

Leadership and Teaching Practice

Jessica Petersen | 1503729

My first year of teaching gave me a good foundation for continuing in my second year, and I have found that my experience has impacted my practice.

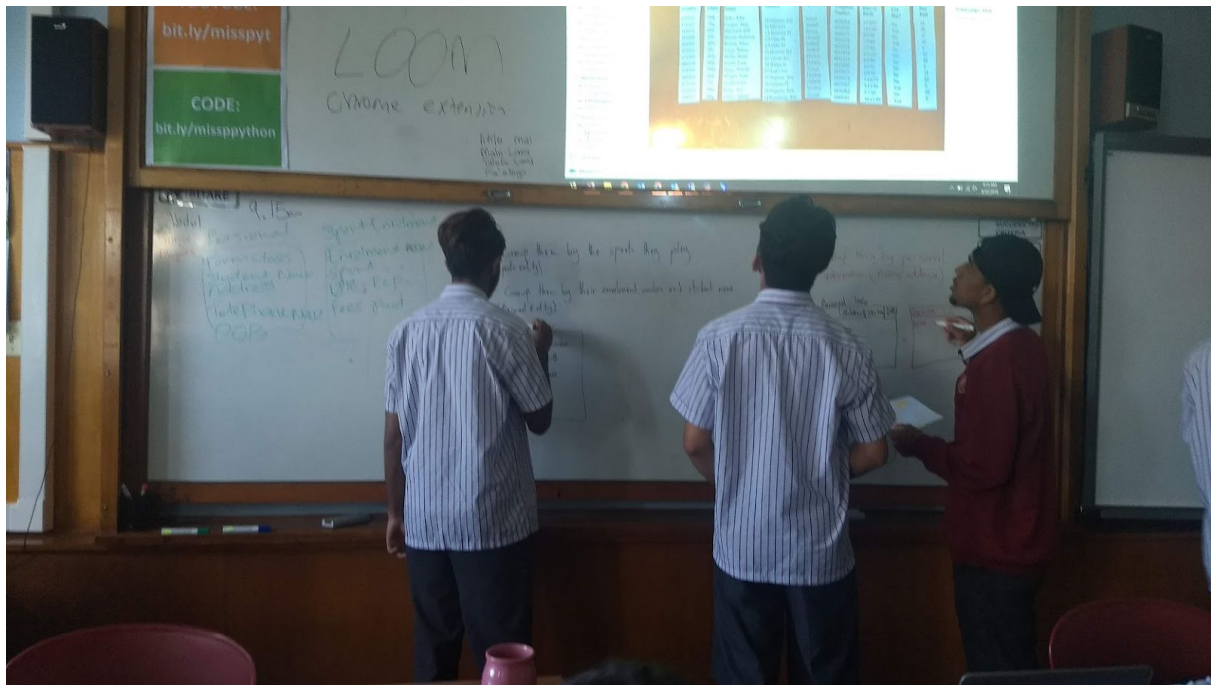
Teaching Approaches and Activities

I have found that the biggest changes in my practice have come as a result of critical reflection on my previous experiences working on particular topics. As I am now teaching content that aligns with a standard that I taught last year, a lot of my focus has been on improving the unit of learning rather than inventing a whole set of activities as I had to last year. This focus has allowed me to diversify my approach according to different cultural and educational contexts.

I found that the activities that I used in class last year were mostly focussed around myself demonstrating ideas to the class or providing content directly to them, and then students would follow along or participate in the content once it was made available to them. Examples of this include “I do, you do”, and worksheets (Petersen, 2018).

I made a conscious effort this year to raise my expectations around content exploration, so instead of just providing students with content, I encouraged them to explore and critically reflect on their own assumptions where possible. This was effective in broadening the educational contexts that students were exposed to as it is a very different approach to teaching over traditional ideas where the teacher is the holder of knowledge” and distributes this knowledge to passive learners (Gillies, 2015).

Examples of this new approach included my lesson focused around why relational databases exist. This lesson did not exist when I taught the topic of relational databases last year, and as such, it was a great opportunity to apply my experience from teaching the unit previously, and for me to see how this new approach impacted learner understanding.



