Prior expectations of leadership programme attendees and their subsequent reflections on completion thereof

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Abstract

This article describes the reflections of nursing academics on their personal expectations prior to commencement of a leadership programme and their subsequent reflections on completion of this introduction to the leadership programme. The programme aimed at developing the participants as leaders in conjunction with developing the culture of research in a school of nursing at a university in the Western Cape, South Africa. A qualitative, exploratory and descriptive design was used. A total sample of eight nursing academics at a higher education institution (HEI) took part and narratives were written in July 2012. The results indicated active participation and involvement; development of skills and knowledge; a balance between programme and personal goals; a sense of confidence amongst attendees; creating structure for growth; and critical thinking. The implication of the study was that a leadership research team has been established with clear underlying assumptions of transformative leadership in research driven by self-leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are increasingly requiring academics to maintain research outputs and publications in order to build science and knowledge in fields such as health care. According to Taraban and Logue (2012, 499), providing research expectations for academics has become a widely recognised and accepted goal of universities, and significant effort has been made for creating and maintaining opportunities for academic research. Less attention has been given to the dynamics of research expectations to include peer interaction in research settings; the ability of more junior academics to get involved in research; and the impact of research programmes on developing a positive attitude and leadership in terms of research and research skills.

Despite the growing requirements of universities for academics to conduct research and to publish their research results, the reality of motivating academics to take the lead in conducting research remains a challenge. The Faculty of Health Sciences at a university in the Western Cape, South Africa, recommends that academics should ideally spend about 15 per cent of their time on research activities. However, similar to a situation outlined by Hegmann and Dehn (2006, 5), the factors identified as having the most detrimental effect on publication success are: lack of time due to teaching or other responsibilities; lack of training in research design; and lack of previous leadership and experience in successful publication. The time allocation dedicated to research and writing is considered the most important factor for promoting faculty scholarship (Hegmann and Dehn 2006).

A decision was taken to establish four research development programmes at a School of Nursing in the Western Cape. One of the programmes identified was the leadership programme and eight members of staff joined the group under the mentorship of a senior staff member (lead researcher). A leadership development initiative was established in March 2012 by a senior academic, based on an underlying transformational leadership approach.

Over time, various leadership researchers have emphasised a range of definitions of leadership. Van Zyl (2012) emphasises several definitions, from an ability to influence other people (Kouzes and Posner 1993), to influencing an organised group to accomplish goals (Avolia and Luthans 2006), to interpersonal relationships that allow other people to comply voluntarily (Irving 2011). Leadership is a process that involves the influencing of other people in a group context and goal attainment, while more recent notions of leadership emphasise the role of the leader in the context of the organisational reality (Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe 2005). Furthermore, two distinct but interrelated types of leadership are identified. In transactional leadership, the motivation of followers for carrying out what they have 'transacted' to do is

based on the leader's promises, praise, rewards and/or criticism. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, uses idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration (Bass and Avolio 1993), and followers imitate leaders because they relate with the leaders' aspirations and goals.

RATIONALE FOR THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

On 5 April 2013, the Minister of Science and Technology stated that faculties in the higher education system all over South Africa should develop strategies for advancing science; not only in South Africa, but generally in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region (DST 2013). In 2013, Ministerial Guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of National Research Foundation (NRF) bursaries and fellowships were circulated to universities. These guidelines were informed by the three fundamental principles, namely: representivity; improved efficiencies; and prioritisation of the science, engineering, and technology disciplines. Since the cooperation of researchers is essential for achieving these objectives, universities need to familiarise themselves with these Ministerial Guidelines. The NRF was expected to start implementing the funding guidelines in 2013 in order to achieve the set targets for equity in granting bursaries by 2015 (DST 2013). In the 2013/14 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period, an additional investment of R400 million in the 2015/16 financial year had been allocated by the National Treasury for postgraduate student support. The bulk of these funds would be available to the NRF for distribution in the form of student bursaries and researcher grant funding (DST 2013). A research group, such as the leadership research group established, can obtain funding for projects if successful.

