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Follow the leader: Understanding the impact being a PASS Leader has on self-efficacy

Ruth McPhail, William Vuk Despotovic and Ron Fisher

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study is to inform and advance the body of knowledge of the contribution that 'Peer Assisted Study Sessions' (PASS) provides for student leaders in terms of its impact on their self-efficacy - the personal belief in competence to succeed within certain situations (Bandura, 1986). To date, there has been little research providing a practical insight into whether acting as the leader of university PASS has a perceived impact on self-efficacy. The results of the qualitative research are based on interviews from a sample of 16 leaders. We found that being a PASS leader improved self-efficacy specifically in the areas of: cognitive development, performance, engagement and satisfaction. The results of this study may have implications for the development of future programs, particularly, in terms of attracting suitable candidates in the recruitment process, the future training of leaders and the provision of ongoing support for the leaders to participate effectively in such programs.

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that peer collaborative learning techniques used in conjunction with traditional teaching approaches enable students to construct deeper levels of understanding (Martin, 1994). Alternative teaching and learning approaches, designed to engage and support first year students who are experiencing difficulties in making the transition into higher education, are becoming of increasing importance (Heirdsfield, Walker, Walsh & Wilss, 2008; Jacobs, Hurley & Unite, 2008). The PASS program is one such initiative which targets traditionally difficult courses and provides students with a 'peer-support' network to enhance their learning experience through greater engagement with learning and an increased development of intellectual and social bonds with other students and 'near peers'. The aim of the PASS program is to help students adjust to university studies and get a good start to their formative university experience (Malm, Bryngfors & Morner, 2011). Furthermore, the goal of PASS is to improve student performance within targeted courses, increase student retention, lower failure rates in traditionally challenging courses, raise student grades, increase re-enrolment and graduation rates, and provide leadership opportunities to students (Jacobs, et al, 2008). PASS are facilitated by second and third year students, 'PASS leaders', who have previously completed the targeted course with exceptional grades or students who are regarded as high performers in the discipline concerned (Capstick & Fleming, 2002; Van der Meer & Scott, 2005). It is the role of the PASS leader to help participants gain the most from their learning by thinking through problems for themselves. The PASS leaders are not teachers, and they present no new course material, instead their role is to encourage participation, engagement, collaboration and discussion centred on understanding of specific course content with critical thinking (Malm, Bryngfors & Morner, 2011). Currently, very little is known about whether acting as the leaders of university PASS has a perceived impact on self efficacy. Research into self efficacy is salient because it predicts several important work-related outcomes, including performance (Frattaroli, 2006; Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010), employee engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2001), job satisfaction (Moe, Pazzaglia, Ronconi, 2010) and training proficiency (Martocchio & Judge, 1997). Understanding the experiences of PASS leaders can contribute toward the overall success of the program (Heirdsfield, et al, 2008); hence, understanding the impact on their self efficacy is crucial particularly in terms of attracting suitable candidates, the

future training of leaders and the provision of ongoing support for the leaders to participate effectively in such programs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND THEORY

The concept of self efficacy has received considerable attention throughout psychological, organisational and educational literature over the past 30 years. Its creator, Albert Bandura, has been credited with being one of the most influential psychologists in the history of the profession (Haggbloom, Warnick and Warnick, 2002) and his seminal work on self efficacy is still used widely today. Bandura (1986) defines self efficacy as *“the levels of confidence individuals have in their ability to execute certain courses of action, or achieve specific outcomes”*. Furthermore, Bandura (1986:71) explains that self efficacy is a person’s belief in their ability to:

“produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes”

Bandura emphasises that dealing effectively with life challenges involves more than just knowing what to do; it also requires marshalling the necessary cognitive, social and behavioural skills into successful courses of action, and, importantly, the individual’s self-belief in their ability to succeed (Bandura 1986, 1995, 1997). Pointing out that self-efficacy differs from self-esteem; Bandura (1997) explains that self esteem is a person’s view of their self worth, while self-efficacy is their judgement of what they can do.

