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A South African Perspective on Self-Leadership Development for Women Engineering Students – A Pilot Study

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Abstract : Across the world, initiatives have been introduced to encourage women to enter into and remain in engineering fields. However, research has shown that many women leave engineering or suffer a loss of self-esteem and self-confidence compared to their male counterparts. To address this problem, a South African comprehensive university developed a self-leadership intervention pilot study in 2013, aimed at improving the self-efficacy of its female engineering students and increasing retention rates. This paper is a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive study of the rationale and operational aspects of the Women in Engineering Leadership Association's (WELA) self-leadership workshop. The objectives of this paper are to provide a framework for the design of a self-leadership workshop and to provide insight into the process of developing such a workshop specifically for women engineering students at a South African university. Finally, the paper proposes an evaluation process for the pilot workshop, which also provides a framework to improve future workshops. It is anticipated that the self-leadership development framework will be applicable to other higher education institutions wishing to improve women engineering student's feelings of self-efficacy and therefore retention rates of women in engineering.

Keywords : co-curricular interventions, self-efficacy, self-leadership, women in engineering
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