Furthermore, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) Strategy for Human Capital Development for Research Innovation and Scholarship was gazetted for public comment in 2013. The strategy aims at increasing the number of active researchers and enhancing research and innovation skills and outputs in order to improve the international competitiveness of South Africa as a producer of scientific knowledge and innovation, in support of national socio-economic development. It seeks to guide the investment in researcher development, while fully maximising the outputs of established researchers. According to the Science and Technology Laws Amendment Act (No. 16 of 2011), the Minister of Science and Technology must declare research institutions that will be directly funded via the NRF. The main purpose of the declaration of research institutions is to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the spending of public funds.

Some HEIs have established Centres of Excellence (CoEs) that are physical or virtual entities of research that combine existing capacity and resources with the purpose of enabling researchers to collaborate across disciplines and institutions on long-term projects that are locally relevant and internationally competitive in order to enhance the pursuit of research excellence and capacity building (DST 2013). The leadership programme referred to in this article obtained funding from a CoE

in the School of Nursing to initiate the programme. To achieve the goal of quality in research output strong leadership in research is needed in higher education to adapt to the changing research arena and research expectations of, for example, the NRF and the Medical Research Council (MRC).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The transformational leadership style includes the characteristics of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Abualrub and Alghamdi 2012, 668). Transformational leaders develop their followers' interest and commitment to the mission of the group by encouraging problem-solving and specific behaviour by means of intellectual stimulation and by enabling new ways of working (Bass 1999). Such leaders inspire followers to move beyond their self-interest by setting a clear vision and belief that encourage other people to emulate them (Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen and Carneiro 2012, 512). A transformational leader can influence the well-being of his/her followers by employing different mechanisms (Skakon, Nielsen, Borg and Guzman 2010), such as a developmental programme. By applying transformational leadership behaviour, leaders can positively influence their followers' beliefs about their own capability to achieve a task and also indirectly influence their work characteristics to function in a work setting (Nielsen and Munir 2009).

The current study was based on the following assumptions of transformational leadership:

- People will follow a person who inspires them.
- A person with vision and passion can achieve great things.
- The way to get things done is by injecting enthusiasm and energy.
- Transformational leaders care about their staff members and want them to succeed (Holly, Igwe and Kamienski 2011, 3).

As this was a qualitative study, a literature review followed the data collection phase.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Stenhouse (1981, 104) believes passionately that 'it is an academic who in the end will change the world of the school by understanding it'. He argues that academics need to be active meaning-makers in their own professional practice. By selecting areas of concern for themselves and by exploring these issues, they would be best placed to understand and resolve their own real practices and problems.

According to Macphee and Suryaprakash (2012, 251), numerous nursing leadership development programmes have been created to prepare effective nurse

leaders worldwide. However, the present study explored the expectations of members in the process of developing the leadership research development programme for academics at an HEI during their first group engagement. This is believed to be the first attempt to compile a research development programme in leadership with an underlying intention to enhance self-leadership of nursing academics. It was unknown what the nursing academics' expectations were during the introduction of the leadership programme and their subsequent reflections on it. It was assumed that the nursing academics' initial expectations could shape their own journey during the leadership research development programme. An insight into the expectations of lecturers of the programme could create the conditions for growth in a collaborative leadership research development programme.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to explore and describe the expectations of nurse academics during the introduction of a leadership research development programme and to explore their subsequent reflections on completion thereof. Kuh, Kinzie, Cruce, Shoup and Gonyea (2007, 38) are of the opinion that conducting research with peers can be a life changing experience. The article describes the initial expectations and reflections of nurse academics about the introduction of a leadership programme at a School of Nursing in the Western Cape, South Africa.

DESIGN

The research design of participatory action research (PAR) was applied. The article focuses on the initiation of the leadership programme. PAR has been found to be appropriate, for example, for health promotion programmes that are designed to empower and lead people to having increased control over their lives (Minkler and Wallerstein 2008). PAR methods are used when planning and conducting the research process involves those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study (Bergold and Thomas 2012, 1). During the current study, a senior academic acted as the lead researcher who was assisting seven nursing academics with focusing on research about self-leadership, with the purpose of increasing their ability and interest in self-leadership in the educational environment. Qualitative data was collected by using narratives to explore the participants' expectations during the first two contact sessions of the programme.

PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the programme were eight nursing academics who were appointed at an HEI. They comprised six females and two males between the ages of 35 to 56 years. Of these participants, two had a doctorate, and the others held master's degrees in nursing science. The academics expressed a range of motivations for getting

involved in the programme. All of them were attracted by the idea of participating in a project that involved weaving together the skills of research and self-leadership 'to do something that is worthwhile'.

