

**Paper Code: DIXO 7048**

"Promoting professionalism, and accountability in educational leadership through the application of electronic portfolios"

Robert Dixon  
Curtin University of Technology  
GPO Box U1987 Perth WA  
Telephone: +61 08 92662182  
Email: [r.dixon@curtin.edu.au](mailto:r.dixon@curtin.edu.au)

Dr Kathryn Dixon  
Curtin University of Technology  
GPO Box U1987 Perth WA  
Telephone: +61 08 92662189  
Email: [k.dixon@curtin.edu.au](mailto:k.dixon@curtin.edu.au)

## **Promoting professionalism, and accountability in educational leadership through the application of electronic portfolios**

*ABSTRACT- This paper is the consequence of an investigation of the capacity of an electronic portfolio to promote reflection on educational leadership. A cohort of volunteer aspirant and current school leaders participated in the trial of an innovative software package designed to facilitate the creation of an electronic portfolio. The study followed the development of volunteers as they underwent the process of constructing an e-folio, in an effort to understand the efficacy of an electronic portfolio as a tool for demonstrating self-reflection and analysis of personal leadership. The trial members wrote reflections regarding their experiences as leaders into their portfolios using the parameters of the “Leadership Framework” as the conceptual guide. This part of the study reports on the results of a content analysis conducted on individual reflections, which found seven key thematic concerns of modern educational leaders, including their relationship with staff, pedagogy and learning, students, the performance of staff, students and the school, the need for collaboration, an emphasis on the importance of planning, and the need to develop a vision. Several smaller but significant sub themes such as management of the educational institution, improving skills and knowledge of both staff and students, and the tasks and activities of everyday management also emerged.*

### **Background**

The Western Australian Department of Education and Training developed its Leadership Centre in partnership with several associations of school administrators in 1998. The mission of the partnership was to establish and foster “the growth of leadership in a school centre and to encourage the sharing of the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values of leadership between leaders” (Leadership Centre Website, 2004). Furthermore the leadership centre positioned itself with three strategic broad aims:

- Developing a contemporary understanding for the profession of school leadership
- Raising the professional standards of school leadership
- Provision of opportunities for professional growth and development for government school leaders.

With the collaboration of the Leadership Centre, a number of academic researchers in two WA universities, the Professional Associations, the Australian Education Union and in line with its broad strategic aims, the organisation developed a leadership framework underpinned by a range of leadership competencies and standards (Fig. 1).

## The Leadership Framework

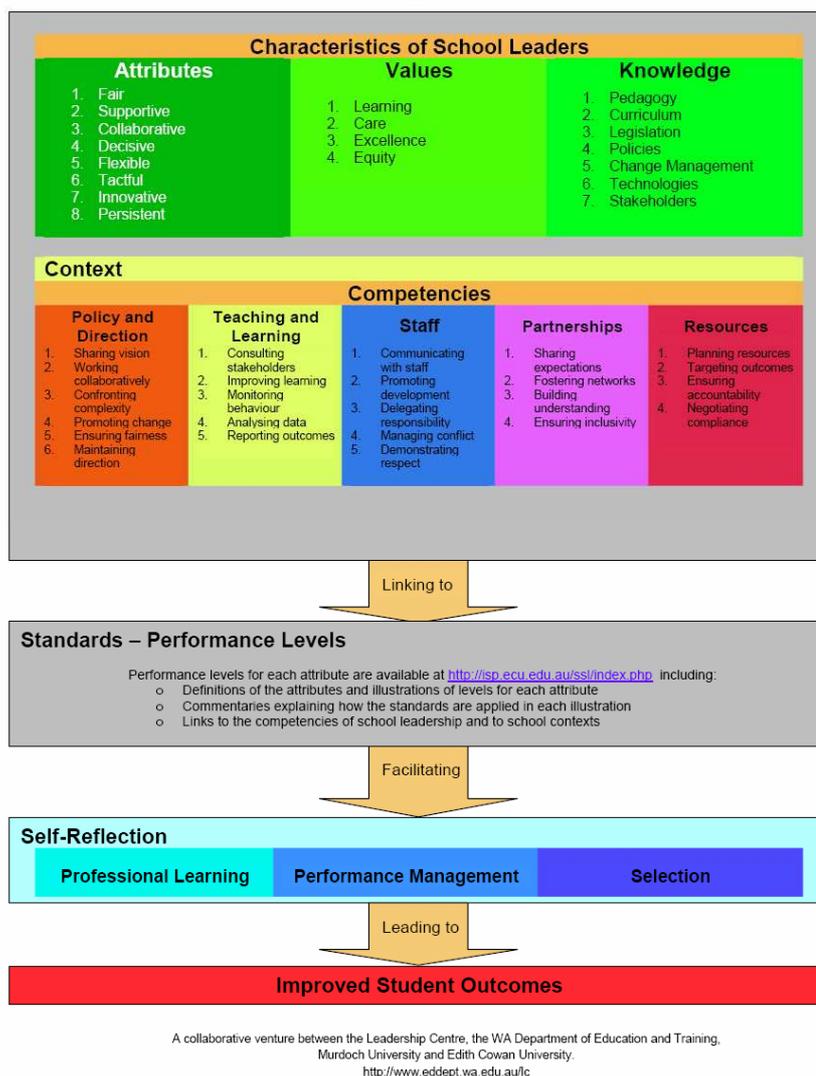


Fig 1 The Leadership Framework

The framework adopted a reflective practice model, which aimed to develop personal assessment and continuous growth in educational leadership.

Underpinning this model were four major assumptions; first that the professional values, knowledge, attributes and skills of educational leadership are essential, generic and applicable to any educational context; second, that the competencies are a result of rigorous research, and represent one way of describing effective leadership within W.A.; third that competencies are interrelated, complex and difficult to describe and serve to highlight key elements of effective leadership without privileging one over another; fourth that the conceptual basis for the construction of the framework is in organisational change and the facilitation of empowerment by educational leadership in the wider school community, (Wildy & Loudon, 2002).

