ACADEMICS IN THE CONTEXT OF A LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

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Learner objective
To understand
- the meaning of self-leadership as experienced by nursing academics in a research leadership group
- as well as their underlying individual motivational processes in the context of an educational setting.

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- School of Nursing University of the Western Cape, Cape Town South Africa
The word "lead" originates from the Indo-European root "leith" which means "to go forth", to "cross the threshold". Leadership is about finding the balance between power, authority and influence in a specific situation (Jooste, 2010).
Self-leadership is a set of rational approaches utilised by individuals in discovering, motivating, and influencing themselves to attain desired behaviours and to maximise their abilities. It focuses on self-motivation that a person utilises to direct him or herself to achieve optimum performance.

Components of self-leadership are self-observation, self-goal setting, self-reward, self-punishment, and self-cueing.
As much as self-leadership focuses on directing the self to achieve personal goals, Neck & Houghton (2006) assert that persons engaging in self-leadership frequently cultivate a sense of ownership in terms of their tasks and work processes.

Self-leadership is connected with higher levels of self-efficacy, proficiency, increased resilience, adaptability, and productivity.

Those who possess good self-leadership qualities know how to achieve high levels of self-direction and self-motivation.
A self-leadership development programme was created in 2012 for ten nursing academics with the aim of empowering them to embark upon research projects, write for subject matter publications, and develop as leaders at a school of nursing in the Western Cape. While the focus was on research it was important to understand what the meaning of self-leadership was for them in the context of a higher education institution in South Africa.
Qualitative exploratory, contextual, narrative research study

Eight nurse academics (female and male) in a leadership programme

Wrote their narratives over a period of 3 months, after attending a team leadership workshop

Open coding

Trustworthiness
## Themes and categories

| Leadership attributes | Taking responsibility  
|                       | Innovative thinking  
|                       | Willingness to lead (learn)  
|                       | Motivation  
|                       | Self-reflection for development  
| Responsibilities towards the group | Support  
|                             | Taking the lead  
|                             | Situation analysis  
|                             | Dedication to team success  
|                             | Ensuring goal attainment  
|                             | Valuing team members' contribution  
|                             | Collaboration |
Theme 1: Leadership attributes

Taking responsibility for oneself

An individual who becomes accountable for themselves and takes personal responsibility for his or her needs and development goals, self-motivation, renewing thinking patterns, and directing his or her efforts towards success.

The findings of this study lent support to the role of self-leadership skills in fostering innovative behaviour at work and was illustrated in the words of one participant who wrote: “To use my initiative and clinical enquiry skills to think about the task, to improve and create innovations.”
An individual leader must be willing to lead by having self-awareness and adaptability to learn new skills or competencies.

“You must also be willing to find out, if you do not know something”.

Willingness to lead (learn)
Motivation is described as the force “responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it.

“I feel motivated and energised to develop the dreams and potentials that have been buried under disappointments”. Another participant described the need for motivation in self-leadership as: “In self-leadership, you need to be motivated and enthusiastic”.
Self-reflection for development:

An individual leader has to have self-awareness and adaptability to learn new skills or competencies such as leadership.

*Self-identification (self-reflection) will also assist me… and find ways of using, creating, or developing necessary criteria, whereby, we can measure ourselves to develop*.
Giving support could mean to offer assistance and to be enthusiastically interested in and concerned about the accomplishment of the team to which one belongs.

One participant wrote: “…giving them support in all our endeavours”.

Theme 2: Responsibilities towards the group
A particular area of leading themselves was the ability of the nurse academics to have the confidence to exert their power and be at the forefront of leading other people toward the actualisation of the objectives of the team.

“I must guide others to obtain the goals of the project by using my authority to gain resources to conduct the different stages of the project.”
Personal analysis

Their individual appreciation of self-leadership within themselves, as well as of their workplace environments in order to identify the key issues that required structuring

“This means self-inspection and the workplace (SON) inspection and find the challenges or gaps”.

Effect of self-leadership was described: “would cause a person to motivate, discipline, commit, and give herself to the actual cause and can only result in a positive outcome”.

Ensuring goal attainment:

Results in a feeling of self-fulfilment and accomplishment.

One of the participants mentioned: “The main goal will be reached whereby one’s self-leadership and building in academia takes place, empowerment of individuals, colleagues, academics, and communities”.
Valuing one another

“I also feel I can learn from everyone in our group”.

The importance of collaboration and cooperation with members of their team in order for them to actualise their goals, as well as their collective objectives. This was indicated by the following excerpts from some of the nurse academics’ narratives: “It also means collaborating and interacts [sic] actively with my group members” and “You must also participate fully to make the project a success”.
The findings of this study indicate the meaning that nursing academics attach to self-leadership is fundamentally driven by motivation and self-influence to direct themselves with the aim of achieving optimum performance in the programme. The results of the study further confirm the framework of Jooste (2011) by indicating that leadership development of academics is progressing from personal to group leadership.