Towards Engagement in Self-Leadership Practices in the Era of Reforms: South African Nurse Teachers' Views on Own Personal Mastery

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Abstract

Nurse teachers are expected to be agile and adequately prepared to cope with a continuously changing and competitive academic environment. This requires nurse teachers to continually strive for high levels of personal mastery, that is, the motivation to continue learning to improve teaching and learning. However, little is known about nurse teachers' personal mastery within a nursing education environment. The article aims to understand nurse teachers' perceptions of their personal mastery and how their personal mastery could be promoted in a nursing education institution (NEI) context. An explorative, descriptive qualitative design was utilised. Data were collected from nurse teachers working in purposively selected NEIs in South Africa. Four semi-structured focus group interviews were audio-taped, and the interviews were conducted until data saturation was reached. Tesch's methods were used for thematic data analysis. The two themes that emerged were: views about the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers, and views on how nurse teachers' personal mastery can be enhanced in an educational institution. Nurse teachers should engage in self-leadership practices in order to stimulate their personal mastery. Institutions should provide enabling environments that support the continuous learning of nurse teachers. Teaching nurses in today's competitive environment requires nurse teachers who are agile and striving to achieve high levels of self-leadership and personal mastery.

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing education in South Africa is undergoing reform to respond to the changes brought by the country's revised national qualification framework. The new qualifications framework is aimed at transforming the country's higher education to ensure inclusion, access, and equity (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). The revised Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework (HEQSF) is the basis upon which all higher education qualifications are integrated into the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (Council on Higher Education, 2013). To be fully integrated into the NQF, all programmes including nursing qualifications, are required to be compliant with the provisions of the HEQSF to allow for articulation of programmes, and the transfer of students between programmes and higher education institutions. As part of preparation for the implementation of the reform, NEIs are expected to develop nursing curricula that are aligned to the new higher education qualifications sub-framework and invest in resources required for accreditation and implementation of these programmes in a highly competitive environment.

The reforms are an opportunity for NEIs to produce graduates that are appropriate to the country's nurse-led primary health care system towards implementation of the much-anticipated universal healthcare system. These changes must occur despite institutions currently operating under adverse Covid-19 conditions that have disrupted normal content delivery methods (Shea & Rovera, 2021). The myriad of activities that nurse teachers in the 21st century engage in require them to be creative, innovative, resilient, self-leaders and in possession of high levels of personal mastery (Green-Wilson et al., 2022; Nickerson, 2020). As role models to their peers and students, nurse teachers always need to be self-aware and self-regulate through understanding and recognising own emotions and feelings as they occur during learning and teaching processes and take steps to develop teaching mastery in disciplines that they teach (Rowe & Fitness, 2018). Implementation of reforms will require nurse teachers to engage in an intrapersonal perspective of leadership, wherein one focuses on strengthening inner self-leadership first so that they can efficiently influence, guide, support, and lead others (Koehle et al., 2008). Meanwhile, successful implementation of reforms will also need a NEI environment to be a supportive one with that is characterised by a culture of shared vision, promotion of life-long learning, collaboration, and innovation amongst academics (Gil et al., 2019). Whilst an institution cannot change or increase nurse teachers' personal mastery, it can provide enabling conditions that encourage and support nurse teachers to increase their own mastery. An institution can support teachers to keep pace with modern-day transformation by developing a lifelong action strategy for staff, to ensure that they become actively involved in advancing change and innovation so that their newly acquired knowledge can be incorporated into learning and teaching practices that improve student performance (Gil et al., 2019).

Due to their constant spirit of inquiry and learning, individuals that possess personal mastery can analyse the turbulent, changing environment as something that is not a disaster, but something to learn from (Senge, 1990). Such educators succeed because they take time to master their teaching, self-reflect on their teaching practices, take risks, and engage in self-development (Sipman et al., 2019). Thus, it remains individual educators' inner motivation that drives them to persist through challenges to achieve personal mastery (Watson, 2006). This means that for nurse teachers to stay relevant and thrive in a high-paced learning organisation, it remains their responsibility to proactively engage in self-goal setting, self-awareness, self-development, self-motivation, self-control and self-care, all of which are elements of a phenomenon known as self-leadership (Watson, 2006).

