# **Unit 1: Begin with the End in Mind**

## Overview

*Knowing where you are going is the first step to getting there.*

*~ Ken Blanchard*

This unit is intended to help you understand that action research can improve leadership in practical ways. In this unit, you will read about the importance of action research for your own personal and professional development. You will be introduced to what action research is, you will also explore what the MA Lead Capstone project is, and what you will be required to do to complete it. As leaders, you are faced with personal and professional challenges daily, the overarching goal of this course is to help you find creative and innovative ways to address these challenges through the lens of transformational servant leadership.

## Learning Outcomes

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

* Describe what action research is.
* Discuss action research as a way of engaging and improving leadership in practical ways.
* To describe the final capstone project.

## Topics

1. Building Better Leadership Actions
2. Action Research and Leadership
3. The Capstone Project

## Resources

## Parsons, J., Hewson, K., Adrian, L., & Day, N. (2013). Engaging in Action Research A Practical Guide to Teacher-Conducted Research for Educators and School Leaders. Brush Education Inc.

## Activity Checklist

Here is a checklist of learning activities you will benefit from in completing this unit. You may find it useful for planning your work.

* **Activity 1.1:** Start a Reflective Learning Journal.
* **Activity 1.2:** Read a chapter, watch a video, and reflect in your learning journal.
* **Activity 1.3:** Review, read an article and reflect in your learning journal.
* **Assessment:** Complete the unit 1 discussion post.

## Topic 1: Building Better Leadership Actions

As leaders, we believe that developing, implementing and sharing your leadership journey is essential to improving leadership practice, from the level of the individual leader through to organizational systems as a whole.

This practical, interactive course has been designed by Jim Parsons and Heather Strong to assist you as a leader in the development, implementation and sharing of your own journey through the MA Leadership program at Trinity Western University. This journey will be shared through two distinct processes: 1) through artefacts collected during your own leadership journey and 2) through the planning and implementation of an action-research project.

Action research is one strategy that leaders can use to study leadership issues, implement change and document professional growth. It has contributed to progress in many leadership domains (i.e., healthcare, education, business), while also invigorating the professional lives of the many people (and communities) involved in this creative and empowering experience.

Action research can and should engage any questions that leaders believe are important to answer. What differentiates action research from other kinds of research is that its end isn’t to engage in a particular research project; the end of action research is about changing the way we live as leaders. Specifically, action research is about collaborating in ways that take advantage of our collective and diverse skills, experiences and insights so that we all—together—can both answer questions that are right in front of us and build a community of practice where we can share what we know and have learned within our own organizations, in our own cities and with leaders everywhere.

### Action Research as Professional Development

Action research is “a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking action. The primary reason for engaging in action research is to assist the ‘actor’ in improving and/or refining his or her actions” (Sagor 2000).

One goal of action research is to increase professional learning. When action research is engaged as a way of living, action research helps leaders build efficacy and become more effective leaders in their own profession.

In relation to professional development, action research can

* be used to solve problems or institute change,
* be used to document professional growth,
* create communities of action,
* help leaders become responsible agents of organizational improvement and
* create a culture and process of continual organizational change.

## Learning Activity 1.1: Start a Reflective Learning Journal

To begin this learning activity, start a reflective learning journal. A reflective journal is simply a record of your thoughts. There is no correct way to create this journal; rather, it is a reflection of the way you think and the manner in which you respond to your learning. Journals can consist of traditional note taking, mind maps, pictures, stream-of-consciousness writing, recordings, quotes, sketches, or drawings: whatever you choose to include. Experiment and have fun.

The purpose of journaling is to make you an active participant in your learning experiences as you engage in the various activities throughout the course’s readings, activities, and discussions with your tutor and your fellow students. Reflecting upon these learning events will help you gain a deeper understanding of the course materials and help integrate your learning into applied practice in your everyday life and work.

Throughout the course, we will remind you to write in your journal, as we want to be sure you are actively learning the material. Reflective journaling is an activity you can and should complete on a regular or daily basis, even outside of our scheduled course activities.