Above: ("DTW3 on Friday 8 February, collaborating to solve a problem on the whiteboard", 2019)

Both of these lessons functioned by providing learners with a problem to solve - for example, in the lesson about why relational databases are used, learners were asked to "think outside the box" about how they would best reduce redundancies in the given database. This was a collaborative, ako-based approach where learners thought critically about what they could change and how it could be improved, as well as encouraged learners to debate their ideas with each other in order to create the best possible solution. At the end of the lesson, the four groups presented their ideas of solutions to the class, and I was impressed by how close each group got to the industry-standard solution - relational databases. In this lesson, I did not present any content. Students worked together to build their own understanding and I "filled in the gaps" at the end. I found that this was a great way to engage learners and encourage agency, although in the future, I intend to create smaller group sizes to ensure that the ideas of more confident students do not drown out the ideas of others.

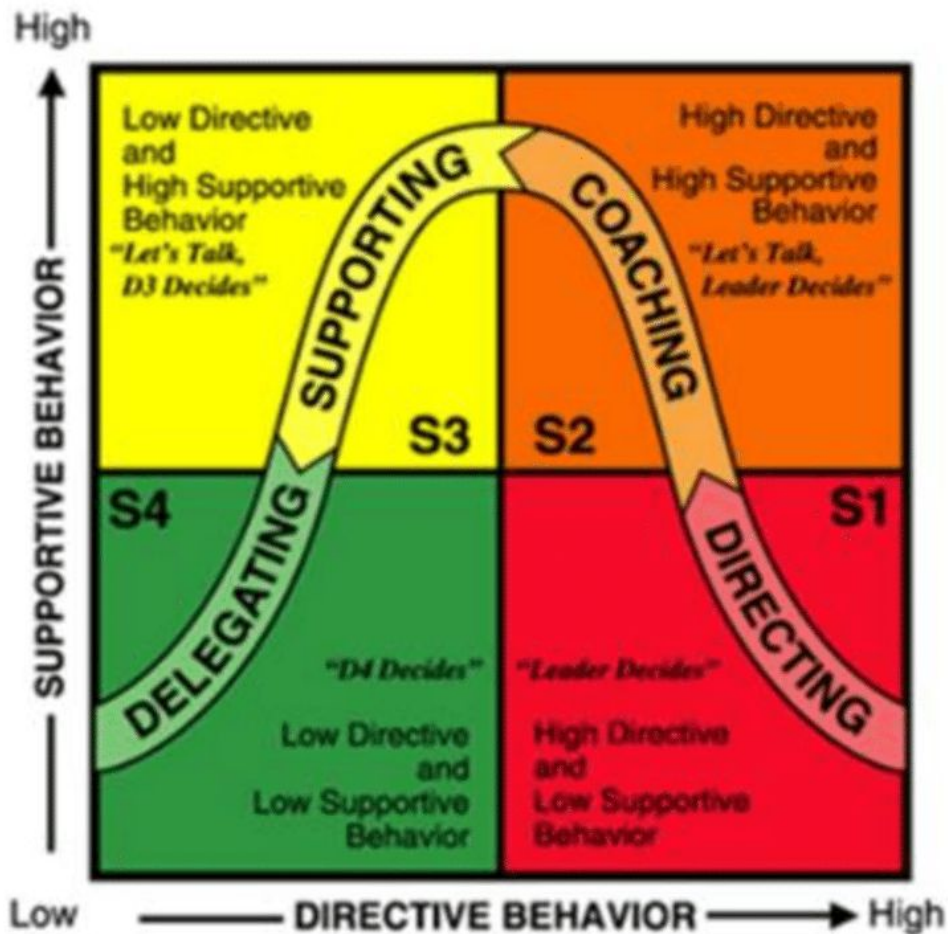
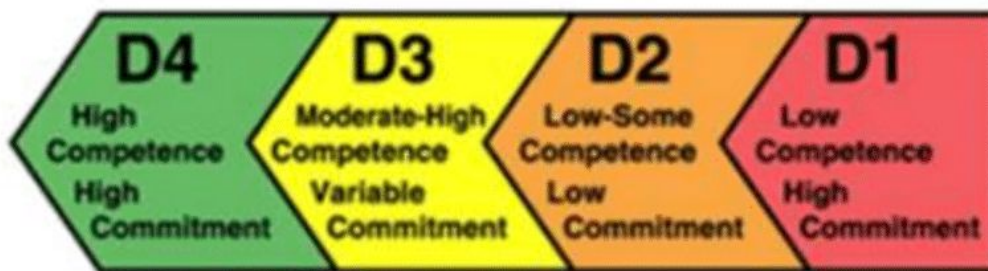