Based in NEI context, this study focused on nurse teachers' understanding of the concept personal mastery from a nurse teacher lens and how the personal mastery discipline could be enhanced. The educational institution should be a learning institution in which there is lifelong learning and professional development (Boeren, 2019). The views of the nurse teachers were used to elucidate the meaning of their own personal mastery, as they are expected to prepare student nurses to become active lifelong learners who should be able to identify and meet their personal learning needs that are aligned to changes within their work environments and work independently towards their personal mastery (Syslo, 2004).

Based on the above, a broad research question that was used to explore the issue became:

*What is the meaning of personal mastery for nurse teachers, and how can nurse teachers'
personal mastery be enhanced within a NEI setting?*

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Personal Mastery

Personal mastery is a process of purposively living and working towards a personal vision, in alignment with own values and in a state of constantly learning about oneself and the reality in which one exists (Bryant, 2021). Personal mastery originates from Argyris and Schön (1978)'s *Organisational Learning Theory.* The theory posits that in order for the learning organisation to sustain competitive advantage over others, its employees should be provided with capacity to learn from the evolving knowledge and apply what has been learnt to achieve organisational goals quickly than others (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The term "learning organisation" was popularised by Senge (1990), in his seminal work entitled *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* which identifies personal mastery as one of the core disciplines in a learning organisation, that of continuous learning, which is guided by values and aimed at creating a deeper level of self-awareness and reality, which consequently leads to one making wiser choices whilst recognising that the organisation advances only through individuals who learn. The other four disciplines of a learning organisation are systems thinking, shared vision, team learning, and mental models (Senge, 1990). Meanwhile a learning organisation is defined as an organisation that exhibits adaptability, learns from mistakes, explores situations for development, and optimizes the contribution of its personnel (Gagnon et al., 2015). An ideal learning organisation creates a conducive climate that facilitates learning to improve employee work behaviour (Hutasuhut et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is when one works within a learning organisation that one develops personal mastery, the discipline of "continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively" (Senge, 1990, p.7), and develop "the capacity to grow and learn on a personal level" (García-Morales et al., 2007, p. 547).

Bui and Baruch (2010) and Bui et al. (2012) identified the following seven concepts as antecedents that influence the personal mastery discipline of learning organisations including academic environments: personal values, self-motivation, individual learning, personal vision, organisational culture, competence, and training and development. I now describe each of the concepts and attempt to translate them to academic environments.

Personal values are individuals' internal compasses that guide them in their selection of possible goals, actions and behaviours (Schwartz, 1996). It is purported that an individual's personal values are the drivers behind one's decisions and behaviours in organisational settings (Semerci, 2018). Therefore, because personal values are closely linked to motivation, they help explain an individual's behaviour, enable attainment of goals and personal aspirations towards increased personal mastery because they direct the individual's personal commitment to self-development (Bui & Baruch, 2010; Levontin & Bardi, 2019; Purc & Laguna; 2019). In higher education, students regard their teachers as moral guides and role models, therefore, teachers need to reflect on whether their personal values enhance or impede teaching (Gamble Blakey & Pickering, 2018; Bui et al., 2012).

Motivation has been studied at length for the purpose of identifying the meaning behind human behaviour to understand individuals' inspiration in behaving in certain ways. It is purported that individuals with high personal mastery would be self-motivated, and be willing to commit themselves to personal and professional development, which results in improved individual performance (Ramani et al., 2019).

This is attributed to the fact that individuals with a motivation to learn have high intrinsic motivation for the task itself, because challenging tasks help them develop their skills and knowledge unlike individuals that are more are driven by extrinsic motivational factors such as receiving rewards, avoiding criticism and having competition with others (Semerci, 2018). Thus, the academic institution has a role to play in discouraging tendencies by academics of relying on external factors to attain motivation to teach, they should encourage academics' engagement in activities that facilitate personal mastery through improving teaching skills and competence (Matahela & Van Rensburg, 2022).

Individual learning entails acknowledging that individuals have a duty in taking ownership of their own learning in order to improve and help attain the organisational vision, which is in itself the essence of personal mastery (Blackman and Henderson, 2005). This means, rather than the learning being activated through organisational processes, individual learning within a learning organisation's context is initiated by individuals themselves (Blackman and Henderson, 2005; Bui & Baruch, 2010; Chancharoen & Cruthaka, 2021). Academics with a high degree of personal mastery are more committed to continuous self-development which is guided by personal needs and visions that extend their capability to create efficient work outcomes and as such they lead to organisational learning within their institutions (Chancharoen & Cruthaka, 2021; Kwatubana, 2021). Such individuals are highly valuable in reform times as they possess a persistent spirit of inquiry and learning that empowers them to analyse the turbulent, changing environment as something that is not a calamity but a source of learning whilst enduring the commitment to own development (Senge, 1990; Senge et al., 1994).

