex teams

- Strategic Leadership is essential
- Core team building skills
 - Balance between team function and project outcomes
 - What we do and how we do it
 - Facilitation skills
 - Surface conflict
- Matrix management

Effective management cont'd

- Role clarity
 - Strong knowledge of roles and competencies
 - Manage power imbalances
 - Provide opportunities for all
- Prioritize and organize the work
 - Critical and strategic thinking
- Mentor and coach

Effective high performance teams are characterized by:

1. Shared goals enabled by inspiring, meaningful reasons to work together
2. Clear roles and responsibilities
3. Prioritizing building relationships
4. Established norms of accountability and mutual trust
5. Effective team processes, notably communication
6. Measurable processes and outcomes
7. Clear group norms for making decisions as a group and resolving team conflict

Contacts and Affiliations

- **Shannon Sibbald:** Assistant Professor, School of Health Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Family Medicine, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University (ssibbald@uwo.ca)
- **Malcolm Steinberg:** Director Public Health Practice, Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University (malcolm_steinberg@sfu.ca)
- **Beverley Bryant:** Manager, Education and Research, Peel Public Health (beverley.bryant@peelregion.ca)
- **Anita Kothari:** Associate Professor, School of Health Studies, Faculty of Health Sciences, Department of Family Medicine, Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry, Western University (akothari@uwo.ca)

Thank you



© fotogestoeber - Fotolia.com