The model integrates the characteristics and competencies of educational leaders through context, linking performance standards, facilitating self-reflection that ultimately leads to improvement in student outcomes in a linearly structured

framework. The cyclical link between leadership performance and self-reflection, whilst intrinsic and intuitive is not made explicit in the current model.

The subdivision of leadership characteristics into three areas (Attributes, Values and Knowledge) enables specific and comprehensive categories of recognisably simple and explicit ideals of which an educational leader should have command. Similarly, the competencies are divided into five subheadings, (Policy and Direction, Teaching and Learning, Staff, Partnerships and Resources) which have been identified as key areas that indicate educational leadership mastery. Each competency has a series of definitions of the attributes with illustrations of the levels for each and a series of commentaries explaining how the competencies are applied and measured against context.

It was against the background of this research and the resultant model that the furthering of the strategic aims of the leadership centre through the development of an electronic portfolio evolved.

### **Reflective Practice**

The Socratic axiom that a life without reflection is not worth living, may be stretching the boundaries of 21<sup>st</sup> century credulity in a television dominated somatic culture, but like the Greek philosopher Sophocles, who was also a proponent of thoughtful reflection by carefully observing and describing human performance, it provides an interesting entrance into the world of modern reflective practice and its potential for developing leadership.

At the root of the concept of modern reflective practice is the philosopher Dewey whose seminal book "How We Think; A restatement of the relation of reflective thinking to the educative process" (1933) was the beginning of a line of thinking which resonates today with many educators and continues to influence policy making and educative processes. Rodgers (2002) succinctly summarizes Dewey's ideas without losing complexity:

*Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible and ensures the progress of the individual and ultimately society. It is a means to essentially moral ends. Reflection is a systematic rigorous, disciplined way of thinking with its roots in scientific enquiry. Reflection needs to happen in community in interaction with others. Reflection requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others. (p845)*

Schön (1983), a scholar who elaborated on the work of Dewey, spoke of reflective practice as the dialogue of thinking and doing which enables one to become more skilful. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) surmised that reflection is a means of developing self awareness and improving performance. Schön, working with Kolb, has given currency to reflective practice recently by applying reflection on experience to improve action in professional practice, forcing one to learn through questioning

and feedback which leads an individual to examine the basis on what is believed to be either true or false. (UK Centre for Legal Education, 2007)

Reflection as a learning process, examines current or past practices, behaviours, or thoughts in order to make conscious choices about future actions, implying that reflection is the combination of hindsight, insight, and foresight. (Barnett and O'Mahony, 2006) Brookfield (1998), takes this a step further, describing critically reflective practice, which is a "process of inquiry involving practitioners in trying to discover, and research, the assumptions that frame how they work" (p 197). He asserts that there are four complimentary lenses through which practitioners interrogate these assumptions;

*"...the lens of their own autobiographies as learners of reflective practice, the lens of the learners eyes, the lens of colleagues perceptions and the lens of theoretical, philosophical and research literature." (p197)*

The notion of critical reflective practice, especially the autobiographical lens and its capacity to create a resource from which personal insight could be gleaned to inform practice, became a key element underpinning the design of the electronic portfolio which is at the centre of the current study.

Reynolds (1999) similarly accords critical reflection "a commitment to questioning assumptions and taken for granted beliefs in both theory and professional practice" Therefore, he argues, it has the potential to be used as a training tool, particularly with regards to critical incidents where explicit questions such as; "How could I have managed this situation more effectively? How was my comment about 'x' received by individuals?" can be starting points for critical reflection. (NCSL, 2003). Reflections on prompts like these are often recorded and used later in reports required by district superintendents and other education authorities.

The potential for reflective journals to form a part of a structured training program in leadership development is recognised in a number of studies (Brubacher, Case & Regan 1994; Boud, 2001; Zehm and Kottler, 1993; Holly, 1989; Posner, 1989; Kottkamp, 1990):

*Writing to reflect involves a cyclical pattern of reflection: first, reflecting on experiences as you write; and then reflecting on the journal entries themselves at some later stage, which may provide material for further reflection, and so on. (Holly, 1984, p. 7)*

Ghaye and Lillyman, (2000) observe that, reflection is not necessarily everyday spontaneous professional behaviour, except in the cases where things go wrong, or in a major life crisis. Furthermore, Gelter (2003) proposes that reflection is "a learned process of an unconscious selecting of spontaneously generated thoughts..." (p338). He intriguingly suggests that the conscious capability for reflection is a historically recent development of human beings; that the conscious "I" and its capacity to reflect (as opposed to the unconscious "me") arose in the dawn of modern society in association with the development of a free will and that reflective capacity is thus epigenetic and has to be learned and encouraged.

Kinsella (2005) took a practical view in the application of reflective practice especially with regards to professional development. She postulated that the actions of a reflective practitioner included recognition of practical experience as an avenue for learning. She encourages individuals to reflect regularly and to learn to recognise other ways of knowing within ones profession. The development of self knowledge, the examination of the context of practice and examination of the ideologies of the systems in which one works should be put towards envisioning and applying positive change. Scrutinising personal assumptions to enhance self awareness should be undertaken. Articulating theories of practice and comparing espoused theory with actual practice with the overall aim of developing praxis, is paramount.

### **The Professional Portfolio**

Pressure is increasing on schools to respond to rapidly changing conditions brought about by improvements in technology and a shift in emphasis towards a more pluralistic and accountable approach to administration. School leaders are being asked to demonstrate how they are responding to these challenges and to demonstrate the ways in which they are improving their leadership to meet the enormous demands made upon them. Brown and Irby (1996) emphasised the complex, multi-faceted responsibilities of school leadership, and studies by Joyce and Showers (1995) have demonstrated that educational leaders must develop continuously as professionals and instructional leaders to optimise learning conditions for student success.