Personal vision is regarded as the bedrock from which personal mastery continues to expand (Senge, 1990). It is also proposed that that an individual's ability to maintain a career requires investing energy toward development and maintenance of one's personal vision within the profession, so that one can have feelings of self-efficacy, optimism, hope and core identity, which in turn leads to work engagement in the profession (Buse & Bilimoria, 2014). Personal vision becomes that greater goal through which individuals yearn to achieve personal mastery. This requires individuals' earnest management of the creative dissonance between the envisaged vision and existing reality, which will require reducing discordant forces that may become impediments in the achievement of personal vision (García-Morales et al., 2007). A personal vision assists teachers to develop a picture of the learning they wish to achieve with their classes and become a mechanism for reflecting on experience to inform future professional learning (Jess et al., 2021). It is deeply connected to the teachers' past, their current experiences and also to the various people who played a part in shaping their personal beliefs about teaching (*ibid*).

Organisational culture is known is the "personality" of an organisation and encompasses deeply rooted artefacts, creations, shared values, and basic assumptions that give distinctive meaning amongst members of an organisation and guide its workplace behaviour (Bloisi et al., 2007; Tyler & Gnyawali, 2009). Thus, to give leverage to personal mastery for its members, an organisational culture will need to be identified as open, trustworthy, collective and empowering. Hence, according to McKenna (1992) the personal mastery process cannot begin until the organisational culture issues are understood. When teachers identify with the culture of the institution and what it stands for, they see the need to invest time and energy on efforts to evolve continuously through lifelong learning to improve their performance (Chandorkar, 2019).

Competence "concerns the experience of effectiveness and mastery. It becomes satisfied as one capably engages in activities and experiences opportunities for using and extending skills and expertise. When frustrated, one experiences a sense of ineffectiveness or even failure and helplessness." (Vansteenkiste et al., 2020, p.3). Personal mastery is grounded on competence and skills, thus "people with high levels of personal mastery are continually expanding their ability to create the results in life they truly seek" (Senge, 1990, p. 141). In an academic environment, teachers ensure continuing competence through exploration, reflection-on, and development of own teaching practices, keeping updated about new trends, breaking out of intellectual isolation, and sharing experiences and insights with peers (Reddy, 2014).

The last antecedent, *Training and development,* is purported to be critical in enhancing employees' personal mastery as it is through learning that is acquired through training and development that individuals and the organisation can generate and share knowledge and improve their professional development (Blackman & Henderson, 2005; Senge et al. 1994). Continuing professional development has been identified as one of the approaches in which healthcare professionals such as nurse teachers can keep mastery of their theoretical and clinical skills to "continuously improve their knowledge, skills and performance to effectively function in an ever-changing healthcare environment" (Ramani et al., 2019, p.1045).

Another concept that is closely related to personal mastery because of its intentional nature of influencing one's thinking, feeling and actions towards one's objectives and also because both concept require self-awareness, self-management and self-learning, is self-leadership (Bryant, 2021), and its theoretical framework is discussed next.

Self-leadership

Bandura's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was the theoretical lens with which to approach and provide a comprehensive description of the concept self-leadership. The SDT suggests that both employees' performance and their well-being are affected by the type of motivation they have for their job activities (Deci et al., 2017). Thus, according to the SDT, there are types of motivations with different catalysers, concomitants, and consequences. The type of motivation relevant to this study is autonomous motivation, which is characterised by people being engaged in an activity with a full sense of willingness, volition, and choice. With autonomous motivation, individuals engage in a behaviour because it is perceived to be consistent with intrinsic goals or outcomes and emanates from the self (Hagger et al., 2014). Therefore, individuals who engage in autonomously motivated behaviours are self-determined and feel a sense of choice, personal endorsement, interest, and satisfaction and, as a consequence, are likely to persist with the behaviour (Hagger et al., 2014). In the end, when individuals understand the worth and purpose of their jobs, feel ownership and autonomy in carrying them out, and receive clear feedback and support, they are likely to become more intrinsically motivated and reliably perform better, learn better, and be better adjusted in their engagement in self-leadership. In essence, self-leadership entails the practice of purposefully influencing one's thinking, feelings, and actions in a bid to achieve specific objectives (Manz, 2015; Warren, 2021). As a way of tradition, leadership is viewed as an outward process in which formally designated leaders exercise influence on their followers. However, self-leadership offers a comparatively different view of leadership by suggesting that staff in an organisation can lead themselves to some degree in an inside-out fashion. In fact, the concept of self-leadership challenges the notion that only designated leaders can bring about a positive impact, influence, and inspiration within their organisation (Koehle et al., 2008).