In your reflective learning journal, begin by answering the following questions:

* Who am I?
* What is important in my life? Why?
* In five years where do I want to be? What is my living legacy?
* What am I doing now that will help me get to my imagined future?
* What do I care about?
* What do I feel is really important to me right now?
* What’s really working well for me? What could I do better?
* What completely puzzles me? Why does this seem to happen?
* When my leadership skills are working well, what’s different from when they are not working well?
* How might I change things to make my organization better?

*Note that some of these questions will be addressed in your assignment for this unit. See the Unit 1 Assessment for more details.*

## Topic 2: Action Research and Leadership

Action research is a plan that leaders can use to investigate a problem or area of interest specific to their personal or professional leadership practice. But, more than that, action research is a philosophy of empowerment that focuses on a leader’s efficacy in planning and deciding what’s best for their employees, for their own professional growth and for improving their organization’s system. Action research is about doing things to improve personal and professional practice.

Action research provides the structure to engage in a planned, systematic and documented process of professional growth. It also is founded upon a belief system that leaders should become primarily responsible for the decision making that happens at their own professional site.

Action research is insider research in which leaders research their own practice to improve themselves or their organizations. As insider research, it differs from classic or traditional research, in which researchers are outsiders who investigate other’s practices. Leadership action researchers are not outsiders participating in others’ organizations; instead, they are insiders responsible to their own employees and colleagues.

Action research is always research conducted by insiders. Insiders may be teachers, organizational leaders, clinic managers, healthcare leaders, or leadership coaches— anyone who studies their own practices.

Here is a short video explaining how Action Research can be a valuable activity for leaders. [“Action Research in Leadership”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXUwfCavBUg)

## Learning Activity 1.2: Read, Watch and Reflect

* Read chapter 1: You as a Researcher in Engaging in Action Research of our course text by Parsons et al.
* Watch the following videos that describes an [Overview of Action Research by Margaret Riel.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmBSKK9izao) And also how Action Research can be a valuable activity for leaders. [“Action Research in Leadership”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXUwfCavBUg)
* Next, in your learning journal reflect on the following questions.
  + What did you learn about action research? What did you expect? What was your reaction?
  + How does your understanding of action research link to your academic, professional and/or personal development?
  + How will you apply what you have learned?

*Note that some of these questions will be addressed in your assignment for this unit. See the Unit 1 Assessment for more details.*

## Topic 3: The Final MA Leadership Capstone Project

The final capstone project will include clear documentation of your leadership journey through MA Lead including: selected leadership artefacts, your leadership philosophy, an action research project report and a reflection on the integration of Transformational Servant leadership in your future leadership endeavors. The final capstone project will be presented in the platform of an ePortfolio hosted on Wordpress, or a platform of your choice.

**What is an e-Portfolio?** A personally useful ePortfolio is both a product (a digital collection of artifacts) and a process (of reflecting on those artifacts and what they represent). ePortfolios generate learning because they provide an opportunity and virtual space for students to critically assess their academic work, to reflect on that work, and make connections among different courses, assignments, and other activities, such as work experience, extracurricular activities, volunteering opportunities, and more.  Making and then sharing an ePortfolio with others is somewhat like telling a story: **the story of one’s learning journey.**

Note to ID: Add an example of an ePortfolio here.

As you can see from the example above, your ePortfolio is the final product of specific assignments and activities that you have collected throughout the MA Lead program and in 697/698. It is also a process, as it provides you with an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned throughout the MA Lead program. Your ePortfolio will include the following sections:

* A selection of artefacts from your leadership journey.
* Your personal leadership philosophy.
* Your action research project report.
* A final reflection on integrating transformational servant leadership into your future endeavors.

## Learning Activity 1.3: Review, Read and Reflect

Begin this learning activity by reviewing the following ePortfolio examples in Education, Healthcare and Business.

Note to ID: Add examples here.

