

LEADERSHIP EDUCATION AND JOB READINESS

Christine R. Palmer, MPH, EdD, CHES©

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

- Liberal education exposes students to a wide variety of courses and subject areas, increasing knowledge and attitudes
- Approach to liberal education theoretically aligns with skills and abilities employers are requiring
- However, a gap still exists between what students are learning and what employers desire
- Study seeks to measure perceptions of knowledge, understanding, skills, and abilities related to job readiness through the implementation of leadership education

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- Noted consistent feelings of nervousness and panic in students regarding future goals and graduation
- Most commonly witnessed in the Public Health Capstone Seminar, which is meant to prepare students for next steps after graduation
- Wondered if leadership education would have an impact on student perceptions, especially through lens of self-efficacy

LITERATURE – LEADERSHIP EDUCATION

- The evolution of leadership
- Theoretical foundation
- Types of leadership education
- Knowledge and skills from leadership education
- Teaching leadership models
 - Social Change Model of Leadership (SCM)
 - Relational Leadership Model
 - Multicultural leadership
- Pedagogies and theories for developing leadership programs
 - Class discussion
 - Leadership simulations
 - Self-assessments
 - Theory + application

LITERATURE – JOB READINESS

- Theoretical foundation
- Employer perceived view of job readiness
 - Concerns with communications skills, problem-solving, analytical reasoning, teamwork, and decision-making skills
 - Graduates need skills in self-management, literacy, initiative, and leadership skills
- Student perceived view of job readiness
 - Students believe that employability is important
 - Agreement on skills needed, but differences in perception of their own skills and abilities
 - Recent graduates note responsibility and self-discipline as critical skills
- University response to job readiness
 - Problem-based learning, undergraduate research, peer advising
- Assessing job readiness

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Primary research question:
 - How does leadership education impact perceptions of job readiness in undergraduate students?
- Secondary research question:
 - How does leadership education impact perceptions of job readiness in diverse undergraduate student populations?

METHODOLOGY

- Qualitative action research methodology
 - Exploratory case study design
- Participants
 - Students enrolled in PUBH 499: Foundations of Public Health Leadership
- Research site
- Sources of data collection
 - Questionnaire
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Artifacts
 - Observational data

DATA COLLECTION

- Open-ended questionnaire at beginning of course
- Semi-structured and unstructured interviews during office hours
- Informal focus groups in classroom
- Artifacts collected throughout semester
 - Self-leadership paper
 - Public health leader paper
 - Group project
 - Class worksheets/reflective writing exercises
- Observations
 - Case studies
 - Class discussions

DATA ANALYSIS

- Coded the data based on key terms and concepts
- Grouped coded data into themes for analysis
- Analyzed for connections and emerging ideas in relationship to research questions
- Interpreted findings for similarities and connections as well as conflicts with research questions

SEVEN THEMES

1. Identification and perception of job readiness skills
2. Change in definition of leadership throughout course
3. Interest in volunteer work and service learning
4. Need for stress management for job readiness
5. Concern about others contributing in teamwork
6. Self-efficacy by knowing more about self-leadership
7. Gender and race impacts motivation behind career

IMPLICATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

- Additional areas of need for public health students
 - Practical experience in public health field
 - Stress management
 - Effective team and group dynamics
 - Outlet for diversity and individual experience
 - Case studies, assessments, and leadership theory
- Recommend leadership education be included in public health undergraduate curriculum
 - Embedded within another course, such as Capstone Seminar
 - Stand-alone leadership course, such as Foundations of PUBH Leadership
 - Aligns with new CEPH accreditation criteria

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Quantitative pre-test post-test design of student perceptions
- Follow students into workforce and compare with employers
- Expand sample to other students in health sciences
- Study impact on perceptions in diverse students further
- Assess students' skills
 - Communication and initiative
 - Student contributions in teamwork
 - Stress management