According to Neck et al. (2017), SDT suggests that the needs for competence and for self-determination or autonomy are primary mechanisms for enhancing intrinsic or natural motivation derived from the task or activity itself. Self-leadership comprises three strategies in which individuals engage: behaviour-focused strategies, natural-reward strategies and constructive thought strategies (Manz, 2015). Behaviour-focused strategies help to facilitate management of one's behaviour. Natural reward strategies help individuals in shaping perceptions and building enjoyable facets into work activities or tasks, and constructive thought strategies generate positive habits of thinking (Norris, 2008). Thus, the implication of SDT on self-leading nurse teachers is that they would seek out and attempt to overcome challenges in order to increase their feelings of competence and self-determination when executing their duties. In addition, these nurse teachers identify enjoyable aspects of their work activities, such as teaching a subject or course that they find naturally interesting, or focusing on an interesting subject due to the natural desire to master it.

Although the concept of personal mastery has been referenced in a variety of disciplines and contexts, the researcher could not locate its application by nurse teachers in nursing education environments. The purpose of this article is to explore and describe nurse teachers' views on how their

personal mastery could be facilitated in the context of South African NEIs, which are implementing higher education reforms.

METHOD

Design

The researcher employed an exploratory-descriptive qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of nurse teachers' views on how nurse teachers' personal mastery could be promoted in a NEI environment. Use of qualitative design allowed the researcher to capture the nurse teachers' views in their entirety within academic contexts (Nowell et al., 2017; Polit & Beck, 2012). The study was conducted in four NEIs located in the Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal provinces in South Africa.

Sampling design and Study group

The study population consisted of nurse teachers teaching at purposively-selected NEIs. They had to be working at the NEIs on a full-time basis for at least a year and readily available to participate in the study. Research coordinators in NEIs assisted in approaching potential and willing participants who met the selection criteria. The participants were all female (N=26), at an age range between 25 and 60 years. Of the 26 nurse teachers, 12 worked at private nursing schools, 8 were from public nursing colleges and 6 were from university-based nursing departments. Their years of experience in clinical nursing ranged between 3 and 16 years, whilst their experience in teaching nurses ranged between 1-21 years. They engaged in a variety of roles within their respective NEIs, including theory facilitation, clinical teaching, student clinical accompaniment, curriculum development, research supervision, quality coordination, student counselling, and student administration.

Data collection

Four focus group interviews were conducted by the researcher between 2018 and 2019. Each focus group comprised of up to 10 nurse teachers, who were female. The purpose of the focus group interviews was to understand the points of view of nurse teachers on their personal mastery in an NEI context from a homogenous group, in a relaxed and non-threatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Interviews were held in classrooms, boardrooms, and conference rooms of the NEIs. Data saturation guided the number of focus groups. On average, the interviews lasted 55 minutes and were guided by the following research questions:

- What is the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers?

- How can personal mastery in nurse teachers be promoted in an educational institution?

The researcher developed an interview guide with possible probing questions and shared it with participants preceding interviews. Although the researcher used the guide during interviews, participants' responses were further guided through probing and clarification (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Other communication techniques such as reflecting, remaining silent, and nodding, were employed by the researcher to acquire as much information as possible on the research questions. This was consistent with the iterative approach used in qualitative methodology (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The researcher obtained permission from the participants to record the interviews on the audiotapes.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was sought from the Research and Ethics Committee of a university (REC-012714-039) before the study could be conducted. Relevant institutional authorities and research structures in NEIs also provided permission to conduct study within their institutions. All participants

willingly took part in the study following the signing of an informed consent form. No participant withdrew from the focus group interviews. Ethical standards for nurse researchers such as fostering of justice and beneficence; excluding harm and exploitation of participants; self-determination; ensuring confidentiality and anonymity and ensuring quality research were upheld (Brink et al., 2012; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