A professional portfolio has a number of definitions depending on its use.

*... a thoughtful, organized, and continuous collection of a variety of authentic products that document a professional's progress, goals, efforts, attitudes, pedagogical practices, achievements, talents, interests, and development over time. (Winsor & Ellefson, 1995, p.1).*

According to Simmons (1996) and Wolf & Dietz (1998), there are three main functions of the portfolio; learning, assessment and employment or professional presentation. The first two are more student-oriented, whilst the third is meant to demonstrate professional development, containing (for example), a resume, and artefacts of *best practice*. The third type of portfolio includes a statement of teaching philosophy, letters of recommendation, awards, official documents, curriculum innovations, lesson plans, reflections and personal evaluations (Hurst, Wilson & Cramer, 1998).

A professional portfolio is an "organized collection of complex, performance-based evidence that indicates one's growth, goals, and current knowledge and skills needed to be competent in a role or area of expertise" (Campbell, Melenyzer, Nettles & Wyman, 2000, p. 151, cited in Heath, 2002). Heath, (2002) elaborates further that, a portfolio must be more than an organized collection of artefacts, but should also indicate areas of proposed future growth based upon assessments of past performance and current strengths. These assessments, says Heath, are made as a result of personal reflection both on personal performance and on the selection of artefacts on which reflections are based. "The act of reflection, which is a critical element of portfolio content, further defines the professional portfolio as our own" (Heath, 2002 p. 19).

Creating a leadership portfolio according to Meadows & Dyll (1999, p.3) is;

*“...a culminating experience in the educational leadership program assisting prospective administrators in the areas of performance appraisal, professional growth, and career planning”*

According to Salend (2001), however a portfolio is organised or prescribed, professional leadership portfolios should be both process and product oriented with a focus on the collaborative and reflective process of the teaching and learning experience.

With the above named studies as a guide and the Leadership Framework as the conceptual framework for the study, the researcher created an electronic portfolio application, recruited volunteers and commenced the trial which is reported in this paper.

### **The Study**

Eleven volunteers were selected to take place in a trial of an innovative portfolio project, authored by the researcher, in an effort to determine the effectiveness of a portfolio to elicit reflective practice and to demonstrate the specific characteristics referred to in the Leadership Framework developed by Wildy and Loudon (2002).

After participants had been provided with a full day training program, they were followed up over the next twelve months, by regular telephone, e-mail communication and two personal visits during February 2005 and April 2005, with a final “show and tell” in November, 2005. During both the personal visits, which lasted an average of just over an hour, the trial inductees were provided with technical support, encouragement and positive reinforcement as to the extent of their progress. They were encouraged to write as much about their experiences in leadership as was possible and to collect artefacts which demonstrated their leadership skills.

The trial group began with eleven volunteer aspirant and current educational leaders. One dropped out of the trial on personal grounds in early February. Two drifted away from the trial for a number of personal and professional reasons during the course of 2005. Eight participants completed the trial; two primary principals, (P1 & P2) three primary deputy principals, (DP1, DP2 and DP3) and three secondary heads of departments, (HD1, HD2 and HD3). Of the eight who saw the portfolio through to the end of the trial, two made excellent progress, three finished the portfolio with a high degree of achievement, two finished with a moderate to high degree of achievement and one made simple entries and barely satisfactory progress. Achievement was measured in terms of the number of tasks completed, the amount of information provided, the clarity of the organisation of the portfolio, the technical competence with which the artefacts were produced and inserted and personal perceptions of completion.

### **Methodology**

Written reflections from participant portfolios were edited to remove unnecessary information such as dates and names for example. Spelling errors were corrected, and

other extraneous information, such as pictures and captions were removed, with the resultant data containing only reflective comments, which were gathered into an Excel file. This file was then subjected to SPSS Text Analysis for Surveys, V2 in order to ascertain frequencies of responses, linguistic and semantic groups which provided context for the open ended reflections.

SPSS Text Analysis authors claim that their software uses “advanced linguistic technologies to extract and classify key concepts...and can code open ended text consistently and reliably” (SPSS, p1-2). This is a claim which, from personal experience has some justification

Content analysis is an important research technique in the Social Sciences in that it makes sense of data as “symbolic phenomena” and is analysed in an unobtrusive way (Krippendorff 1980). Furthermore, content analysis works within a framework in which the context of the data, how the analysts knowledge partitions reality, the target of the content analysis, inference and validity, combine to create a successful outcome;

*“The framework is intended to serve three purposes; prescriptive, analytical and methodological. It is prescriptive in the sense that it should drive the conceptualization and design of practical content analyses for any given circumstance; analytical in the sense that it should facilitate the critical examination of content analysis results obtained by others; and methodological in the sense that it should direct the growth and systematic improvement of methods for content analysis.” (Krippendorff, 1980: 26)*

SPSS offered the opportunity to reduce the bias normally associated with manual content analysis techniques, and improve validity of the findings, although “creative science” was required to specify exclusions, inclusions and to refine the concepts which emerged. Content Analysis is an iterative process. Moreover, “content analysis is fundamentally an empirical approach in orientation, exploratory, concerned with real phenomena and predictive in intent.” (Krippendorff, 1980:9). Conceptually, content analysis is able to make reproducible and valid inferences from data to their context, and is a systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. (Berelson, 1952:18)

## **Findings and discussion**

Individual reflections were analysed using the SPSS application and then the total corpus of information was combined to seek emergent trends as a group. A word count of each of the contributions is demonstrated in Table 1.