THE PROGRAMME

The vision of the overall programme was to enhance research in leadership and to develop a positive, purposeful research environment that fostered commitment and enthusiasm for working collaboratively towards a common research output purpose and leadership at a School of Nursing. This leadership initiative was planned as a project over a period of three years (2013–2016). During this period, the group would meet at least three times a year for two consecutive days at a time.

The programme used a developmental approach while adopting a participatory educational style of workshop and writing retreats that were participant-centred. During the early days of the research, the programme leader intentionally chose a methodological approach that was designed to make the research process as participatory as possible (Ballamingie and Johnson 2011, 721). To accomplish this objective, she sought participation in all aspects of the research process, attempting to engage the nursing academics as members of the group to collaborate with her on the research and analysis. Methodologically, this was an explicit attempt to 'democratize the research process' between the researcher and academics, as well as interested local parties (Greenwood and Levin 1998, 4).

It was expected that the programme would enhance self-leadership in research capacity. The content of the workshops and writing retreats included: enhancing self-leadership among nursing academics; writing a proposal for funding support on self leadership of nurses in the Western Cape; writing research articles about leadership for publication; enhancing research capacity for their own doctoral studies; and building leadership at a school of nursing.

DATA COLLECTION

The use of narratives allowed the researcher to gain more insight into the participants' initial expectations (Burns and Grove 2011) and these narratives provided helpful perspectives in relation to their experiences and rich details about their feelings and thoughts. Participants were requested to complete a narrative report during July 2012 about their prior expectations and their reflections on the first session of the programme. The research questions posed were: 'What are your expectations of the programme?' and 'How was the programme for you?' They were requested to hand these reports back after the first contact session of the programme after they had reflected on the session. The narratives did not identify the participants and participation was voluntary.

Unstructured observation by the lead researcher was also used as a method of data collection during this first contact session. The researcher attempted to describe

behaviour as it was observed during the session, with no preconceived ideas, in field notes. The researcher wrote field notes during and after the first session as a measure of triangulation with the data of the narratives. The methods enabled data saturation to be obtained.

DATA ANALYSIS

Making use of Tesch's (1986) method of open-coding, the transcribed narratives were analysed by the lead researcher and an independent coder. Steps included in this method were reading carefully through all transcripts, answering the following questions: 'What is it about?' and 'What is the underlying meaning?'; making a list of major topics; and turning them into categories.

TRUSTWORTHINESS

The following measures to ensure trustworthiness were applied (Guba and Lincoln 1985, 290–327):

- **Credibility/truth-value:** Reflexivity was important and referred to the assessment of the influence that the researcher's own background, perceptions and interests had on the study (Krefting 1991, 218). In order to counteract the possible over-involvement, a field journal was kept by the researcher. Making use of the field journal, the researcher kept a record of her own behaviour, expectations and reflections on her thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Precision in description of the data and stringency in meaning interpretation were important for credibility.

- **Transferability** was achieved by a dense description of the data (Guba and Lincoln 1985, 301).

- **Dependability/consistency:** The study emphasised the uniqueness of individuals' perceptions, and variations in experience rather than expecting identical results (Krefting 1991, 216). The data was sent to an independent coder.

- **Confirmability** was achieved by ensuring reflexive analysis and data analysis triangulation (Krefting 1991, 221). Field notes and narratives were methods that were used to achieve data triangulation.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In accordance with research ethics, committee approval was sought from the institutional research committee (Registration number 12/9/26), all participants in the programme gave informed consent and participated voluntarily.

FINDINGS

Two themes emerged from the data analysis, namely: (i) expectations prior to commencement of the programme; and (ii) reflections subsequent to the completion of the programme.

Expectations prior to commencement of the programme

In this theme, four categories emerged from the data, namely: (i) active participation and involvement at both an individual and a group level; (ii) development of skills that can be utilised in the context of the workplace; (iii) development of new and improvement of existing research skills by practical engagement in research activities; and (iv) linking personal goals/objectives to programme goals/objectives.