Data analysis

The researcher and an independent co-coder analysed the verbatim transcripts and field notes independently using Tesch's thematic analysis protocol outlined in Creswell and Creswell (2018). This process involved reading and re-reading all the transcripts meticulously to get a sense of the whole, and then commencing to code the data according to major and subcategories following the protocol (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher held a consensus meeting with the independent coder to deliberate on the themes and subthemes that each had identified individually and to confirm if there were similar patterns and gaps (Thomas, 2003). The deliberation went on until consensus was reached on how the themes and subthemes connected to one another. The researcher and the co-coder revisited the manner in which all themes were named and ensured that these were written in the words of participants so that the themes reflected the participants' voices, (Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher confirmed findings with participants to verify findings and interpretations with the participants (Nowell et al., 2017). The identified theme and subthemes were conceptualised using existing relevant literature (Byrne, 2021).

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) strategies were utilised to guarantee trustworthiness of the study, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was guaranteed by presenting data on the personal mastery of nurse teachers in a way that would be considered accurate to an extent that other nurse teachers who identify with that experience would instantly understand the descriptions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018; Kornbluh, 2015). This was achieved through prolonged engagement by spending sufficient time with the participants prior and during the interviews (Nowell et al., 2017); triangulation through using multiple data collection methods and taking field notes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018); and member checking through going back to participants and ask whether the transcribed data was an authentic version of their experiences (Kornbluh, 2015). Transferability was ensured by offering a thorough account of the study methods, so that those interested in transferability would have the base information (Colorafi & Evans, 2016; Miles et al., 2014). Meanwhile dependability was upheld by offering an in-depth account of the research methodology (Nowell et al., 2017), whereas confirmability was guaranteed by way of an audit trail, triangulation, and consensus discussions between the researcher and the independent coder (Nowell et al., 2017; Thomas, 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained are presented below based on research questions and research themes. The nurse teachers' responses and quotations are shown in tables. The two main themes that emerged were further divided into sub-categories, as illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2. Conceptualisation within the existing literature was conducted to allow derivation of recommendations for the promotion of personal mastery in nurse teachers (Lim et al., 2022).

Views about the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers

When the participant nurse teachers were asked to describe what personal mastery meant to them, 11 meanings were discovered. These meanings relate to participants' views that personal mastery means engagement in self-leadership practices. Among them, the most common meanings of nurse teacher personal mastery were Creating a personal vision (f = 7), Engagement in self-control (f = 5), Continuing professional development (f = 5), Life-long learning (f = 5), Self-reflection (f = 4), and

Self-awareness (f = 4). These meanings were followed by Setting personal and professional goals (f = 3), Having self-discipline (f = 3), Self-development (f = 3), Self-motivation (f = 2), and Taking initiatives (f = 2). Table 1 depicts the views of the participants about the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers.

Table 1. Views about the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers

Theme: Views about the meaning of personal mastery in nurse teachers		
Main category	**Subcategories**	**f**
Personal mastery means engagement in self-leadership practices	Creating a personal vision	7
	Engagement in self-control	5
	Continuing professional development	5
	Life-long learning	5
	Self-reflection	4
	Self-awareness	4
	Setting personal and professional goals	3
	Having self-discipline	3
	Self-development	3
	Self-motivation	2
	Taking initiatives	2

As revealed in the table, regarding the meaning of nurse teacher personal mastery, a variety of words were used to describe the meaning, with 11 subcategories obtained. The following is an illustration of how participants understood and viewed the personal mastery of nurse teachers:

Participants indicated that personal mastery meant taking the initiatives instead of waiting for this to be initiated by their institution. Thus, participants engaged in taking ownership of their own personal mastery to improve and help attain the institutional vision. To influence and bring impact to their institutions through personal mastery, nurse teachers therefore needed first to engage in self-leadership practices. This entailed taking initiatives such as creating personal vision, engagement in self-reflection, engagement in self-control, and engagement in continuing professional development.

Creating a personal vision

Participants were aware that to have personal mastery, they first needed to change ineffective behaviour patterns by defining and articulating their values and setting a vision with challenging goals for themselves. This involved nurse teachers setting challenging and realistic goals to motivate and direct behaviours towards their personal and professional development, as illustrated by the following quotations:

"I need to assess my work properly to plan and work according to plan and when I put it into practice, it will be a quality work that is well planned. Of course, I am guided by specific values because there are specific things in the profession that we believe in." (P4, G1).