Identity	Corpus Contribution SPSS (Words)
DP1	12,637
DP2	11,740
HD1	4,889
DP3	4,441
HD2	3,525
P1	3,369
HD3	2,885
P2	2,711
Total Corpus Size	46,176

Table 1 Corpus contribution of participants

The raw data was then converted into linguistic extractions from the text using SPSS to create categories. These categories were thoroughly interrogated for “fit” and appropriate adjustments were made until nineteen key themes emerged (Fig 2)

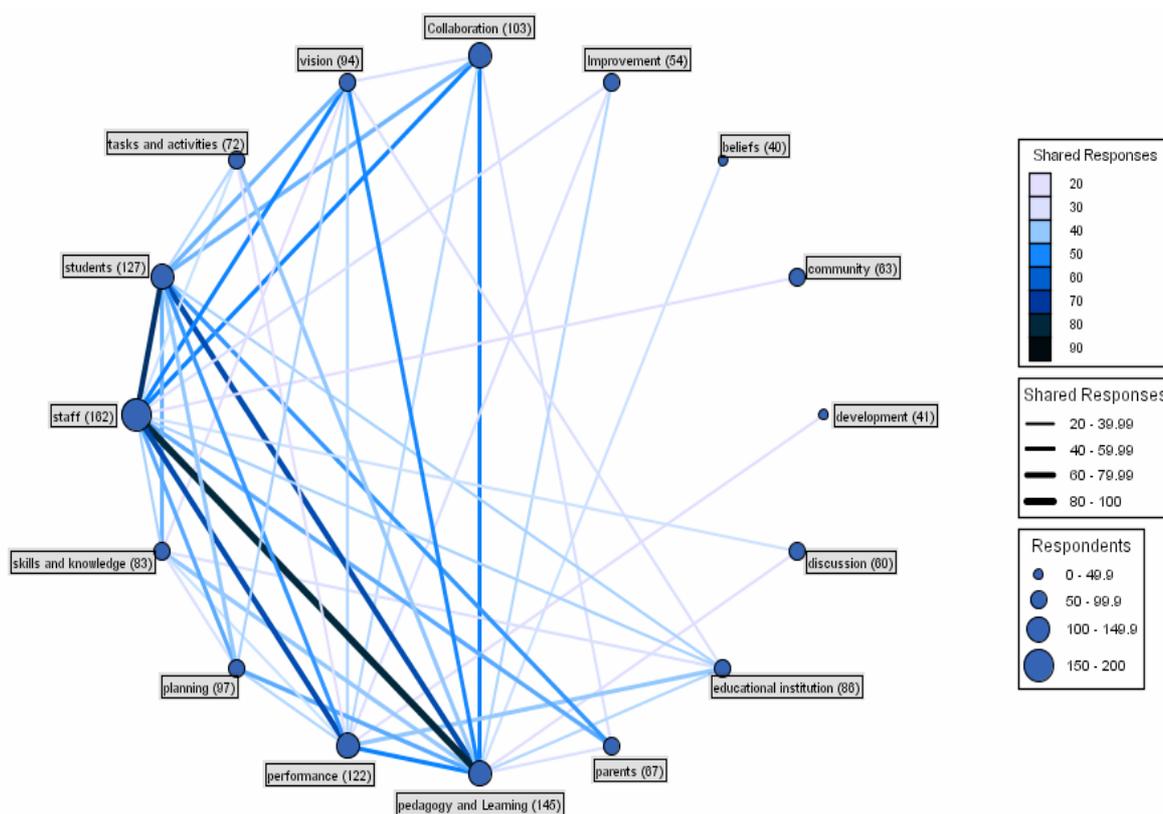


Fig 2 Key linguistic relationships between categories from all participants

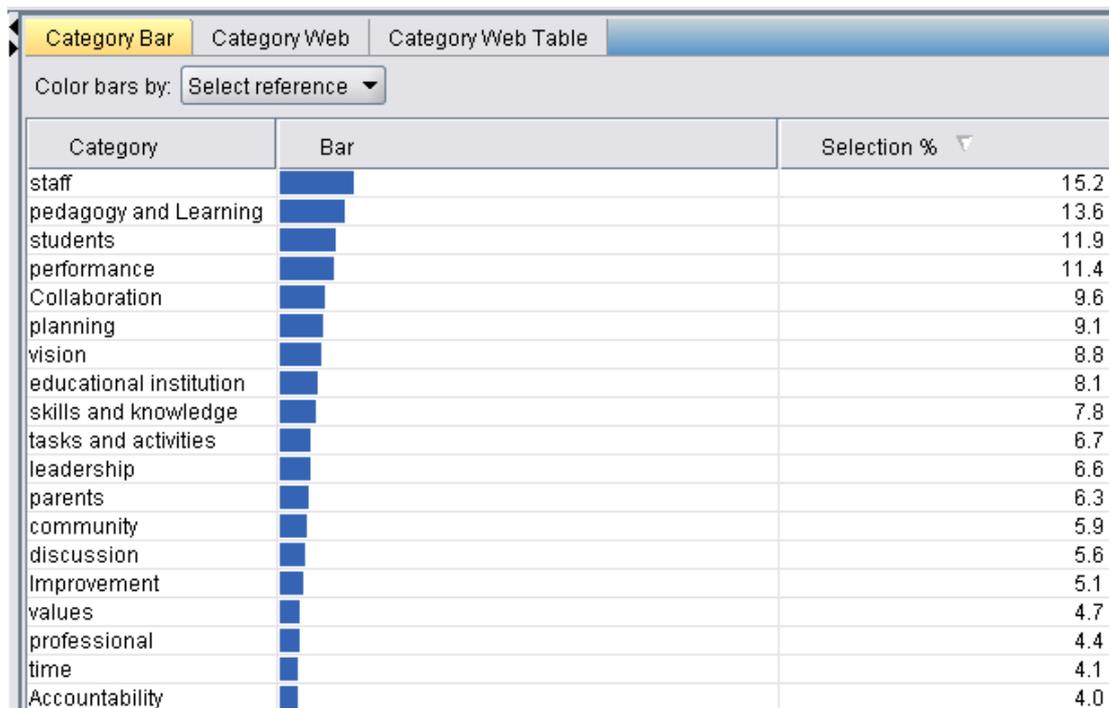


Fig 3. Key themes extracted from participant reflections

### Staff

The key concern for participants was broadly categorised as Staff; however this category belies the complexity of the relationships and context in which the concept was referred to. Staff as it was used in the transcript was translated as being teaching staff. The category was referred to 162 times (15.2%) and aligned with the same Leadership Framework competencies including communicating, developing, and managing conflict. Linguistic frequencies indicated the strong relationships in participant reflections between staff, pedagogy and learning (81), staff and students (77), staff and performance (66) staff and vision (51), staff and collaboration (51) and staff and parents (44). Clearly, educational leaders in the project viewed staff as the single most important consideration of their responsibilities, and especially the relationship between staff, students, pedagogy and learning. Reflective comments consistently indicated the importance of improving the quality of learning and methods by which they could inspire their staff to do so.

*“I actively encourage my staff to monitor student progress and learning”*  
*“I worked to encourage my staff to seek continual improvement and reflect on their teaching...”*  
*“I opened discussion with the teacher that my decision would ultimately affect, I explained how I envisaged the program would work, what benefits it would bring to their students and what I imagined would be the impact on them as the classroom teacher, outlining the immediate benefits but also explaining what I saw as the challenges. The response was very positive and the enthusiasm and eagerness to accept the changes I saw as both a reflection of my ability to ‘sell’ a change but also by skill of working collaboratively, through allowing their suggestions, innovative through ensuring that new ideas in the school were taken on board and through realising the vehicle by which that change could occur”*

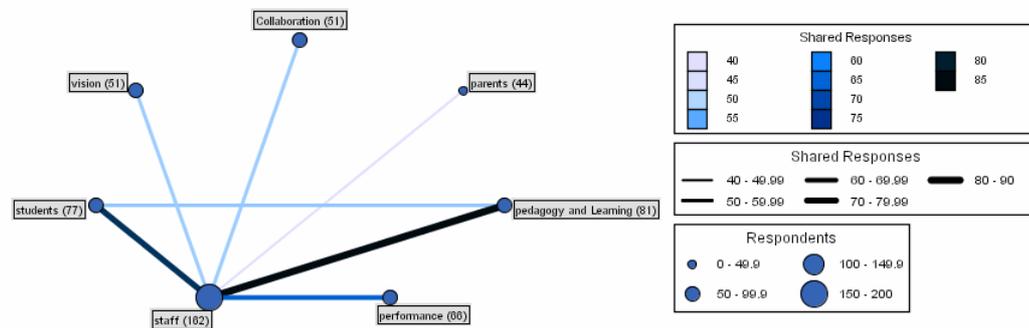


Fig 4 Staff