Active participation and involvement at both an individual and a group level

Active participation is defined as either the involvement or performance of either individuals or a group in the activities with the purpose of exerting influence, or active involvement that is articulated as effective participation or contribution towards the achievement of a common goal (Miner 2005).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in an organisational environment of development, learning, and building supportive relationships through participation. According to Walker, Cooke, Henderson and Creedy (2006), leadership enables staff members to find meaning in their work, empowering them to communicate their ideas and to participate collaboratively. Participants expected active participation in the programme and in their narratives some mentioned that at group level they expected: 'Participation and dedication', 'Play an active part in this ...'. On an individual level, one participant mentioned: 'To be part of the ... programme ... and do the part that is allocated to us ...'. Another participant summarised their expected involvement in the group as: 'Commitment to the group ...'. The experience of being part of and involved in a group as an individual provides an opportunity for open communication, and sharing knowledge and ideas which is subsequently translated into transformational leadership (Hellriegel et al 2011).

The findings indicated that members of the group had a desire to be part of a group that behaved in new ways. A participant articulated this point of view: 'I want to feel part of the group who can exercise autonomous behaviour that is self-motivated.' Hellriegel et al (2011) state that transformation leadership involves inspiring, and thereby motivating, individuals to reach the highest goals. This opinion was further expressed as: 'The leadership programme could lead to concerted efforts directed towards a common goal by all stakeholders within the School of Nursing.'

Development of skills (leadership and management) that can be utilised in the context of a changing workplace

The nature of leadership is quite demanding and in order for a person to lead, whether he/she leads him/herself or other people, requires a combination of leadership and management skills (Innman 2007) that include change management. Leaders perceive that enhanced leadership styles and organisational skills in a changing environment are associated with improved staff morale and engagement, and more respectful staff relationships (Macphee and Suryaprakash 2012, 257). There is also evidence to suggest that academic research has little effect on management practice (Brannick and Coghlan 2006). However, the expectations shared by the participants indicated that they expected that the development of their skills 'could enable them to function as "agents of change"'. This statement was related to the research and leadership context of the School of Nursing that was discussed during the session (field note).

Baker (2013, 1) highlights the characteristics of a successful change agent as someone who can work with people by influencing and persuading, that is, working with people rather than seeking to impose change upon them. One narrative stated the importance of being a change agent as 'to make a difference through the programme, to current management styles present in the academic and clinical environment ...'. Change requires innovation and the creation of new ideas. Transformational leaders stimulate their followers' change efforts by approaching old situations in new ways (Avolio and Bass 2002, 2).

In an academic environment, it could be expected that participants develop and establish change in themselves and those people in the sphere of their influence. One narrative stated: 'establish change within self and those around me'. Change is a universal constant for nursing leaders throughout the world, and change management is a key global leadership competency (Macphee and Suryaprakash 2012, 257).

Adult participants should be self-directed with the purpose of allowing change to individuals' self-concept (Knowles 1990). Development of skills is linked with adult learning. It is known that adults best integrate knowledge when it is suitable for immediate use of solving day-to-day problems of living or working. As one participant wrote: 'apply the information to everyday living'. Kearney (2009, 1) states that more flexibly organised research and systems, and pragmatic approaches are needed that serve society in the widest sense.

Development of new and improvement of existing research skills by practical engagement in research activities

Research is the result of advancing knowledge that had been created in the past (Samuels 2013). Engagement refers to being immersed, busy, occupied, or involved, for example, deeply involved in something (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/engaged?qsrc=2446) such as research. A participant expected an opportunity 'to be able to participate in research'.

Worldwide, countries face growing demands to strengthen their capacities for research and knowledge production. This has necessitated urgent efforts to renew HEIs in order to become knowledge-orientated institutions (Kearney 2009, 1). A participant expressed the expectation to develop research skills as an academic: 'To develop and enhance current research skills'. A systematic review of nursing leadership development finds that leaders are able to improve their work environment after acquiring the necessary skills sets or competencies (Pearson et al 2007, 208).

Linking personal goals/objectives to programme goals/objectives and vice versa

Ho and Nesbit (2008, 451) cite that the self-influence process is aimed at reaching desired goals by embarking on actions that are aligned with the desired behaviour. Individuals seek self-clarification in terms of how a developmental strategy complements their own career goals (Bud West and Bocarnea 2008 in Van Zyl 2012, 194). Participants in the programme also sought clarity on their own objectives, as one participant stated: 'Get clarity on how my research interests ... can fit into the leadership programme'.