"Personal mastery is when as a nurse teacher I develop my own vision, so that I have an idea of where I am going. Having a personal vision guides me to determine where I want to be professionally in the years to come" (P2, G1).

From the participants viewpoints, it appears that personal mastery means defining and clarifying one's personal and professional values and committing to these by continuously clarifying and delving deeper into one's personal vision and self-leadership (Bui & Baruch, 2010). García-Morales (2007, p.549) asserts that upon individuals acquiring personal mastery, they pursue their personal vision to manage dissonance "between future vision and current reality", and the self-doubts that become an obstacle for ease of achievement of the personal vision. Thus, nurse educator's personal mastery through formulating a vision that articulates one's passion for teaching, which is also aimed at influencing change beyond teaching is a self-leadership practice.

Engagement in self-control

Participants described their personal mastery as being able to monitor and control feelings, thoughts, and actions during interactions with those within their professional cycles like students and fellow teachers. Such ability curtails unprofessional behaviours and actions, which have a potential to negatively affect the teaching-learning process within an NEI. Participants perceived their personal mastery as having the strength to prioritise and demonstrate self-discipline by focusing on accomplishing their tasks, as illustrated by this:

"We do not have individual offices; we are having an open plan office. So, we share the same space, so one has to be disciplined and continue to work quietly as if there is no one else there. It is only you alone in the office ... you must be self-disciplined and have good concentration levels…..not let the environment affect your work, even in an open plan setting like this." (P4, G4).

These views indicate that personal mastery was understood by the participants as getting out of comfort zone, prioritising, and focusing one's personal vision and achieving the set goals. Individuals with personal mastery are inclined to self-control and can deny urges with ease. De Boer et al. (2015) depict self-control as being able to keep impulsive thoughts or behaviour in restrain and resist being tempted and distracted, even under stressful situations.

Some participants believed that to stay focused and on track with their work, they had to be 'organised'. To the participants, being organised means that they prioritise their workload by managing their time to accommodate learning alongside their teaching schedules, and still meet their deadlines. The participants thus stayed focused when dealing with disturbances and distractions that could interfere with their engagement in personal mastery. They said:

"When you are a nurse teacher you have a lot of responsibilities to fulfil, and you need to be organised. This means striving for effective time management, engaging in preparatory activities such as lesson planning on time." (P5, G3).

The participants' views indicate that nurse educators perceive their personal mastery as putting systems in place to bring order to all aspects of their teaching. To achieve this, nurse educators need to possess self-control. Without exercising self-control, nurse teachers would be submitting to outer adverse stimuli which could desensitise individuals into engagement in self-destructive unethical acts and behaviours (Huxley, 2019). Therefore, when nurse educators exercise personal mastery through exercising self-control aimed at maintaining quality standards of learning and teaching, they are in essence engaging in self-leadership practices.

Engagement in continuing professional development

Participants described personal mastery as taking initiatives to ensure continuous professional growth, using continuing professional development as an example of such an intervention. This view appears to stem from the participants' understanding that continuing professional development is an initiative to self-develop that requires more effort from the individual nurse teacher with lessened reliance on the institution. Participants indicated that their personal mastery could be enhanced by keeping themselves updated on new trends in education and healthcare, as supported by the following quotation:

"Yes, I think nowadays the students that we are teaching, most of them are well-informed, they use gadgets, and do not respond well to traditional ways of teaching. We need to go back and try to catch up with them, so this will help in developing ourselves better." (P6, G3).

The views above indicate that participants viewed personal mastery taking time to introspect and identify own learning needs based on identified areas of weakness or strength.

Embarking on such a lifelong reflective journey sustain their continuing professional development would require nurse teachers to conduct a critical assessment of learning activities or issues within their social and political contexts that would bring about meaningful learning (Grech, 2021). Thus, nurse teachers are advised to take advantage of lifelong learning opportunities that would allow them to continuously improve their expertise and as they attain practical skills and knowledge for application in real-world environments. A participant said the following:

"I think as a nurse teacher you develop professionally by attending courses and seminars which are related to the content and subjects that you are teaching." (P1, G3).