### Pedagogy and Learning

The second emergent key theme to be gleaned from the data analysis concerned pedagogy and learning (P&L). Although participants used the concepts of pedagogy and learning, the context of their comments suggest they were referring to teaching and learning as it is traditionally understood. This category was referred to 145 times (13.6%) and aligned convincingly with the Leadership Framework competencies of improving learning, consulting stakeholders and monitoring behaviour in particular. The analysis identified links between P&L and Staff (81), P&L and Students (66), P&L and Collaboration (52), P&L and Performance (52), P&L and Vision (50), P&L and Planning (43). The links between P&L collaboration, performance, vision and planning are interesting because they indicate the emphasis of the culture of planning and development towards teaching and learning.

*“Through discussion and debate on the CF and SOS we decided to develop a proposal encapsulating the main strategies of these documents. “Making the Difference at Blank School” enabled the establishment of a Curriculum Team. I identified teachers who had excellent interpersonal skills, were team players, and had sound curriculum knowledge and strong background knowledge of the school. To successfully implement the CF and SOS we decided that Curriculum Leaders should be given extra DOTT and PD funds to enable year level collaboration and preparation and presentation of appropriate staff PD. I restructured the timetables to allow for common DOTT to promote a collaborative and supportive environment. This increased ownership and improved learning programs and student outcomes. The Curriculum Team was extremely successful at the school, community and district level was seen as being innovative and proactive. Common DOTT is now used at Blank school to accommodate collaborative planning. Developmental Learning Team leaders report to me regularly”*

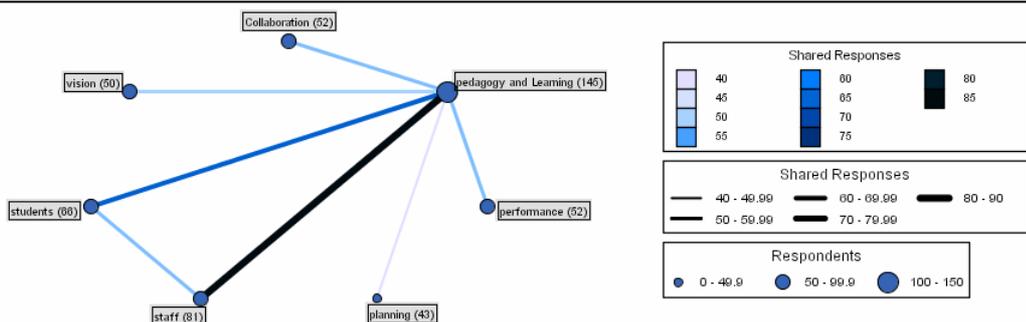


Fig 5 Pedagogy and learning

### Students

The third most important theme to arise from the analysis concerned the student category which was referred to 127 times (11.9%). Although this was considered to be of very high importance, it is not a characteristic or competency which has any direct equivalent within the Leadership Framework. Students were correlated linguistically with staff (77) pedagogy and learning (66), parents (46), performance (46) and skills and knowledge (42). Participant leaders were most concerned in this category with staff student relationships, student learning, student and staff relationships with parents, school and scholastic performance and the improvement of student knowledge.