Orientation and clear goals are necessary when entering a programme. Alves et al (2006)<Not in References> argue that individualism-collectivism orientation is important when entering a programme. An individual culture of personal achievements and self-determination should be blended with the collectivist culture of working towards group harmony and belonging. However, participants mainly expected that their personal goals would be addressed, since participants wrote that they wanted: 'to see where I as an individual fit into this research programme'; 'link project to future studies'; and 'to complete my PhD'. A transformational leader inspires followers to see the attractive future state and demonstrates a commitment to goals (Bass 1998, 5). The mentioned anecdotes are also indicative of behaviour-focused strategies that are employed for the purposes of self-reflection and self-goal setting (Van Zyl 2012).

Reflections subsequent to completion of the programme

The second theme indicated the nursing academics' reflections academics subsequent to completion of the introduction of the programme. Five categories emerged, namely: (i) overview of programme content clarifies programme aims and engenders a sense of confidence amongst attendees; (ii) programme guide creates order, structure, and focus for attendees; (iii) group interaction serves as a challenge and a support for attendees because it stimulates/engenders critical thinking, involvement, co-operation, and accountability; (iv) establishing a balance between the meeting of personal needs/goals and programme outcomes; and (v) new learning and building, enhancing, and enriching existing knowledge.

Introduction and overview of programme content

The findings indicated that the session of the programme stated a clear aim and content focused on leadership and research that engendered a sense of confidence amongst attendees (fieldnote). Leadership development positively affects nursing teams in one way or another (Laschinger, Finegan, Shamian and Wilk 2004, 527). Having a vision and clear goals for the team appeared to be significant factors in creating a conducive and receptive learning environment for the team members. At the same time, clarifying the vision and goals right at the start while doing an introduction and overview of what can be expected seemed to have had a greater impact as indicated by some participants: 'A very good introduction and overview at the start of the day gave the clear goal of where the team is heading and the focus ... '; and 'Without this it would have been an exercise without vision, leaving members confused ... '.

From the findings, it could be deducted that participants had a clear vision about where the programme was heading. The development of a shared vision is an integral component of the idealised, transformational leader. It helps other people to take a look at the futuristic state, while inspiring acceptance through the alignment of personal values and interests to the collective interests of the purposes of the group (Avolio and Bass 2002).

This also relates to the self-determination theory, which is multi-dimensional and includes intrinsic (doing what is interesting and what generates joy), extrinsic (doing for instrumental reasons) and a-motivational (having no motivation) aspects (Deci and Ryan in Wang and Gagne 2013, 134). It seemed that the group members' initial motivation for joining this team was extrinsic in nature. The following quotations alluded to such perception: 'To be able to participate in research'; 'To develop and enhance current research skills'; 'Link project to future studies'; 'To complete my PhD'; and '... which contribute to my personal career goals'.

Extrinsic motivation consists of three types, namely, external, introjected, and identified regulation types that differ in terms of the articulated degree of self-determination. The group members' motivation for joining the team suited the identified regulation type because they either wanted to achieve personal goals: 'To complete my PhD', or sought to act according to clearly-held values. This behavioural regulation can be internalised, which explains why extrinsic motivation can lead to autonomous motivation (Deci and Ryan in Wang and Gagne 2013, 135). Therefore, a leadership programme with a set vision increases the confidence of participants and changes their perceptions and behaviour (Macphee and Suryaprakash 2012, 255).

Preparation and provision of course material/programme guide/framework/ template creates order, structure and focus for attendees

Findings of this category clearly elaborated on the vision and clear goals that were expounded in the previous category. The findings indicated that the provision of a clear framework as a point of departure for the programme enabled participants

to see 'a way forward' and encouraged them to take part in the programme. One participant wrote: 'With the groundwork that has already been done ... I find it easier ... I find it easier to work from an existing structured guide.'