Bandura (1997) argues that the results of extensive and diverse research confirm that self-efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to an individual’s motivation and attainments. People with high self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided, they set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. This argument is supported by Lee and Bobko (1994) who note that those who have a strong sense of self-efficacy in a particular situation will devote their energy and attention fully to the demands of the situation with the full expectation of realising a desired outcome. Furthermore, compared to those with a weak sense of self-efficacy, individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy will typically persist far harder and longer during challenging situations and are likely to regard failure as the result of insufficient effort rather than insufficient skill.

Salient to this study is the exploration of teacher self-efficacy and its correlation with student outcomes. Although it is suggested that the role of PASS leaders is distinct from that of teachers (Malm, Bryngfors & Morner, 2011), it can be argued that there is a connection between teachers and PASS leaders in terms of the impact that job satisfaction may have on their individual levels of motivation and enthusiasm and subsequently the contagion that may have on attending students. Hence exploring the impact that self-efficacy has on a PASS leaders motivation is a salient area of study. Moe, Pazzaglia and Ronconi (2010) highlight the importance of positive self-efficacy for a teacher’s job satisfaction. They argue that job satisfaction is especially crucial for teachers, not only because its lack is associated with burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), but because demotivated teachers demotivate students through emotional contagion (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). Moe, Pazzaglia and Ronconi (2010) argue that high satisfaction increases a teacher’s motivation, and in turn, motivated or enthusiastic teachers raise intrinsic motivation in students and promote their levels of vitality. Resilient and engaged teachers influence a student’s experiences of autonomy and competence and as a result increase their motivation (Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke, & Baumert, 2008).

Moe, Pazzaglia and Ronconi’s (2010) study hypothesised that teaching effectively does not in itself guarantee satisfaction; positive affect and self-efficacy beliefs are also needed to complement technical skills. Moe, Pazzaglia and Ronconi (2010) surveyed a convenience sample of 399 teachers from primary, middle and high schools in

northern Italy. Job satisfaction and the relationship with self-efficacy was the main focus of the questionnaire. The results indicated that the hypothesis was supported with “*success in teaching*” correlating positively with job satisfaction. The results show that good technical teaching is simply not enough. Happy, fulfilled and motivated teachers are the ones who will drive student outcomes, and any future self-efficacy study should factor in job satisfaction stemming from an individual’s self-efficacy beliefs as a key variable to be measured. As this study was conducted in Italy there is a compelling case for further research in Australia and Europe to validate these findings internationally. Further, as the findings of this prior research is drawn from a sample of teachers, further research into the experiences of PASS leaders would not only broaden the knowledge within the field but would provide for valuable organisational implications, particularly in ensuring that PASS leader recruitment processes target suitable candidates and that they are provided with ongoing support in order to manage performance.

Relevant to this study is the organisational context in which self-efficacy has long been a concept used to understand different aspects of performance. Transformational leadership is one such performance indicator, which has been linked to self-efficacy throughout recent literature. Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) explored transformational leadership in a study which was aimed at examining whether an intervention designed to increase self-efficacy resulted in a higher level of transformational leadership. Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) used an experimental research design where participants were exposed to expressive writing classes to reflect on their leadership skills, life goals and intensely positive experiences. The findings indicated that participants who had undergone the expressive writing workshop and were able to report on positive experiences had significantly increased transformational leadership self-efficacy and increased transformational leadership scores (Fitzgerald and Schutte, 2010). This research validates the proposal that an expressive writing intervention can dramatically improve cognitive processing and managerial performance. More broadly, it shows how improved self-efficacy positively correlates with work-related performance. In relation to the PASS program, it could be argued that PASS leaders who undergo similar expressive writing sessions during their formative training would benefit through increased levels of self-efficacy; a factor critical to performance (Frattaroli, 2006; Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010), employee engagement (Luthans & Peterson, 2001), job satisfaction (Moe, Pazzaglia, Ronconi, 2010) and training proficiency (Martocchio & Judge, 1997).