*“I then was determined to deploy staff for best outcomes for students and reorganised the Key Teacher timetable to ensure the LOTE program could be delivered to students in all year levels. This programme has been running for 8 years and the outcomes which have been met in the ensuing years have drawn much praise from students, parents, teachers and District Directors”.*

*“ I needed to ensure that the community participated and felt empowered, the children were involved in a program geared toward flexible learning styles, a vision for improvement existed and an accountability system was in place. The action I took was to set an agenda for regular ASSPA meetings and increase the focus on the student outcomes, promote agency committee links and encourage parental participation and feedback. I began to liaise regularly with the AIEO, provide professional development and problem solve with the school staff on Aboriginal issues. I capitalised on opportunities in school planning sessions to promote the homework centre profile and celebrate the successes of the ASSPA, the AIEO and Aboriginal Studies. I established a clear set of rules and consequences for the homework centre and delegated the responsibility of lesson programming and resourcing to the First Steps teacher. As a result of these actions more students attended the homework centre, less time was spent on MSB and greater learning outcomes were achieved. There became a greater accountability for the expenditure of the ASSPA budget as I had successfully led the school through a period of vast change resulting in a more student-focused and outcome-driven Aboriginal Education program”*

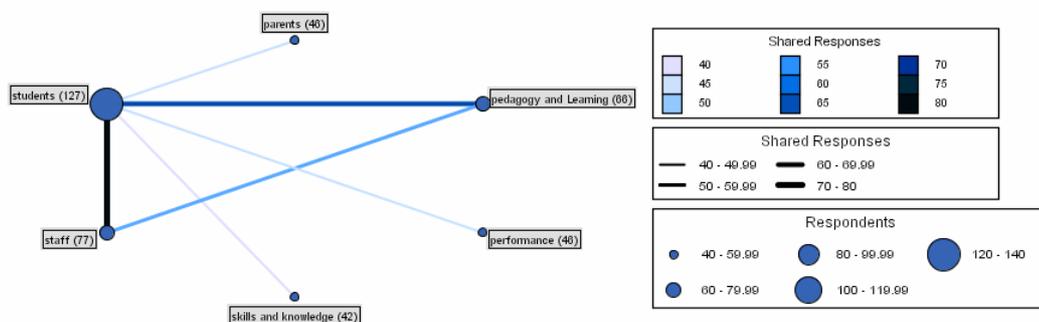


Fig 6 Students

### Performance

Fourth in order of importance by frequency was the category referred to as performance (122). It straddled two of the Leadership Framework competencies of Teaching and Learning (particularly with regards to improving learning and monitoring behaviour) and Staff (especially communicating, promoting development and managing conflict). The linguistic connections showed that participant reflections highly correlated performance with staff (66) pedagogy and learning (52), students (46), educational institution (40) and vision (37). The analysis suggests that staff performance and staff management were high priority concerns for educational leaders. It also makes the link between the need for developing a vision through their leadership to improve student outcomes.

*“I have also recently been responsible for the Performance Management of staff. I worked to encourage my staff to seek continual improvement and to reflect on their teaching. I was presented with the challenge of a new position where the previous incumbent remained in the faculty. I met this challenge through a policy of open dialogue, encouraging the individual to remain actively involved in the faculty, to seek out continued professional development opportunities, and to openly seek their support and advice on matters where I felt that they could have a valuable contribution. I model a collegiate approach to managing my peers and am careful to consult in order to enlist their support for analysing information and collaborative problem-solving, which has been critical in Faculty Planning. I have encouraged staff to develop a vision for our school and to seek every opportunity to develop this vision, I used my circumstances, with continued study, tertiary lecturing and professional development to encourage the principle of continuous improvement and I role model positive leadership and self-improvement.”*

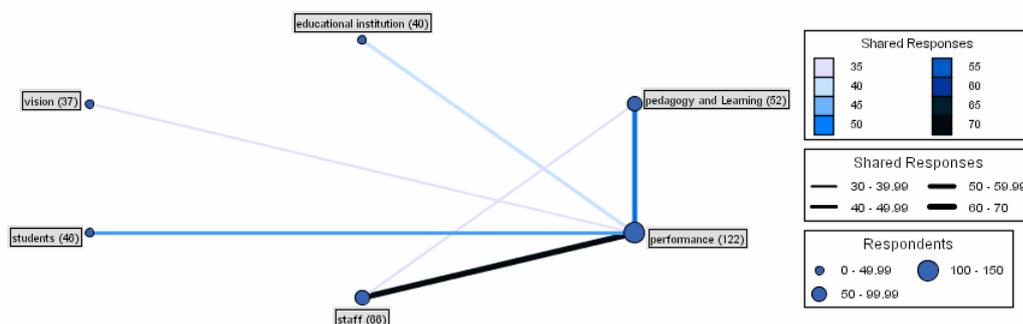


Fig 7 Performance

### Collaboration

Fifth in importance by frequency of linguistic relationships was collaboration which was cited 103 times (9.6%). This aligns with elements of the Policy and Direction, the Teaching and Learning and the Staff competencies of the Leadership Framework. The collaboration category was linguistically linked to P&L (52), staff (51), students (41), performance (35) and vision (30). Participants in the project understood the value of collaboration especially with staff and students working together to improve performance. Creating a vision to improve pedagogy and learning was perceived as paramount in the reflections of participants.