Covey (1989, 98) writes that 'to begin with the end in mind means to start with a clear understanding of your destination. It means to know where you are going so that you better understand where you are now so that the steps you take are always in the right direction'. Prior to the leadership programme, each of the leadership programme attendees received a collection of resources with articles and other relevant leadership information to read in preparation for the programme. The facilitator completed the groundwork for the programme and presented clearly structured guidelines to be adhered to for the duration of the programme by setting a platform of an organised atmosphere. One participant mentioned: 'I appreciated the fact that the days were structured.' McClean (2003) is of the opinion that the complexity of designing a task is often underestimated, since it needs particular competencies. A programme needs knowledge for a meritorious design (Wiggins and McTighe 2005, 254).

A leadership programme attendee expressed appreciation for the structure provided by the facilitator for each day of the programme: 'I was able to work within the template provided ...'. A presenter (lead researcher) has to be mindful of the target audience when a curriculum is effectively designed and of their learning expectations since they have to be appropriate for the specific outcomes of the programme (Wiggins and McTighe 2005, 13). Being able to work in the context of the template reflected that the lead researcher of the programme ensured a correlation between the design and the specific outcomes of the programme. It was stated: 'I like the specific focus of this study ...'.

To create a conducive environment for nursing academics, a strong nursing leadership is needed (Baker et al 2004, 1678). A participant described the lead researcher as follows: 'She provided good direction, clarification and feedback.' Leadership can be defined as the influential relationship between leaders and their followers that leads to reaching common outcomes and achieving their shared purpose (Daft 2008, 4).

Transformational leadership is proposed as an empowering leadership style that better fits into the nursing environment of today (Jooste 2004, 217). Transformational leadership focuses primarily on the leader's effect on followers and on the behaviour that is used to achieve this effect (Bass 1996). The role of the lead researcher became clear by defining a leader: 'All her qualities encourage me personally to want to give my best.' The transformational leader disburses personal attention to followers based on the individual follower's needs for achievement and growth (Avolio and Bass 2002).

The lead researcher displayed the qualities of a leader, since she was able to influence a group of nurse academics in an attempt to reach a common goal. It was written: 'This ensured that the group acted and responded in a shared direction.' The prior preparation of the facilitator motivated the group to ensure that the goals of the

workshop were achieved. The findings indicated that the lead researcher during the first session dealt with what was expected from the workshop and she was also able to systematically explain the expected outcomes of the workshop to group members (Du Brin 2013, 3).

Group work and interaction serve as a challenge and a support for attendees because it stimulates/engenders critical thinking, involvement, co-operation and accountability

The findings indicated that group work was challenging and stimulated accountability through the development of their own framework and the setting of tangible outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate other people by providing them with challenges (Avolio and Bass 2002, 2).

Blanchard (2007) postulates that effective leadership should influence other people in such a way that it unleashes their power and potential. A participant described that she experienced her potential in the group: 'I was unsure about my fit in their group initially, but now I can say I want to be part of their team because it has tangible outcomes.' The transformational leader acts as a mentor or coach, developing followers in a supportive climate to 'higher levels of potential' (Bass 1998, 6).

Bass (1998, 6) states that transformational leaders have good relationships with their team members due to their individualised consideration of their followers' individual differences in terms of needs and desires. A participant responded: '... working in a new and different team ... brought a new level of collegiality'. According to Bass (1978), an essential characteristic of a leader (lead researcher) is the ability to transform followers (nursing academics) to perform better than expected and to move them beyond their self-interest with the purpose of getting them to work for the greater good.

During the initiation of the programme, the nursing academics were divided in two work groups. Participants mentioned that: 'Each of the two groups developed their own objectives ... with a clear vision of the output', as well as the fact that: 'In a group, we were able to debate certain concepts ...'. Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2005) emphasise the importance of a leadership approach that sculptures a shared vision and a shared meaning of the purpose and the process of the work-role activities of a group of individuals who gather to achieve a common aim.

One participant responded: 'Working in the quantitative group … was made easy', while another mentioned: 'Writing objectives for a research proposal in groups [is] easier than doing it alone.' Creating an environment in which all members of the programme were able and willing to make a contribution to group performance positioned group interests before personal preferences (Kouzes and Posner 1993).

The findings indicated the participants' commitment to take part in the programme. Ho and Nesbit (2009) state that high quality relationships between leaders and followers could result in individuals who perform well and who are willing to contribute meaningfully. A participant indicated: '... everyone was involved in the

process'. It could also be interpreted that participants had self-leadership abilities. Houhgton and Yoyo (2006) find that individuals with self-leadership qualities display high levels of dedication to tasks, objectives, and teams due to innate qualities and self-motivation that lead them to work harder than others counterparts.