This viewpoint is testimony to the participants' recognition of a need for nurse teachers to attend and participate in workshops and conferences, and to pursue further training in their teaching disciplines or their area of interest. For nurse teachers to engage in self-development and personal mastery, they need to be self-motivated (Bui & Baruch, 2010), so that they do not rely on external factors for motivation but instead rely on the natural desire to engage in activities that facilitate deep fulfilment and feelings of competence. The role of the NEI would be to support the personal mastery of its teachers through provision of a learning culture, so that teachers can dedicate themselves to professional development, with individual performance and higher individual satisfaction as resultant outcomes (Bui & Baruch, 2010). This support translates to institutional managers leading by example by also engaging in continuing professional development activities, as nurse teachers often aspire towards being guided by their role modelling. As Ng (2020) asserts, institutional managers should lead by example and demonstrate a high level of commitment by engaging in self-development activities. In this regard, an apt assertion by Senge et al. (1994, p. 173) on self-development is that "There is nothing more powerful you can do to encourage others in their quest for personal mastery than to be serious in your own quest".

A participant opined that nurse teachers should invest in lifelong learning programmes that facilitate personal mastery through self-leadership, "We need to attend self-leadership training so that we can be aware of our behaviour and self-control and have confidence when we teach". Self-leadership training is regarded by Stewart et al. (2011) as one of the outstanding external forces that promote personal mastery practices and ultimately improve performance. Self-leadership training can be utilised as an intervention that modifies nurse teachers' experience of negative emotions and impulses to improve interpersonal skills (Thompson & Miller, 2018). Such self-leadership training initiatives should not only be targeted at teachers within the NEI, but also aimed at managers, because as Stewart et al., (2019) asserts, many leaders may not know how to lead in a way that promotes personal mastery. The focus areas on self-leadership training could be on the three self-leadership dimensions, namely, thought pattern strategies, behaviour-focused strategies, and natural reward strategies. According to Sampl et al. (2017), mindfulness exercises and self-leadership training mutually supplement each other within Mindfulness-Based Self-Leadership Training (MBSLT) in an academic context.

Views on how nurse teachers' personal mastery can be enhanced in an educational institution

When participants were asked to describe how nurse teacher personal mastery could be enhanced in an educational institution, six suggestions were revealed. These suggestions relate to Provision of a supportive environment, mentioned here in order of hierarchy of frequencies: Mentoring (f = 10), Role modelling (f = 9), A collaborative learning (f = 9), Teamwork (f = 8), Succession planning (f = 5), and Management support (f = 4). The participants' views on how personal mastery of nurse teachers can be promoted in an educational institution are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Views on how nurse teachers' personal mastery can be enhanced in an educational institution

Theme: Views on how personal mastery of nurse teachers can be promoted in an educational institution		
Main category	**Subcategories**	**f**
Provision of a supportive environment	Mentoring	10
	Role modelling	9
	A collaborative learning climate	9
	Teamwork	8
	Succession planning	5
	Management support	4

As revealed in Table 2, participants shared their views on how nurse teacher personal mastery could be enhanced in an educational institution, which are illustrated using 6 subcategories. The following are some of the illustrations of the participants' views, wherein Provision of a supportive environment was revealed as the supportive roles that could be played by peers and institutional managers towards the facilitation of personal mastery in nurse teachers. A supportive environment could be provided through availability of mentors and role models, and a collaborative learning climate.

Availability of mentors and role models

Participants identified role-modelling as a promoter of personal mastery in a NEI. This could be accomplished through provision of mentorship on good teaching and professional behaviours by experienced nurse teachers and leaders within the NEIs. Participants asserted:

"I think the missing link in the professional journey of young and new nurse educators is mentoring and finding role models that are aligned to our interests…we are really losing out" (P3, G2).