*I meet fortnightly with my Curriculum Team, where we discuss how our collaborative teams are going, and brainstorm alternatives to any issues that have been encountered and discuss the future plans for our collaborative team meetings and school development days and determine who will play what role for these in order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in blank school*

*As a result of our partnership with Curtin University, providing time for our staff to meet regularly as a collaborative team for reflection and planning for improvement our staff and successfully implemented cooperative reading throughout our years 4-7. Our students were clearly engaging in the reading program and were achieve greater outcomes. Students would openly discuss with me and show me what they were doing in cooperative reading.*

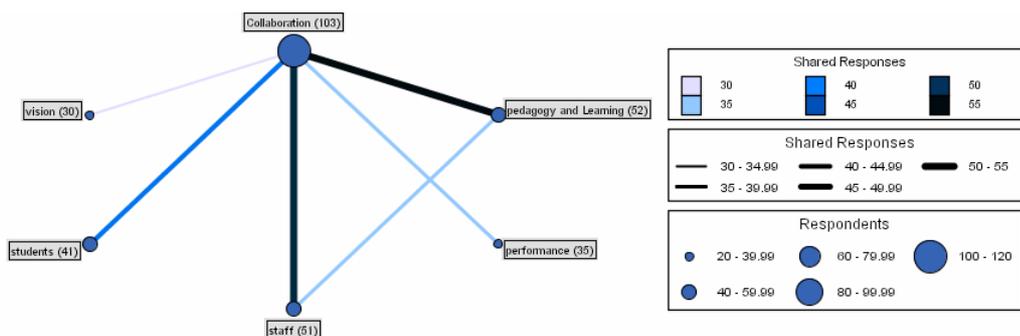


Fig 8 Collaboration

## Planning

The sixth category which emerged from analysis was planning, which was made explicit 97 times (9.6%). The planning theme linked linguistically with staff (43), P&L (43), students (40) vision (37) performance (36) and skills and knowledge (29). Planning was integral to all major themes, but was most importantly linked with staff and included meetings and timetabling and developing a vision. Planning was perceived as very important to developing relationships with students and maximising their performance and learning. This is the first category to align with the resources management section of the Leadership Framework, but as in most other categories the sections dealing with T&L and staff were well represented.

*I reviewed and analysed the success of that process and saw how I could transfer the success to blank school. I consulted and discussed the ideas with all staff. As a result, my staff have formed collaborative planning teams and formally and informally share ideas and planning. I in-serviced staff at blank school on the use of technology as a learning tool eg, Web quests. Many are moving into the use of interesting Webquests as a means of increasing their computer skills and an easy way of incorporating outcomes based learning in their classrooms. My staff now plan to use CF and outcomes, and lifelong learning and catering for the child of the 21st Century are becoming part of the general discussion about learning at blank school*

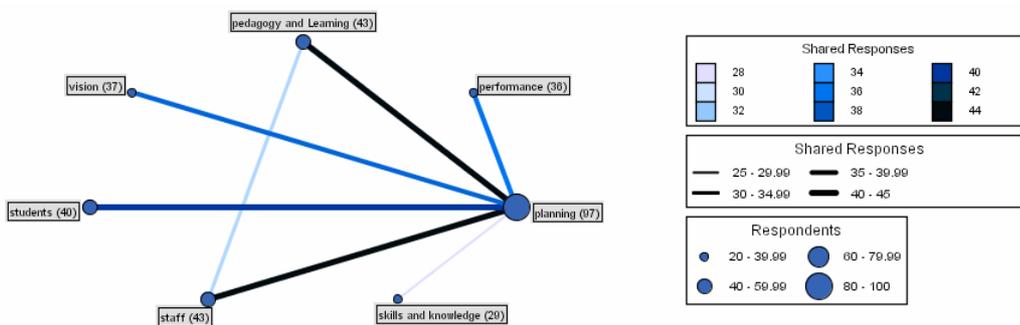


Fig 9 Planning

## Vision

The seventh major theme to emerge from the study was categorised as vision which was included 94 times (8.8%). Vision, as it related to the context of the reflections under analysis referred to creating a future set of goals for staff (51), P&L (50), students (41), planning (37) and performance (37). This category best illustrated the Policy and planning section of the Leadership Framework, though there was also overlap with the Teaching and Learning, Staff and Partnerships competencies. The ability to create a successful school strongly underpinned the participant leader's perceptions that having a clear view of the direction, and creating change of the school in terms of staff and students was a motivating powerful force.

*“Under my strong leadership the collaboration between students, staff, parents and the wider school community ensured the very successful fulfilment of a wonderful shared and clearly articulated vision”*

*“To be a ‘People Person’ with a clear, well articulated vision empowering and leading a collaborative team in the pursuit of personal and professional excellence to improve student outcomes”*

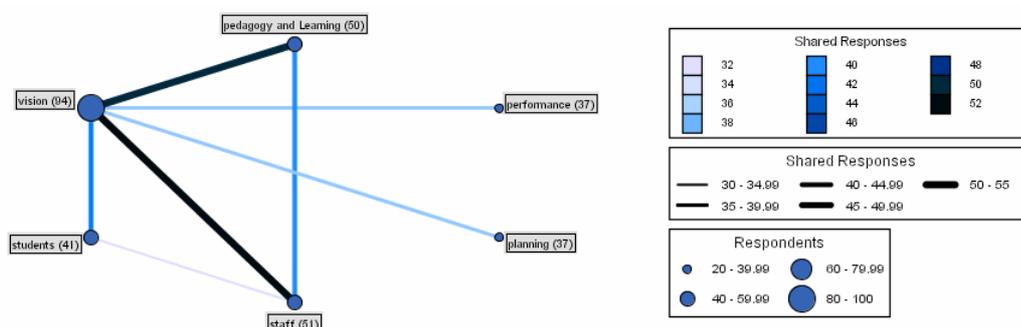


Fig 10 Vision

## Sub Themes

A number of sub themes which were prominent enough to include in this paper included the following categories;