Another study conducted by Luthans and Peterson (2001) proposes an important interpretation of self-efficacy with respect to employee engagement. Luthans and Peterson (2001) suggest that when employees are engaged they are not only more satisfied but more productive as a result. Luthans and Peterson (2001) conducted an empirical investigation to determine the role that managers’ psychological states of self-efficacy played in the relationship between their employees’ measured engagement. Data was collected from 170 managers from a wide range of levels and functions. The results from Luthans and Peterson (2001) conclusively show support for the hypothesis that employee engagement is a by-product of managerial self-efficacy and in every case there was a positive correlation between manager self-efficacy and employee engagement. In relation to the PASS program, if the role of a manager was analogous to the role of a PASS leader, it could be argued that PASS leaders with high levels of self-efficacy will influence higher levels of engagement amongst students (analogous with employees) within their sessions.

Self-efficacy in the organizational context has been explored in significant depth and its validity as an organisational concept agreed upon with acknowledgement to a few nuanced positions by various authors.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Bandura’s (1986) seminal work on self-efficacy has attracted numerous studies across a wide range of disciplines. The concept and multi-dimensional nature of self-efficacy

are relevant in both educational and organisational contexts and both the concept and its application in these areas has been explored in the literature. An unexplored context is that of the student leaders' self-efficacy in a PASS program. In order to explore this phenomenon in the context of PASS, the following research question is explored:

'Does acting as a leader of university Peer Assisted Study Sessions have an impact on a leader's perceived self-efficacy?'

In order to address this gap within the existing literature this research aims to contribute to the broader body of knowledge by providing a practical insight into whether acting as the leaders of university PASS has a perceived impact on self-efficacy.

METHODS

The information on which this study is based was collected through qualitative surveys distributed to PASS leaders in the business and health schools within a Queensland based university in 2011. A qualitative approach has been selected for this research because it responds well to understanding the world from the perspective of the informants being studied. Furthermore, the qualitative approach to research allows for multiple perspectives to be presented from respondents while ultimately rejecting the notion that a single truth exists (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Patton, 1990).

Sample

In this study, senior students and graduates were invited to take part in a qualitative survey. The sample was drawn from multi-departmental (Business and Health) backgrounds using a purposive sampling approach. The criterion for selection was respondents who were or had been PASS leaders. This process identified 55 potential respondents. Prospective participants were emailed an invitation to participate in the study. A total of 16 PASS Leaders agreed to participate in the qualitative survey.

Procedure & Analysis

The survey data was collected with the aim of obtaining information related to the perception of whether acting as the leaders of university PASS has a perceived impact on self-efficacy. Qualitative surveys were considered the most appropriate data collection type because it allowed student and graduate participants' liberal completion time and greater access to participants who were located in geographically dispersed areas.

The survey was designed in two sections, Part A and Part B. Part A contained nine open-ended questions on whether being a PASS Leader helped in other work and study arenas. Participants were asked whether being a PASS leader had increased their self confidence; whether being a PASS leader helped them in: goal achievement, dealing with difficulties, achieving set tasks, performing under adverse conditions, doing things better than most others, and believing in themselves. Furthermore, participants were asked to list aspects of being a PASS leader which they liked and disliked. Part B of the survey contained ten questions designed using the General Perceived Self-Efficacy Scale (GPSES) (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). When measuring self-efficacy, researchers typically ask individuals whether they can perform at specific levels on a specific task (responses are either yes or no) and ask for the degree of confidence in that endorsement (rated on a near-continuous scale from *total uncertainty* to *total certainty*) at each specific performance level (Lee and Bobko, 1994). Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) constructed the GPSES which improved significantly on earlier constructs (Sherer, Maddux, Mercandante, Prentice-Dunn, Jacobs & Rogers, 1982). The GPSES measure taps beliefs in one's capability to handle new and difficult tasks in a variety of different domains. It consists of a lesser 10 items that are rated on a 4-point scale with the anchors *not at all true* and *exactly true*. Scholz, Gutiérrez, Sud & Schwarzer (2002) reported that internal consistency coefficients were tested widely between 0.75 and 0.91 with Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) and these scores comfortably exceeded the

