Perceptions of tutors on tutor training at a University of Technology[1]

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ABSTRACT

Tutor training is an essential component of any university's tutoring programme, but the role of tutor training is often understudied. Underpinned by a reflective practice theoretical lens, this study investigated the perceptions of tutors regarding the tutor training they receive at the beginning of the semester, with the thesis that tutor training imbues tutors with essential skills. A quantitative approach was assumed, buttressed by a positivist worldview. A sample was drawn from tutors who participated in the tutor training (n=69), whereas a self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. Statistical analysis was conducted through the Independent Samples t-test (One-sample t-test). Results reveal that tutors who participated in the survey felt more confident, personally developed, more empathetic, and skilled in academic areas such as writing and student diversity. Training appears to help them understand the dynamics of teaching and learning and contributes positively to their work as tutors. The main implication of the study is that universities should invest in tutor training.

Keywords: tutor training, tutor development, tutor programme, tutoring.

INTRODUCTION

The effectiveness of tutoring is well-established in academic literature as a valuable tool to improve student performance. As such, tutors must be well trained to ensure the quality of tutorship, which largely depends on the training provided to tutors (Bennet & Marsh, 2002). The importance of tutor training is underscored by scholars such as Layton (2013), Faroa (2017) and Staub and Hunt (1993). Moreover, studies attest that continuous training and support for tutors are critical to the development of tutors and ultimately enhance their performance (Layton, 2013). Given the significant role of tutors attested by McKay (2016) and Baleni et al. (2016), training is arguably one of the most critical factors for effective tutoring (Bennett & Marsh, 2002). To this effect, Bennett and Marsh (2002) recommend that tutor training should be conducted throughout the academic semesters. The importance of tutorship in higher education is well documented (Gazula et al., 2020; Maphalala & Mpofu, 2020; McKay, 2016). In the South African higher education context, a large body of literature appears to have mainly focused on the benefits of tutorship for students regarding improving academic performance (Arco-Tirado et al., 2020; Bhorat et al., 2010; Gazula et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2021; Penprase, 2018). Seemingly, this foregrounded focus on tutorship is apt, due to the persistent challenges that mar student academic

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success in South African higher education which are well documented (Bhorat et al., 2010; McKay, 2016; Penprase, 2018).

There appears to be scant research on tutor training and its effectiveness in the South African context. Elsewhere, De Smet et al. (2010) explored how different types of tutor training influence tutorial support patterns and characteristics of tutors, while Motaung and Makombe (2021) studied the experiences of online tutoring to develop a focused training programme. Accordingly, the current study aimed to explore the perceptions of tutors on tutor training on various aspects of the training content, tutor confidence, personal development, communication skills, empathy, academic skills, organisation and understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning. The following literature review focuses on tutor training, competencies and e-learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature is saturated with the documented significance of tutorship in higher education (Baleni et al., 2016; Horn et al., 2009; McKay, 2013) in that tutorial interventions in higher education provide students with extra academic support regarding the subject matter. The challenges faced by universities inherently necessitate tutor programmes. Institutions of higher learning in South Africa face challenges regarding undergraduate pass rates, retention rates, throughput rates and graduation rates (Badat, 2010; Bhorat et al., 2010; Penprase, 2018; McKay, 2016). The studies by McKay (2016) and Badat (2010) show that first-year students are at greater risk of failing; two in three first-year students fail at least one module during their first year of university study. Similarly, Baleni et al. (2016), Horn et al. (2009) and McKay (2013) argue that first-year students are often underprepared as they transition from high school to the higher education environment. One of the objectives of tutorial programmes in this regard is to assist first-year students to transition into higher education smoothly through the provision of tutorial interventions (Horn et al., 2009; McKay, 2013). Support does not end at the first year; undergraduates at all levels are also provided with support through tutorial interventions (Penprase, 2018; Bhorat et al., 2010). Given the critical role played by tutors in the higher education ecosystem, it follows that tutors should be trained to be fit for purpose. For instance, the findings of Motaung and Makombe (2021) show that e-tutors ought to be prepared for e-tutorials through training.