Next, read the following article by Stuart, Haskins & Adelino (2020). [Do Students Use Their ePortfolios After Graduation? A Pilot Study of Undergraduate and Graduate Students.](https://aurora.auburn.edu/bitstream/handle/11200/49698/2019%20Do%20students%20use%20their%20eportfolios%20after%20graduation.%20AePR.pdf?sequence=1)

Next, in your learning journal, reflect on the following questions:

* What did you learn about ePortfolios? What did you expect? What was your reaction?
* How does your understanding of ePortfolios link to your academic, professional and/or personal development?
* How will you apply what you have learned about ePortfolios?
* What are your initial concerns or questions about creating an ePortfolio?
* How might an ePortfolio be useful in your professional setting?
* *Note that some of these questions will be addressed in your assignment for this unit. See the Unit 1 Assessment for more details.*

## Unit 1 Summary

In this first unit, you have learned that action research can improve leadership in practical ways. You read about the importance of action research for your own personal and professional development and you were introduced to what action research is. You also began a reflective learning journal that will help you make sense of your learning experiences as you engage in the various activities throughout the course’s readings, activities, and discussions. Your reflections will help you gain a deeper understanding of the course materials and help integrate your learning into applied practice in your everyday life and work.

# Assessment

### Unit 1 Discussion Post

In an online class, discussion posts are one way students and professors interact with the course’s ideas and lessons. Discussion posts provide an opportunity for you to connect with peers, contribute to a community of inquiry/learning, share insights, and ask questions, etc.

The following tips can help you generate an effective post that engages your classmates and elicits thoughtful responses from your instructor and classmates.

Below you will find the instructions for what you need to discuss and post for this unit. Please do your best to complete the posts that require a response by Friday at midnight of the week they are assigned to allow time for your colleagues to respond to your questions over the weekend. Please post your responses on the discussion forums provided in Moodle. Do not upload your response to the drop box.

**Note. All forum posts should be between 3000 (minimum) and 500 words (maximum).**

In unit 1, you are asked to write a post addressing the following questions:

* Begin the post by sharing a story about yourself.
* Next, describe your leadership experience to date.
* In five years where do you want to be?
* What are you doing now that will help you get to your imagined future?
* What is important to your growth as a leader?
* What is one thing you would like to change?
* What personal gift or strength do you believe you should develop further?

Post your reflection in the Unit 1 Discussion Forum and respond to 2-3 other posts.

**Grading Rubric**

| **Criteria** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Fair** | **Unacceptable** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Reasoning** | Arguments or positions are reasonable and supported with evidence from the readings. Often deepens the conversation by going beyond the text, recognizing implications and extensions of the text. Provides analysis of complex ideas that help deepen the inquiry and further the conversation. | Arguments or positions are reasonable and mostly supported by evidence from the readings. In general, the comments and ideas contribute to the group’s understanding of the material and concepts. | Contributions to the discussion are more often based on opinion or unclear views than on reasoned arguments or positions based on the readings. Comments or questions suggest a difficulty in following complex lines of argument or student’s arguments are convoluted and difficult to follow. | Comments are frequently so illogical or without substantiation that others are unable to critique or even follow them. Rather than critique the text the student may resort to ad hominem attacks on the author instead. |
| **Reading** | Student has carefully read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions; familiarity with main ideas, supporting evidence and secondary points. Comes to class prepared with questions and critiques of the readings. | Student has read and understood the readings as evidenced by oral contributions. The work demonstrates a grasp of the main ideas and evidence but sometimes interpretations are questionable. Comes prepared with questions. | Student has read the material, but comments often indicate that he/she didn’t read or think carefully about it, or misunderstood or forgot many points. Class conduct suggests inconsistent commitment to preparation. | Student either is unable to adequately understand and interpret the material or has frequently come to class unprepared, as indicated by serious errors or an inability to answer basic questions or contribute to discussion. |

## Check your learning:

Before you move on to the next unit, check the following:

* Can you explain how action research can help you engage in, and improve, your leadership in practical ways?
* Can you describe what action research is?
* Can you describe the final capstone project?