generally accepted minimum of 0.80 for basic research. The GPSES has been used to inform the development of the qualitative questions within this study. Using the 4-point scale participants were asked to provide responses to the statements provided in *Table 1*. The information provided from Part A and B of the survey was contextualised and grouped where possible. Part A of the electronically received surveys was manually coded to facilitate thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was selected because it allows for the coding of qualitative data to assist in the patterning of themes to identify key issues (Boyatzis, 1998). Secondly thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is acknowledged that the coding and analysis of the survey data is a selective process in terms of deciding what to add in and what to leave out (Creswell, 1994). Miles & Huberman (1994) propose that coding is a useful method for data-labelling and retrieval however it has a potentially ad-hoc characteristic. Despite this, Hutchings (2003) explains that issues of validity and reliability of data analysis should be considered. To minimise bias and to facilitate reliability of the findings a colleague was asked to verify whether the findings were representative of the data. Mean scores and percentages were calculated for responses provided in Part B. Although Part B of the survey was quantitative in nature, it is important to highlight that this study does not attempt to adopt a mixed methods approach. The reason for this is that this study seeks to explore whether acting as a leader of PASS has an impact on a leaders perceived self-efficacy; a qualitative based research problem guided by the rich accounts of detailed *perceptions* of experiences. Furthermore, due to an insufficient sample size the quantitative measurement of the responses is too small to attempt a valid inferential statistical analysis. Whilst the presented data on its own is not statistically quantifiable the interplay between the themes from the qualitative survey and the scores from the self-efficacy measure will provide for a valuable source of analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was sought and approved by the university's ethics committee and all guidelines followed accordingly. Participants were provided with an information sheet and consent form which provided details of their involvement in the research. Participation in this research was voluntary and participants were free to withdraw at any time. Participants were told they did not have to answer any questions with which they felt uncomfortable. In addition, a copy of the results was made available to each participant. Most important, was the care of maintaining the confidentiality of participants in the project. For that reason, anonymity was assured by maintaining the safe and secure storage of de-identified data collected through surveys. The data remains private and confidential in accordance with university ethical guidelines.

RESULTS

The value in the completed questionnaires lies in individual's self-efficacy as determined by the combination of measures from Part A and Part B. Findings from these parts will be presented separately and a commentary will be provided in the subsequent discussion.

Survey Results (Part A)

The first section of the survey required participants to respond with qualitative responses regarding their self-efficacy perceptions in their role as a PASS leader. A summary of the main themes that were found is provided below followed by supporting statements from leaders to illustrate these themes further.

Emerging Self Efficacy Themes

Job Satisfaction & Employee Engagement

- **Increased Confidence**
- **Harmonious interactions with supervisor**
- **Satisfaction helping students in their studies**
- **Satisfaction with the PASS leader training received**

Performance

- **Helped in increasing goal achievement**
- **Ability to do things better than most others**
- **Ability to achieve at set tasks**
- **Ability to perform under adverse conditions**

Cognitive Development

- **Realisation of capabilities**
- **Ability to overcome difficulties**
- **Increased self belief**

Table 1: Thematic results Survey: Part A

The consensus view of all respondents was that being a PASS leader was reported to have increased their self confidence. A particularly apparent theme concerns the increased confidence they felt within inter-personal relations between students and staff. Participant 4A illustrated that *“being a PASS leader has helped me feel confident when speaking in front of peers... [in addition] it has helped me with leadership skills... directing a group of individuals [and] conveying a message in a more concise and easy to understand manner”*.

The majority of leaders surveyed had also reported that being a PASS leader had helped them in goal achievement, notably participant 1A explained how *“through the leader training and support during the process I was able to realise that I am able to set goals and achieve them with support and by providing support to others”*. Similarly, participant 2A cites that *“being a PASS Leader allowed me to exercise my ability to set goals for myself and also to enable goal setting to occur in the people around me. Setting session plans/goals was a really good way to practice SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) objectives about what the session would cover”*. The majority of leaders felt more confident in setting and achieving goals from their experience in the PASS program.