Establishing a balance between the meeting of personal needs/goals and programme outcomes

Evidence showing a direct effect of leadership on set outcomes is still very limited (Vance and Larson 2002, 165). However, the effect of the first workshop to initiate the leadership programme was summarised by a participant: 'A balance was struck between reaching workshop outcome[s] and personal needs.' Goals may either be individual, or organisational (Hellriegel et al 2011). A leadership programme has to include all these goals to fulfil both individual and organisational needs.

Dweck and Elliot (2005) state that the goals a person pursues are performance and learning goals. The performance goals are influenced by acquiring favourable judgment from an individual's peers or from authority. The learning goals are used by individuals to increase their competence. Participants reflected: 'The workshop target[ed] me a lot' and '... which contribute[d] to my personal career goals'. Participants focused on their learning goals and were striving to succeed (Dweck and Elliot 2005).

Transformational learning and building on, enhancing, and enriching existing knowledge

According to Von Krogh, Ichijo and Nonaka (2000), generating new knowledge involves sharing unspoken knowledge, creating concepts, justifying concepts, finding an application for the knowledge, and using it in the organisational context. According to Mezirow (1994, 222), transformational learning is a process of change that construes a new interpretation of meaning of one's experience as a guide to action. Keegan (2000) on the other hand, describes transformational learning as an expansion of consciousness that adds to what is already known.

During leadership programmes, informal processes, such as reflection, networking and mentoring, are placed in a meaningful context with the learning and professional development of a leader. These strategies of training and development are structured ways in which leaders can share common sentiments or opinions (Innman 2007). Reflection on the leadership programme through narrative writing was used to better equip nurse academics to lead themselves during the programme.

The programme assisted participants in recalling prior knowledge by sharing information with other members in the programme. A participant was of the opinion that prior knowledge was recalled by the workshop: '... helped me to refresh information that I encountered previously ...'. Leadership programmes provide opportunities for collective articulation of shared expectations. Even in previous

years, Argyris and Schön (1978) point out that collaborative learning resulted in knowledge construction and the sharing of such knowledge.

Transformational learning builds upon previous lines of inquiry (Taylor 1997). A participant reflected: 'I also learned about new framework of leadership ...'. The leadership programme provided an opportunity for individuals (leaders) to work according to a specific structure or framework. Since participants engaged with one another during the programme, new knowledge and ideas emerged and they discovered that learning is a life-long (continuing) process. They realised that prior knowledge about leadership could be re-structured, leading to the development of a new framework of leadership.

Another participant reflected on the programme session as a journey of growth: 'This short journey already enriched me.' The leadership programme broadened the perspectives of many of the members of the programme. It was viewed as a personal discovery of development that allowed members to deepen their knowledge.

The journey in the leadership programme session was described as follows by a participant:

> The academic group that participated in this particular programme had preconceived ideas in terms of what leadership entailed. Having those challenges in mind did not diminish the optimistic attitude that the group held. The programme itself was invaluable to all participants. One of the critical interventions of the programme was the realisation that leadership is adaptive and flexible in response to the needs of an organisation. This then entailed that the leadership structures should create an environment whereby responsibilities are equally divided and shared amongst staff members who then will influence and create new knowledge.

CONCLUSION

The findings acknowledged that the initial workshop of the leadership research programme was based on the assumptions of transformational leadership. This leadership style was evident in the findings that indicated the development of participants, the specific leadership workshop (situation), and the programme (tasks) were of particular interest. The lead researcher acted as a transformational leader who provided inspiration with the purpose of guiding nursing academics (participants) to think about leadership in new ways (Hellriegel et al 2011). The outcomes of this particular leadership approach could engender a high commitment and independent behaviour (self-leadership) of members who took part in the programme.

The findings indicated that participants were motivated to continue taking part in the leadership research programme. Motivation can be defined as any influence that triggers, directs, or maintains goal-directed behaviour (Miner 2005). Leadership was demonstrated by the lead researcher with the aim of influencing the participants

to attain the goals of the programme (Hellriegel et al 2011). It also encompassed increasing group performance through motivation.

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