In contemporary discourse of tutorship, it is important to distinguish face-to-face tutoring and e-tutoring, given the advent of e-learning and its impact on tutorship. Face-to-face tutoring involves physical interactions between tutors and tutees in a typical classroom setting, which allows for personal interactions, activities and a non-verbal cue. On the other hand, the term 'e-tutoring' has extended the framework of traditional tutoring so that its purpose could be achieved in virtual environments as well (Copaci & Rusu, 2015). For Maré and Mutezo (2021), e-tutoring refers to the use of the internet to deliver teaching and learning. Unisa (2018) describes e-tutoring as organised interactions between students and e-tutors during online teaching. Similarly, Motaung and Makombe (2021) define e-tutoring as teaching, support, management, and assessment of students on programmes of study that involve significant use of online technologies (Motaung & Makombe, 2021). As higher education institutions gravitated towards online learning (Motaung & Makombe, 2021), adopting e-tutorship was almost inevitable, even for traditional universities (Dube, 2020).

Competencies and e-tutorship

The advent and adoption of new educational technologies in higher education have impacted the sector over the past few years (Joubert & Snyman, 2020). Consequently, several competencies which tutors should be imbued with are proffered in the literature, to the extent that Bennett and Marsh (2002) recommend continuous training for tutors to impart relevant skills. The core competencies for tutors in higher education include communication skills, patience, critical thinking, curricular knowledge (Menke, et al., 2018) and pedagogical skills (Altmann et al., 2022). Chan et al. (2016) posit that the primary role

of e-tutors is to provide support by guiding, facilitating, helping and providing supplementary instruction to students. Beyond these competencies, with the advent of e-learning, tutors should also be trained for e-tutorship, of which Motaung and Makombe (2021) developed a focused training programme. The term 'e-tutors' appears unsurprisingly in synch with the rising popularity of e-tutorship in higher education. COVID-19 also brought another dynamic to the e-learning and online space as attested by Shange's (2022) study. Clarence (2016) posits that in South Africa, just like in the United States of America and Canada, universities appoint senior students as tutors to facilitate student learning and engagement. According to Chan et al. (2016), e-tutors are not lecturers and, as such, should not be expected to do activities done by lecturers. Given the critical role of e-tutors in supporting students in the online learning process, they should possess not only discipline-specific expertise but also pedagogical and technological competencies (Altmann et al., 2022). This is important, as the overarching task of an e-tutor is to support students in the online learning space to achieve learning objectives and clarify questions (Altmann et al., 2022). As Clarence (2016) explains, tutors need opportunities to develop in areas such as assessment, facilitation, and giving students feedback and practices relevant to their work.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Given that the nature of the tutor training alluded to incorporates reflective practice, a theoretical grounding that undergirds study is reflective practice. The origins and evolution of reflective practice in the context of education can be traced to the seminal works of the likes of Dewey (1933), Schön (1983; 1987), Beauchamp (2006; 2015) and Mezirow (1998). Recently, Winberg et al. offered an important groundwork in their work titled 'A reflection on critical reflection in professional education research', thereby critically reflecting on key tenets for universities of technology, namely, work-integrated learning, entrepreneurship, research innovation and curriculum development. Although Winberg and associates did not necessarily focus on reflective practice in relation to training, their work offers an important foundation for reflective practice in general within education. 'Reflective practice' is a term that is used a great deal in contemporary professional discourses (Leigh & Bailey, 2013), and to reflect is often considered a *sine quo non* for professional competency and recognition in several disciplines, including education (Smears, 2009). Collin et al. (2013) even postulate that reflective practice is progressively a dominant paradigm in education beyond its enshrinement as a professional competency. For Leigh and Bailey (2013), reflection is a process of awareness of unconscious assumptions to change behaviour. It is a means through which a practitioner can develop heightened self-awareness about the impact and nature of their performance. According to Leigh and Bailey (2013), this awareness creates opportunities for professional growth and development. As such, reflective practice provides a useful framework for analysis regarding tutor training. Since reflection in the context of training is inherently and mainly *post facto* (Collin et al., 2013), it enables tutors and trainers alike to perceive experiences differently and change their reactions to experiences in future. In essence, the tutors can affect changes in approaches and reactions within the tutoring environment and with their interactions with students, thus improving approaches to tutoring and development. Here, Winberg et al. (2023) proffer that through 'critical' reflection, practitioners can question their assumptions, practices and approaches to improve them.