In response to how being a PASS leader has helped them overcome difficulties, a key theme that emerged was the realisation that their capabilities in the subject content were much better than what they had initially thought. Participant 6A commented that *“It made me believe that if I put in the effort and time there is a high chance that I will overcome the difficulties that I am facing”*. Similarly, when participants were asked about how being a PASS leader helped them to perform under adverse conditions one participant reported that *“it helped me immensely in my post-graduate studies to engage with others in group work that I otherwise may have been frustrated with. It also helped me to become a more resourceful and creative thinker”*. Although very few participants claimed to have encountered adverse conditions in PASS one other key

theme that emerged was how a new found awareness towards planning, preparation and time management enabled several of the respondents to deal with difficult interpersonal situations.

Being a PASS leader also helped participants in achieving set tasks. Participant 1A commented that “through the planning and ‘thinking outside the box’ concepts used in PASS I am able to plan for and achieve tasks in the workplace”. Furthermore it was explained that the program was responsible for giving another participant the ability to reframe the perspectives about tasks so that they had a “better attitude toward... pointless and tedious tasks”.

The majority of leaders surveyed reported that being a PASS leader enabled them to do things better than most others. Most significantly participant 7A explained that “*PASS has given me additional confidence in providing arguments for a point of view, explaining in a clear manner a topic or discussion and also on group facilitation. This has allowed me to perform at a superior level in many tasks to that of the average student*”. Paralleling this, several respondents claimed that they had noticed that the preparation and planning required as PASS leaders had developed these transferable skills within their own studies.

Of the leaders surveyed 90% claimed that their involvement in PASS has helped them believe in themselves. Common themes revolved around the belief in themselves and in their potential. As illustrated by one respondent “*I have increased my confidence and I have gained skills I will be able to put into practice once my degree is finished and I am out in the workforce*”. Interestingly, almost 30% of the respondents claimed that their involvement in the PASS program had established/reinforced a desire for them to pursue academia as a career path.

The entire cohort of participants agreed that they ‘liked’ many aspects of the PASS program. Notably leaders frequently reported the harmonious interactions with the supervisor as an aspect of the work that satisfied them. In addition, the satisfaction from helping their students was another factor which the majority of leaders enjoyed. Equally, the training session at the start of semester was reported as being “*vital [to the success of the program] and very well run*”. Paralleling these positive aspects of the PASS program, participants were asked what three things they disliked about the PASS program and what changes they would wish to make. Less than half of the participants were able to provide responses to three things that they disliked. Of the relatively few aspects that were mentioned, the relationship to timing issues and clashes between scheduled session and personal timetables was an issue that emerged on several occasions.

Survey Results (Part B)

The findings above indicate that to all questions, participants responded within high levels of self-efficacy. In addressing the ten questions in Part B of the survey, nine (excluding Q2) received a mean self efficacy score of between 3.37-3.91 (Moderately True - Exactly True). The results presented in Table 1 and Table 2 clearly support the findings of the key qualitative themes which have emerged from the qualitative survey results in Part A.

Table 2: Survey Results: Part B

Responses (n=16)	Q1.	Q2.	Q3.	Q4.	Q5.	Q6.	Q7.	Q8.	Q9.	Q10.
to the statements below were indicated using a scale from “4” (Exactly True), 3 (Moderately True), 2 (Hardly True) to “1” (Not at all true)	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions	If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	I can usually handle whatever comes my way.
Mean:	3.73	2.91	3.64	3.45	3.36	3.91	3.36	3.45	3.45	3.27
Median:	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3
Mode:	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3
Frequency of 1 'Not at All True'	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Frequency of 2 'Hardly True'	0 (0%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Frequency of 3 'Moderately True'	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	4 (36%)	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	1 (9%)	7 (64%)	6 (55%)	6 (55%)	8 (73%)
Frequency of 4 'Exactly True'	8 (73%)	1 (9%)	7 (64%)	6 (55%)	5 (45%)	10 (91%)	4 (36%)	5 (45%)	5 (45%)	3 (27%)

