SELF-PERCEIVED LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OF PEER TUTORS IN INTERPROFESSIONAL UNDERGRADUATE HEALTHCARE STUDIES

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Introduction:
Peer tutors are used as teaching partners in undergraduate programmes at the University of Pretoria to transfer knowledge and practical skills to students from various healthcare disciplines. Peer tutors are therefore placed in leadership positions and their role in the development, learning, and success of fellow students is widely documented in literature on education and leadership. In spite thereof, minimal research has been done on the development of leadership abilities through involvement in tutor training programmes and little is known about their development as leaders. The assumption of this study was that leadership skills of peer tutors can be developed by introducing them to the transformational leadership model of Kouzes and Posner - “The five practices of exemplary leaders”.

Purpose:
The aim of this study was to describe the self-perceived leadership development of peer tutors in undergraduate healthcare studies during participation in a tutor training programme.

Methods:
A triangulation mixed method design was used to collect complementary quantitative and qualitative data with equal contribution. The study sample (total sampling) consisted of 12 tutors appointed for the academic year. The tutors attended orientation on the content of their respective modules, a tutoring and a leadership workshop. Data collection was done by means of structured self-report instruments completed in the beginning and end of the programme, a narrative description of their experiences halfway through the academic year and an unstructured focus group at the end of their tutoring responsibilities.

Results:
The tutors described their self-perceived leadership development during involvement in the tutoring programme as a period of personal growth and gaining of leadership skills, as well as seeing the value of breaking down professional silos.
Conclusion:  
An increased focus on leadership development in addition to the focus on their knowledge and skills, lead to better tutoring abilities and skills outcomes of tutees from different professions, as well as improved academic programme output and eventually improved collaboration to benefit patients and communities.

Implications:  
This study is expected to serve as the basis for a follow-up study to determine the impact of leadership development of peer tutors on the clinical knowledge and skills retention in peer undergraduate health care students, as well as the effect on health outcomes of patients in clinical practice.

Key terms: Leadership development, peer tutors, tutor training programme, interprofessional training

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