1. Educational Institution (86 times or 8.1%). This was primarily descriptive of the school environment and its importance to performance, staff, students, P&L and skills and knowledge
2. Skills and knowledge of both students and staff (84 or 7.8%) which concerned the acquisition and development of skills and knowledge for staff and students.
3. Tasks and activities (72 or 6.7%) This included the interaction between staff and students and staff with staff in terms of practical activities.
4. Leadership (71 or 6.6%)
5. Parents (67 or 6.3%)
6. Community (63 or 5.9%)
7. Professionalism (47 or 4.4%)

## Conclusion

The complexity of the key concerns of modern educational leadership and the interrelatedness of themes which constantly overlap in this study is clearly demonstrated through analysis of participant reflections. The portfolio served as a vehicle for capturing some of these complexities and brought to light concerns which could prove useful to senior management for the future development of educational leaders in terms of training and how they can best be managed and resourced to improve the culture of the school environment they lead.

Very importantly, the Leadership Framework created by Wildy and Loudon (2002) proved to be an effective conceptual framework for the portfolio. The study tends to validate their model and reinforces the five main competencies and their accompanying descriptors. The model provides an appropriate link to performance standards within the context of the environment leaders are expected to operate. The reflective entries by the trial members demonstrated professional development over time through the application of reflective practice. The portfolio provided strong evidence of competency within the framework in most cases and has the potential to be a powerful tool for future selection, line management and the demonstration of personal professional growth.

Where the model appears to be underrepresented is in the lack of reflective comments by participants about their own characteristics as school leaders, especially within the attributes and values categories. It could be that the participants were modestly reluctant to be descriptive of their own characteristics; however much of what was written suggests their fairness in dealings, their supportiveness of staff and students, their persistence and flexibility and their tact and flexibility. It is as if those characteristics are inherent, expected as the natural state of leadership and not necessary to be illustrated explicitly.

Finally the Leadership Framework model is crowned by the participant's reflective emphasis on student outcomes which is overwhelmingly present throughout portfolio entries. There is a constant and consistent thread which ties resources, both human and physical to the betterment of teaching and learning, a striving to improve the quality of outcomes within the limitations of the education bureaucracy, its resources and general community concerns.

The benefits of introducing reflective portfolios based on the Leadership Framework, to future education leaders, can be convincingly argued on the evidence provided through this trial.

## References

- Barnett, B. and O'Mahony, G.R. (2006) Developing a culture of reflection: implications for school improvement *Reflective Practice* Vol. 7, No. 4, November 2006, pp. 499–523

- Barnard, C.I. (1938) *The functions of the executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press.
- Boud, D. (2001) Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice, in: L. M. English & M. A. Gillen (Eds) *Promoting journal writing in adult education. New directions in adult and continuing education* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass).
- Brubacher, J. W., Case, C. W. & Regan, T. G. (1994) *Becoming a reflective educator. How to build a culture of inquiry in the schools* (Thousand Oaks, Corwin).
- Burns, J.M.,(1978). *Leadership*.New York:Harper and Row
- Cambrom-McCabe, N., Cunningham, L.L., Harvey, J., Koff, R.H., (2005) *The superintendents fieldbook*, Corwin Press, Thousand Oaks, California
- Deal, T.E., and Peterson, K. (1994) *The Leadership Paradox; Balancing logic and artistry in schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Dumaine, B., (1993) *The New Non Managers*, Fortune, Feb 22, 80-84.
- Fink, D., (2005) *Leadership for Mortals; Developing and Sustaining Leaders of Learning*.London. Paul Chapman Publishing
- Hallinger, P. (2003) *Leading Educational Change: reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership*. Cambridge Journal of Education Vol. 33, No. 3, November
- Heck, R. & Hallinger, P. (1999) *Conceptual models, methodology, and methods for studying school leadership*, in: J. MURPHY & K. SEASHORE LOUIS (Eds) *The 2nd Handbook of Researching Educational Administration* (San Francisco, CA, McCutchan).
- Holly, M. L. (1984). *Keeping a personal-professional journal*. Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- Holly, M. L. (1989) *Writing to grow: keeping a personal-professional journal* (Heinemann, New Hampshire
- Kotter, J.P., (1996) *Leading Change*. Boston MA: Harvard Business School Press
- Leithwood, K.A, Jantzi D., and Steinbach, R., (1999) *Changing leadership for changing times*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press
- National College for School Leadership (2003) *Leadership in practice* (<http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/resources/reflection/what.html>, retrieved 14/3/2007
- Norton, M.S. (2005) *Executive Leadership for Effective Administration*. USA Pearson Education Inc
- Pollard, A., Collins, J., Maddock, M., Simco, N., Swaffield, S., Warin, J. & Warwick, P. (2005) *Reflective teaching* (London, Continuum).
- Rost, J.C., (1993) *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*. Westport, CT: Praeger
- Sergiovanni, T. J., (2001) *The Principalship: a reflective practice perspective*. Trinity University, Texas. Allyn and Bacon
- Shepherd M (2006) *Using a learning journal to improve professional practice: a journey of personal and professional self-discovery* *Reflective Practice* Vol. 7, No. 3, August 2006, pp. 333–348
- Thomas, M.D. and Bainbridge, W.L., *Global Perspective on School Leadership*. Educational Research. January 2001
- Warwick, P. & Swaffield S (2006) *Articulating and connecting frameworks of reflective practice and leadership: perspectives from ‘fasttrack’ trainee teachers* *Reflective Practice* Vol. 7, No. 2, May 2006, pp. 247–263
- Zehm, S. J. & Kottler, J. A. (1993) *On being a teacher: the human dimension* (Thousand Oaks, Corwin).