It is important to highlight that this study does not claim to adopt a mixed methods approach. As indicated earlier, the quantitative measurement of this sample is too small to attempt a valid inferential statistical analysis. Whilst the presented data on its own is not statistically quantifiable the interplay between the themes from the qualitative survey and the scores from the self efficacy measure confirm the value of the program, or at least to say that levels of self efficacy were high at the end of the program. Consequently, the insights gained from Parts A and B of the survey provide a practical insight into the self efficacy perceptions of PASS leaders, an area that is both under-researched and is of growing importance to university education. The results of both Part A and Part B are discussed further in the following section.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to contribute to the broader body of knowledge by providing a practical insight into acting as the leader of university PASS has a perceived impact on self efficacy. The findings clearly show support towards three key themes arising from literature, specifically, in terms of work related outcomes, including *performance* (Frattaroli, 2006; Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010), *employee engagement* (Luthans & Peterson, 2001) and *job satisfaction* (Moe, Pazzaglia, Ronconi, 2010) and *cognitive development* (Bandura, 1986), the findings of which may have implications in future training of leaders and provision of ongoing support for the program.

Performance

The first finding is that a substantial number of the leaders reported to have developed self efficacy beliefs in their professional performance which enabled them to perform more effectively in their roles. A large proportion of participants commented on having the ability to feel more confident leading groups, dealing with difficulties and achieving set tasks and goals. These findings support Bandura (1997) and Lee and Bobkos (1994) argument that efficacy beliefs contribute significantly to an individual's motivation and attainments. Luthans and Peterson's (2001) study indicates that managers must have a strong sense of self efficacy or their performance may suffer. Although the self efficacy scores of this group of respondents was high, literature cites an intervention designed to improve self efficacy in individuals with low self efficacy scores. Offering support in this area is Fitzgerald and Schutte's (2010) proposal that an expressive writing intervention can dramatically improve cognitive processing and managerial performance and should be considered for use with leaders. More broadly, it shows how improved self efficacy positively correlates with work-related performance, specifically in this case, improved transformational leadership. It could be argued that such an approach could be used to benefit PASS leaders just as it was used successfully for managers in this organizational context. Just as in the business world employee engagement is extremely important; in an educational environment student engagement is just as critical. Both roles like to know what is expected of them; both like to form strong relationships; and both like finding meaning in their work. Such similarities strengthen the case for self efficacy experimentation within the PASS leader population to further enhance student engagement of both themselves and their participants.

It is notable that research into self efficacy is salient because it can be used to predict performance (Frattaroli, 2006; Fitzgerald & Schutte, 2010). As discussed, Judge et al. (2007) support this notion and explain that in jobs or tasks of low complexity self efficacy can be used to predict performance. However, currently there is little evidence which differentiates between low task complexity and high task complexity in the context of peer learning initiatives. If the role of a PASS leader is significantly complex, Judge et al.'s conclusion is evidence that supports further training for leaders in addition to the self efficacy enhancement interventions proposed by Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010). Sufficient flexibility in the training modules would also need to be provided for as the role of individual differences has been shown to play a large part in self efficacy measurement and enhancement. Conversely, if the PASS Leader role is

assumed to be a job of low complexity then one could conclude that a self efficacy assessment tool used in the recruitment and selection process could be used to predict work related performance outcomes. If valid, using this measurement could not only simplify selection processes but could identify applicants with increased performance tendencies. The introduction of evidence which differentiates between low task complexity and high task complexity is an important nuance which will considerably help further researchers measure self efficacy and develop arguments for its use in recruitment and selection and in interventions designed to increase self efficacy.

Employee engagement & Job Satisfaction

The observations of the entire cohort of participants suggested that they felt engaged and satisfied in their roles as PASS leaders. The observations of one respondent noted that *"I really feel a lot more confident when I am walking around campus because I bump into my attendees who recognise me and want to chat. This makes me feel happy because I feel I am more approachable and personable"*. In addition, leaders reported that the interactions they had between the *"supportive (program) staff"* made the job more enjoyable. In addition, the satisfaction from helping the students was another factor which a large number of leaders enjoyed. Equally, the training session at the start of semester was reported as being *"vital [to the success of the program] and very well run"*. Literature supports this finding and proposes that employee engagement is a by-product of managerial self efficacy (Luthans and Peterson, 2001).