Tutor training

The significance of tutor training is underscored by Staub and Hunt (1993), whose study found that trained tutors had significantly higher success with students than a control group of tutors who were not trained. Staub and Hunt's (1993) findings were reaffirmed by Aladağ and Tezer (2009), who also found that the peer helpers who received the training programme had significantly higher levels of helping skills than the peer helpers who did not receive the training programme. The same study further reported that the peer helpers who received the training programme also reported significantly higher levels of self-growth than the peer helpers who did not receive it. Furthermore, Faroa's (2017: 6) study shows 'that tutors seem to exhibit a generally positive attitude toward training as well as recognise the need for training'. The importance of training for tutors can therefore not be overstated, especially given that tutors

are also students themselves (Clarence, 2016) and not professional tutors. Tutor training typically focuses on various aspects; for example, Bennett and Marsh (2002: 15) note that tutor training can focus on topics such as 'contextual issues, academic skills such as writing, psychosocial topics such diversity, social and personal well-being, train the trainer (which includes tutor and student learning strategies) and e-tools (ICT training)'. This infers that the training exposes tutors to different aspects of their roles and leads to the development of high-quality tutors who can facilitate quality student engagement. Typically, tutor training exposes tutors to the different pedagogies and pedagogical challenges of teaching and learning. Ng and Kong (2008) postulate that through training, tutors can demonstrate various competencies like online learning technical skills, distinguish between online learning and face-to-face learning, formulate strategies to foster collaborative and online learning and develop effective tutorial strategies. By acquiring these competencies, tutors can carry out their responsibilities more effectively, and as a result of the training, contribute positively to their performance (Waltz, 2019).

Training is therefore implemented to provide the skills and knowledge needed for tutors to effectively support students. Previously, training focused more on specific assessment tasks and marking memos, difficult sections of work that will be included in the tutorial curriculum, or other aspects of subject knowledge (Clark, 1998; Bell, 2001; O'Neill et al., 2009; Underhill, 2009; Blaj-Ward, 2014). Research shows that tutor training now focuses on how to facilitate learning, how to create inclusive and student-centred learning spaces, and how to help students become more confident and capable learners (Clarence, 2018; Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; Spark et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2021). Research further indicates that experiential, meaningful learning occurs when learners do, rather than when they are told what to do (Clarence, 2018; Spark et al., 2017). For instance, in the training, tutors have to participate in activities that draw on their knowledge and experiences, are offered opportunities for practising new skills and can model or mimic the kinds of facilitation or teaching expected of them (Bell & Mladenovic, 2015; O'Neill et al., 2009). The aim of this is to demonstrate to tutors how learning can become effective when students are involved in discussions by making them participate during tutorial sessions. Clarence's (2018) study implies that tutors begin to learn how to tutor more effectively by participating in workshop-style engagements that mimic a desirable tutoring environment. This means that there are salient and explicit benefits attached to training, including tutorials, for tutors. Studies attest that continuous training and support for tutors are critical to the development of tutors and ultimately enhance their performance (Layton, 2013).

Contextualising the research

The tutorship programme at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT) is coordinated by the Teaching and Learning Development Centre (TLDC) and is part of the broader academic support programme for students. The purpose of the tutoring programme is to provide academic support to undergraduate students through tutorship (Sithole & Gumede, 2022). The primary role of tutors in this regard is to provide undergraduate students with academic support through mainly face-to-face tutorials. As an entity entrusted with coordinating the tutorship programme, the TLDC provides pedagogical and generic training to all appointed tutors at the beginning of each semester. Underpinned by reflective practice, that training involves active learning scenarios and action planning during the training and post-training surveys, which enable tutors to apply newly acquired knowledge and reflect on what they have learned. The content of the training programme covers various areas such as personal development, academic skills, organisation, communication skills, empathy and understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning. As such, the objective of the study was to explore the perceptions of tutors on tutor training on these aspects of the training content.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted in this study, underpinned by a positivist philosophical stance. The common denominator among scholars (see Bryman, 2012; De Vos et al., 2011) is that quantitative research ordinarily involves quantities and quantifiable properties. It primarily encompasses

data collection and analysis procedures that generate or use numerical data (De Vos et al., 2011), which is measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures- to determine whether the predictive generalisations are true. Bryman (2012) considers a positivist research paradigm as an archetype which views research through natural sciences lenses. According to Rahman (2017) and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), positivism encourages the use of natural science methods in research, including in social sciences studies. Bryman (2012) postulates that positivism is a nomothetic research paradigm, where knowledge is obtained through empirical testing, just like in natural sciences. In this regard, valid knowledge is obtained through objective and empirical evidence (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Essentially, the conceptualisation of reality and findings of the research should be a true reflection of objective reality (Bryman et al., 2014).