This viewpoint is indicative of the participants' understanding of the significance of mentoring and role modelling in shaping their personal mastery. According to Goldsby et al. (2020), a mentor with solid self-leadership skills can easily facilitate mentee to personal mastery. The authors assert that the more calm, positive, and professional the mentor is, the better the mentee is likely to perform. This assertion is corroborated by Ganesh et al. (2019), who found that educators with high self-leadership qualities were keener on mentoring others and helping their mentees to attain personal mastery. In the long run, a reciprocal and collaborative partnership between a mentor and mentee can boost feelings of competence and self-leadership qualities in both the mentor and mentee as they "create meaning together" (Klinge, 2015). Institutional managers can also foster personal mastery in teachers by being role models to them, and by committing to and displaying their own personal mastery (Ng, 2020). In turn, nurse teachers inspire students' personal and professional development through modelling of positive values, emotions, behaviours, and self-development. Hence, it is essential that the credibility, prestige, and trustworthiness of the persons being modelled, that is, institutional managers, are treasured by nurse teachers for their commitment and motivation towards a continuing learning culture (Jack et al., 2017). Therefore, institutional leaders should be aware that nurse teachers yearn to practice personal mastery, however they would benefit more if leaders at NEIs role model personal mastery behaviours so that such practices may cascade across all the institution's organisational levels, including students.

A collaborative learning climate

Participants indicated that personal mastery could be facilitated when nurse teachers worked in an environment that allowed them to establish professional and personal relations, support each other and collaborate on tasks, which would contribute to the enhancement of students' performance and the institution's achievements, as indicated in this quote:

"It would be wonderful if managers and colleagues could appreciate the diverse experiences and skills that each one has. We could collaborate and bring together our collective skills in the institution, then everyone would learn from each other and be developed, not for the benefit of only one person, but for the institution." (P2, G2).

When individuals collaborate with colleagues on tasks, they are exposed to a variety of expertise, experience, and support required for the execution of the tasks, ultimately learning from each other (Stewart et al., 2019). Chenault (2017) found that most academic activities are perceived as inherently personal and devoted to the self, for example conducting research, developing course material and lesson plans. However, collaboration makes it easy for educators to get involved in the practice of critiquing and analysing colleagues' practices, in what Klinge (2015) describes as a partnership of co-equals that encompasses openness and vulnerability. They then learn as a team, while simultaneously attaining personal mastery and a shared institutional vision (Senge, 1990). For the institution to enable team learning, it should assist nurse teachers to build respectful professional relations that are based on respect, wherein they perceive one another not as competitors, but as equal scholars who can derive expertise, emotional and professional support from each other, thus, facilitating a collaborative learning culture that is constructed upon tangible experiences (Chenault, 2017). According to Fouché et al. (2017), when educators feel accepted by their colleagues, they have a sense of belonging and meaningfulness at the institution, leading to a sense of connectedness with other educators and improved performance. Thus, institutions can reduce competition and facilitate personal mastery amongst nurse teachers by mobilising adequate resources, investing in current technology and equipment that facilitates agile learning, and emphasising the importance of a shared vision.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revealed that NEIs should actively support the development of nurse teachers' personal mastery as it not only benefits the individual nurse teacher's professional development in the designated position but the institution as a learning organisation as well. Similarly, the NEI should strive to become a learning organisation that adapts, learns from previous mistakes, explores opportunities for development, and appreciates that nurse teachers' learning, and subsequent contributions are important for the sustainability of the NEI even in turbulent times.

Nurse teachers are encouraged to develop personal visions, proactively take ownership of their own lifelong learning needs for their self-development, and align these to the institutional values and vision, being cognisant of the country's nurse teacher competency framework, as developed by the South African Nursing Council (2014). The long awaited SANC continuing professional development system should be implemented without delay to promote nurse teachers' life-long learning and personal mastery. In this way, nurse teachers can pursue and achieve professional growth, and stay relevant to the continuously changing health and education reforms that are informed by the needs of the population. However, nurse teachers and the NEIs should take proactive steps towards engagement in continuing professional development activities and not wait for SANC's implementation of the framework. Such interventions should be aimed at stimulating lifelong learning behaviour through fostering nurse teachers' intrinsic motivation, contrary to the SANC system's mandatory aspects which have an extrinsic motivation orientation of complying for the sake of maintaining registration.

The NEI could promote nurse teachers' personal mastery by providing a learning platform that facilitates peer support through collaboration, innovation, and pedagogical inquiry. The NEI should also promote activities that could enhance personal mastery as a continuous, lifelong, learning process such as coaching, mentoring. and self-leadership training. As nurse teachers' perceived role models within the NEI, institutional leaders should take lead in engaging in life-long learning and self-development activities that enhance their personal mastery.

Further research studies should be conducted aimed at gaining a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of the NEI as a learning organisation, by exploring and describing the

phenomenon, encompassing all its disciplines, namely personal, systems thinking, shared vision, team learning, and mental models.

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