With productivity and employee job satisfaction a critical focus in the business world, arguably analogous to student satisfaction and learning in the education sector, Luthans and Peterson (2001) suggest that when employees are engaged (when employees know what is expected of them; when they form strong relationships at work; when they find meaning in their work) they are not only more satisfied but more productive as a result. This indicates that managers (i.e. PASS leaders) must have a strong sense of self efficacy or their performance is likely to suffer and therefore, in a domino effect, employee (student) engagement will also decrease. These findings are consistent with Moe, Pazzaglia and Ronconi (2010) study which highlights the importance of positive self efficacy for teacher's job satisfaction its correlation with student outcomes. It is this paper's view that the universality of the concepts of job satisfaction and self efficacy transcends cultural barriers and is indeed applicable to international teaching settings including Australia and its emerging PASS program.

Cognitive Development

A final theme issue widely commented on by the respondents is in relation to the reported cognitive skills they developed as PASS leaders. Bandura emphasises that dealing effectively with life challenges involves more than just knowing what to do; it also requires marshalling the necessary cognitive, social and behavioural skills into successful courses of action, and, importantly, the individual's self-belief in their ability to succeed (Bandura 1986, 1995, 1997). The majority of the respondents specifically mentioned that PASS has enabled them to prioritise, plan and be organised. Other cognitive developments reported included the realisation of *"my own capabilities"*, *"ability to lead people"*, and *"content knowledge"*. These skills included exercising the ability to easily read, think, prioritise, understand, plan, remember, and solve problems. Bandura's (1986) argument that beliefs of one's own cognitive abilities impacts on self efficacy beliefs is supported by these findings. As illustrated by one participant *"PASS has allowed me to think wider and to be more analytical. By that I mean that I can now identify what problems might arise and then develop solutions for if it occurs"*. The results of the GPSES score supports these statements (Question 3&4, GPSES score $\bar{x}=3.45$) which clearly indicates that PASS leaders felt that they would be able to develop solutions if confronted with a problem or if they were in trouble. The consensus view of all respondents was that being a PASS Leader had increased their self confidence. Furthermore, of the leaders surveyed, 90% claimed that their involvement in PASS has helped them believe in themselves.

LIMITATIONS & ISSUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The scope of this study explored the perceptions of whether acting as the leaders of PASS has an impact on leader self efficacy. Although the sample was drawn from multiple departments the findings of this research were confined to the experiences of a single university setting. It cannot be said that the findings are universal to other university contexts. Further limitations of this research were based on the fact that the studied university is in the early stages of its program and thus only has a small history of leaders. This factor contributed to the low response rate due to the sample size from which the study was able to draw upon (n=55, from which a response rate of 29% was achieved). These limitations provide the scope for future research into a larger sample size from a multi-university context. The similarities between the student and the employee and the PASS leader and manager are striking and it would be interesting to test the Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) intervention in an educational context. If the principals of Luthans and Peterson (2001) and Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010) could be transferred into an educational context with PASS leaders assuming the role as managers and students becoming the employees it is again interesting to hypothesize if the self efficacy and performance principals would transcend disciplines. Furthermore, although this study was qualitative in nature, a quantitative assessment of the GPSES would provide a useful analysis for future research.

CONCLUSION

Self efficacy has been a very valuable tool over the past 30 years for researchers to understand performance in a variety of settings. This paper has given a brief history of self efficacy and its applications since the concept first emerged in Bandura's (1986) seminal work. Organisations have found real value in measuring and improving manager's self efficacy and teachers have also benefitted from identifying weak patterns of self efficacy and remedying the situation to theirs' and their students' benefit. The major contribution of this study is the practical insight into whether acting as the leaders of university PASS has a perceived impact on self efficacy. Using a qualitative methodology, this study addresses a gap in the current literature and is salient because it provides an understanding of an area that is both under-researched and is of growing importance to the education sector. The findings clearly show support towards three key themes, specifically, in terms of work related outcomes, including *cognitive development, performance, employee engagement and job satisfaction*. The findings of which, have implications in future training and the provision of ongoing support for the leaders to participate effectively in the program. An understanding and analysis of self efficacy among a larger number of PASS leaders in other university contexts, using extensive measures and supplemented by a quantitative analysis will make a valuable contribution to further research.

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