The underlying propositions of positivism can be understood from different angles, namely, epistemology and ontology. Epistemology is concerned with what is valid knowledge, whereas the epistemic proposition of positivism is that knowledge is obtained through empirical evidence (Rahman, 2017). For Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), in the positivist world, knowledge is derived from empirical observation and thus it involves objective observations and hypothesis testing to find evidence for or against assumptions. Epistemologically, empirical evidence is thus central to support assumptions and predictions. The design of this study was empirical, and accordingly, empirical evidence was obtained to explain the relationship between the constructs. In terms of its ontology, positivism asks what reality is and how we know that something is real (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014) and notes that there is only one objective and stable physical and social reality (Rahman, 2017; Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). As such, it could be deduced that the research in this regard would endeavour to observe and measure reality objectively, which is in tandem with the metatheoretical perspective of positivism. In the end, the apparent association between the positivism paradigm and the quantitative research approach (Rahman, 2017) justifies their adoption in this empirical study.

Population and sampling

The sample for this study comprised 69 tutors who attended the tutor training in 2023 and are currently tutoring in the undergraduate programmes at the selected institution. Permission to conduct the study in this regard was obtained (REF: RD1/03/2020). A purposive sampling strategy was adopted as it allows researchers to select a predetermined sample (De Vos et al., 2011). The sample size was determined using the sample size table espoused by Brynard et al. (2014), given that the population was relatively small and homogenous. Of the 106 tutors, a total of 69 tutors responded to the survey.

Data collection and analysis

Based on the literature on evaluating training in organisations (Cousins & MacDonald, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 1994; Michalski & Cousins, 2000), a five-item Likert scale was developed to investigate the tutors' evaluation of training content to determine the effectiveness of the training. Data were collected through a self-administered structured online questionnaire, which was distributed to tutors who attended the 2023 tutor training programme. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire format was used, where respondents were given the margin to express and rank their views on the impact of tutor training on various constructs ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The self-administered questionnaire was constructed on Microsoft Forms and sent as a link via email to 106 tutors after attending the training. Out of 106 tutors, 69 completed the survey, which translated to a response rate of 65%. De Vos (1998) aver that a 60% response rate falls within the threshold of an acceptable response rate in research, thus affirming that the response rate of 65% was sufficient. The instrument included the option for participants to either 'agree' to participate or elect 'not' to participate; if a participant selected not to participate, the online survey did not allow them to proceed to the next section.

The quest of analysis was to determine the premise that tutor training is beneficial for tutors in terms of their confidence, and it improves their personal development, communication skills, empathy, academic

skills, organisation and understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package Software for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 which provides complex statistical analysis and allows data illustration through histograms, pie charts, bar graphs and scatter plots (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The responses were exported into an Excel document and eventually into SPSS for analysis. Before starting the data analysis, it was necessary to determine the normality of the distribution and the homogeneity of variance to decide which statistical techniques to use (Banda, 2018). For this reason, Kurtosis, a measure of the shape or peakedness of a probability distribution, was used and data were distributed normally. The independent samples t-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient techniques were used in the study. The one-sample t-test was used to compare a sample mean to a hypothesised population mean to see whether the observed difference was statistically different, in other words, whether tutor training is beneficial.

Reliability and validity

The philosophical stance adopted in this study dictates that issues of reliability and validity be outlined succinctly. Reliability is concerned with the extent to which the researcher's data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings (Saunders et al., 2009), while validity dictates that an instrument should measure what it is supposed to measure (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020). In other words, concerning validity, the measuring instrument must measure what it claims to yield beneficial results. To satisfy the dictates of reliability, Cronbach's Alpha (α) was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument. According to Saunders et al. (2009, citing Cronbach 1951), a value of 0.7 or more for the Alpha (α) is considered an indicator of consistency and reliability. More precisely, the generally accepted guiding principles indicate that an α of 0.90 and above indicates high reliability, below 0.90 but above 0.80 moderate reliability, and above 0.70 but below 0.80 low reliability. Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted for the tutor training instrument which yielded an alpha coefficient of α =.955 for the 17 items, which is a relatively high internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha of .955 indicates that the items on the scale were very strongly correlated with each other, meaning that they were all measuring the same underlying construct.

