

Compassionate Leaders of Tomorrow

Embedding leadership into the Year 3 Healthcare Improvement SSC

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Introduction:

Leadership is recognised as a core competency for safe & effective clinical practice, previously relied upon in the hidden curriculum.^{1,2}

What does compassionate leadership mean?

"Leading in a way which is supportive of team members and sensitive to the challenges which they may be facing both in the task for which you are leading them and outside in the rest of their lives"

Student 3

The Problem:

In 2023/24 a learning needs assessment (LNA) showed:

- 100% students recognise the importance of leadership
- 38% feel confident in their own leadership abilities upon graduation

The Response:

Using experiential learning theory, the Healthcare Improvement (HI) team provide a variety of themed 4-week Student-Selected Components (HI-SSC) where students can produce a tangible outcome to their local communities and health service.

We developed a workshop to be embedded within the HI-SSC curriculum to create opportunities for students to develop leadership skills.

By combining structured learning with an experiential approach, we aim to:

- Provide a safe environment for students to apply leadership qualities to real improvement work, and;
- Build confidence before application in practice.

The Process of Development:

The students were clear they did not want to be "taught" leadership. So we iteratively designed a 3-part workshop to include core concepts of:

- Leadership Qualities;
- Emotional Intelligence;
- Influencing Skills.

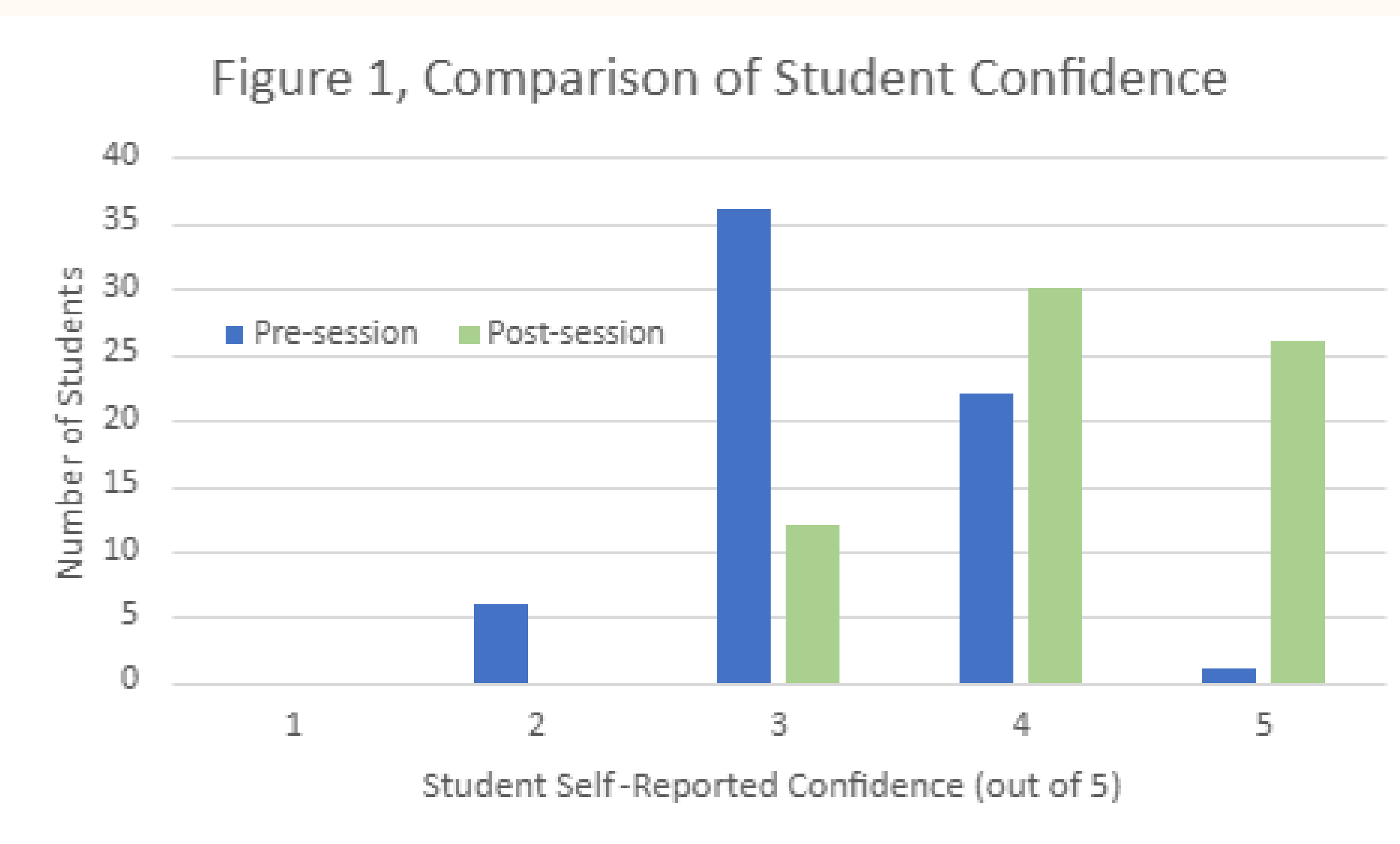
Therefore, we pulled on the Lave and Wenger's³ Communities of Practice theory to integrate leadership theory and activities including a flipped-classrooms dynamic and reflective practice.

Results:

The session has been delivered 7 times to 73 students in Year 3 & final year (Year 5 MBChB & Year 4 ScotGEM) students.

Right Shift in leadership confidence from 3.1 (pre-session) to 4.3 (post-session). Improvement: +1.2/5 (Figure 1)

Net Promoter Score: +20



Student voices:

Who: March 2026 Sustainable Healthcare HI-SSC, n = 8 of 13.

Themes & take away messages:

- Application of skills in practice;
- Permanence to thought process;
- Generalized favorability with design and delivery

"Thanks for running it! It was a really great session which took the more hidden curriculum aspect of the course and tackled it in a fun, engaging format."

Student 6

"[I] didn't realise how important emotional intelligence was to leadership"

Student 8

"The mix of more lecture style elements with discussion worked really well. It was nice being introduced (or reintroduced) to concepts and then actually having the time and space to explore them amongst a safe group of peers"

Student 7

Conclusion

This workshop gives a structured opportunity for students to develop confidence in applying leadership and emotional intelligence skills within the context of HI projects. The workshop has been well received by both learners and educators, with early evaluation showing strong engagement in the interactive workshop format.

Student reflections highlight clear relevance to their current scope of practice and increased confidence in their compassionate leadership abilities. Many students, also, described feeling better prepared to contribute actively to improvement work, reporting a greater understanding of the interplay between emotional intelligence, influencing skills and leadership skills.

Looking forward, this workshop will be delivered within all Year 3 HI-SSC from academic year 2026/27, ensuring leadership development is embedded alongside students' HI project work.

References

1. General Medical Council. (2018). Outcomes for graduates 2018. www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/outcomes-for-graduates-2020_pdf-84622587.pdf
2. Abougazia, A. (2025). Unveiling the Hidden Curriculum of Transformational Leadership: A Novel Paradigm for Future Organisational Learning. International Journal of Strategy and Organisational Learning, 2(1), 40–61. <https://doi.org/10.56830/IJSOL06202>
3. Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation (18th ed.). Cambridge University Press.