FINDINGS

Biographical data

In terms of descriptive statistics for gender, shown in Table 1, the distribution of the genders is almost equal. The depicted data indicate that 47.8% of tutors who participated in the survey were male and 50.7% were female. Per Table 1, there is one missing value, which represents 1.4% of the total participants. The missing value is not included in the cumulative per cent column, as it is not known whether the participant is male or female.

Table 1:
Gender statistics

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	33	47.8	48.5	48.5
	Female	35	50.7	51.5	100.0
	Total	68	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.4		
Total		69	100.0		

The level of education for tutors who took part in the survey is shown in Table 2. The most common level of education among tutors who participated in the study is a diploma (52.2%) followed by an advanced

diploma (23.2%) and Post Graduate Diploma/Honours (15.9%). This suggests that most tutors have a strong foundation in the subject matter they are tutoring. The relatively small number of tutors with master's (4.3%) or doctoral degrees (2.9%) suggests that there is a demand for tutors with a wide range of educational backgrounds. In this regard, it is worth noting that the institution under study has a limited number of postgraduate programmes, especially at the master's and doctoral levels. It is therefore unsurprising that the majority of tutors have qualifications at the undergraduate level.

Table 2:
Level of study

		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Diploma	36	52.2	52.9	52.9
	Advanced Diploma	16	23.2	23.5	76.5
	Post Graduate Diploma/Honours	11	15.9	16.2	92.6
	Masters	3	4.3	4.4	97.1
	PhD/Doctoral	2	2.9	2.9	100.0
	Total	68	98.6	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.4		
Total		69	100.0		

Results

The results of the one-sample t-test, test statistic (t) along with degrees of freedom (df) and the significance level (p-value) for each factor are reported in this section and depicted in Table 3. Results of the one-sample t-test per Table 3 show that the mean scores for all the variables are significantly different from the hypothesised value of 3. The results suggest that all the factors being tested have a significant impact on the respondent's perceptions, as indicated by the p-values (Sig.) being very low (close to 0). This means there is strong evidence to the perception that the training has a significant and positive effect on tutors, meaning that it could be deduced that tutors perceived the training favourably.

Table 3:
One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Build confidence of tutors	8.502	68	.000	1.159	.89	1.43
Personal development	8.651	68	.000	1.188	.91	1.46
Improves communication	9.741	68	.000	1.246	.99	1.50
Improves empathy	8.529	68	.000	1.145	.88	1.41
Academic skills such as writing and student diversity	8.619	68	.000	1.072	.82	1.32

Improves organisation	6.719	67	.000	.926	.65	1.20
Training assists me to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning	8.675	68	.000	1.174	.90	1.44
Contributes positively to my performance as a tutor	8.670	67	.000	1.176	.91	1.45

The results of the one-sample t-test suggest that the training had a significant impact on the tutors' confidence, personal development, communication skills, empathy, academic skills, organisation and understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning. As depicted in Table 3, personal development shows a t-statistic score of 8.651, (t=8.502, df=68, p< .00), which was to determine the perceptions of tutors regarding the training on their personal development as tutors. This suggests that tutors felt that the training contributed positively towards personal development. Beyond personal development, communication is also one of the critical skills for tutors as they engage and communicate with students. As such, the construct was included and measured, with a t-statistic score of 9.741 (t=9.741, df=68, p<.000), which shows that tutor communication skills were enhanced, meaning tutors could communicate more effectively with students. Like communication, empathy is considered another core skill for tutors. At a measure of 8.529, (t=8.529, df=68, p<.000), results affirm that the training had a significantly positive impact on tutors' empathy. As such, it can be expected that the tutors, post-training, could develop more empathy for their students. Regarding academic skills such as writing and student diversity, the t-test yielded 8.619, (t=8.619, df=68, p<.000), suggesting a significantly positive view towards the construct, implying that tutors believe the training helped them to improve their academic skills such as writing and understanding student diversity. On whether tutors perceived the training to improve their organisation, the mean score yielded an average of 6.719 (t=6.719, df=67, p<.000). In terms of whether training assists tutors to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning, the mean score on this item was 8.675, suggesting that the tutors believe that the training helped them to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning. With improved organisation and awareness of the dynamics of teaching and learning, tutors can be expected to deliver tutorials more effectively. Lastly, the data in Table 3 indicate a mean score of 8.670 for the contribution of training to tutor performance. Overall, the results suggest that tutors' perceptions towards the training were significantly positive. Specifically, the results suggest a discernible positive influence of the training on facets such as personal development, communication skills, empathy, academic skills, organisation and the tutor's understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning.

DISCUSSION

This section situates the study's findings in the discourse of tutorship by synthesising findings with the literature in threefold: firstly, concerning literature; secondly, regarding the research philosophy adopted herein; and third, concerning the theoretical framework. The gender of participants is distributed almost equally, while the mean difference for all constructs is significantly greater than the average mean (lowest=.962: highest=1.188). It implies that tutor training can significantly and positively impact tutor development. In line with Layton's (2013) postulation, the results mean that tutors who received training reported feeling more confident, more personally developed, were better communicators, more empathetic and more skilled in academic areas such as writing and student diversity. The training was further perceived to help tutors to understand the dynamics of teaching and learning and to contribute more positively to their work as tutors. These findings suggest that tutor training can effectively improve the quality of tutoring services provided to students as averred by Waltz (2019). Overall, the findings

appear consistent with Faroa's (2017) assertion which affirms that tutors tend to appreciate the value of training. Similar findings include that of Staub and Hunt (1993) and Aladağ and Tezer (2009). Given the significant role of tutors on student academic success (McKay, 2016; Baleni et al., 2016), training is, therefore, necessary (Bennett & Marsh, 2002) to equip tutors with the relevant and requisite knowledge and skills. Layton (2013) emphasises that the importance of tutor training cannot be overstated.

From the results, it can be deduced that tutors who receive training are more likely to acquire certain skills and knowledge, thus being better prepared for their role, and are more likely to use effective tutoring strategies. This deduction reinforces Layton's (2013) emphasis on the importance of tutor training. The results converge at the intersection of positivism and its tenets in that the methodological approaches and techniques employed border quantifiable properties, objectivity (axiology) and empirically (positivist epistemology), underscored by Rahman (2017) and Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014). A litmus test in this regard involves the validity and reliability of the research instrument used in the study of which the reliability analysis yielded a satisfactory score. Thus, ontologically, the views and experiences of the tutors reported in this study can be considered a true reflection of the reality within the context of this study. The same holds metatheoretically, that the tutors' views towards the training can therefore be considered, even axiologically, as 'objective and value free' (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 25).

Given that the views herein were recorded *post facto* training, they can be considered as the tutor's post-training reflections. In this regard, drawing from Collin, Karsenti and Komis (2013) and Leigh and Bailey (2013), tutors are likely to reflect on their practices before and after the training. The results show an overwhelming affirmation of training, which suggests that knowledge and skills gained from the training can, firstly, contribute to the personal and professional growth of tutors and, secondly, affect changes in their tutorial approaches and interactions with students (Collin et al., 2013). Subsequently, tutors can effectively carry out their responsibilities and contribute positively to their performance (Layton, 2013; Waltz, 2019).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of tutors of the tutor training. Through a quantitative endeavour fortified by the positivist research philosophy, the study's findings affirmed the thesis emanating from the literature that tutor training enhances the skills and knowledge of tutors, thus improving their tutorial skills and preparing them for the role. Indeed, the study found that tutors who received training reported favourably regarding the training, as they felt confident in personal development, communication skills, empathy, academic skills and organisation. It is apparent that tutor training is an essential component of a tutoring programme, as tutors who received the were more likely to use effective tutoring strategies and understand the role better. Thus, training should be seen as an essential component of a tutorial programme, as it provides tutors with the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to be effective in their roles. As such, the main implication for practice emanating herein is that to derive more value out of tutoring programmes, institutions should pay more attention towards tutor training. However, the effectiveness of tutor training can vary depending on several factors, such as the content of the training, the delivery method, and the experience of the tutors.

Limitations and areas for further research

Considering that the study was conducted on a relatively small sample of tutors, this could limit the generalisation of the study. The study also did not measure the actual performance of tutors, as such, it limits understanding as to whether the training led to actual improvement in the performance of tutors. Despite these limitations, the findings of the study provide valuable insights into the value of tutor training programmes, as they can help to inform the development and implementation of more effective tutor training programmes. Future studies could include a larger sample, apply different methodologies and possibly focus on evaluating the actual performance of tutors as a result of training.

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