Above: ("DTP3 on Thursday 7 February, participating in ako", 2019)

Another idea that I focused on was learner-led lessons in order to increase student agency, and provide more culturally responsive contexts. An example of this was my lesson around the use of primary and foreign keys. In one of my classes, this lesson ran similarly to the above mentioned lesson around why relational databases are used. In my other class, however, I asked the large number of students who were involved in both classes to teach the ideas to students who were only enrolled in the second class. Students were welcome to use a data set of their choosing for this, and many opted to use things familiar to them such as cars, and video games. While the feedback I gathered from students after that lesson says that many students enjoyed it, I was unsure of the actual depth of understanding gained by students who are enrolled in only the second class, and as result I think that next time I use this activity I will utilise formative assessment in order to gauge the effectiveness of instruction.

Applied Leadership that Supports Teaching Practice

Throughout my classes, especially my year ten class, I have had opportunities to apply my learnings around leadership to better manage my classes and build strong, productive relationships.



Above: Situational Leadership Model (Zigarmi, Blanchard & Nelson 1993)

A huge interest of mine in terms of leadership theory is situational leadership. This is a theory that suggests different ways of interacting with people based on their ability and engagement in specific scenarios (Zigarmi, Blanchard & Nelson 1993). I really focused on applying this leadership style in my year ten class, as it has a large group of students with diverse needs.

Specific Concerns

S1: One student with a documented history of behavioural concerns.

S2: One student with a documented history of disengagement relating to the misuse of computers.

S3: One student with autism spectrum disorder, with special environmental and behavioural needs.

S4: Late addition: one student with identified special learning support needs, in my experience this is especially prevalent in the area of learner agency - part of G1 and G3.

G1: Five students with identified special learning support needs.

G2: A small number of students working well above the level of the course.

G3: A small number of students working well below the level of the course.

Above: Students and groups identified in order to track changes in behaviour over the course of the term inquiry ("10DTG Classroom Management Improvement", 2019)

I began by identifying specific students and groups of students that I would need to approach in different ways. After some observation, I was able to identify the needs and situational leadership "profiles" that I attributed to each student and group. This supported me in deciding how to best work with each individual and group.

After this, I asked for advice on both specific students, and managing a classroom in general from my peers. Some of the first advice I received was from my head of learning area was to use a settling activity of typing out the learning objectives and first task of the day. This was especially good for my "D1" (in situational leadership) learners as it was a simple task that they were able to accomplish fairly easily at the beginning of the lesson. That first "taste" of success early in the lesson supported them to focus in on the activities for the day and encouraged them to continue their "winning streak" of success (Ele Griffiths on Thursday 7 February, 2019 via "10DTG Classroom Management Improvement", 2019).

My in-school mentor was also able to guide me by suggesting that I attempt an "Ignore, Attend, Praise" strategy with a student who was in the "D2" area in the situational leadership model (Ben Claxton on Monday 11 February, 2019 via "10DTG Classroom Management Improvement", 2019). This idea revolved around me providing strong instructions to the student as well as having high expectations of their engagement. This strategy (where I ignore the disruptive behaviour of a student and praise the behaviour of their peers) did not have the desired effect on the student as they continued to engage in disruptive behaviour in order to gain the attention that they did not receive when I praised their peers. I believe that this advice did not work for this particular student as they fit the profile of a low competence, and low commitment individual in this situation. The directive behaviour was there in terms of providing clear instructions to them, but did little to provide any supportive behaviour to the individual. The model suggests that supportive behaviour is important for success in this scenario, so I think that in the future, I would take a more supportive approach by engaging with the student one-on-one about their behaviour and work.

A number of students in my class fit into the "D4" profile of the situational leadership model. These students were both highly motivated in class and demonstrated very high ability in the subject area. Situational leadership suggests that low directive and low supportive behaviour is an excellent approach for individuals who fit this profile, and I found this to be correct. I focused on providing loosely structured, open-ended extension tasks for them to complete once they had finished initial work. These tasks afforded the students more creativity as well as an opportunity to extend their existing skills, which would not have happened if they were only able to access class content. While these students were engaging effectively with the

material, SOLO Taxonomy suggests that at the highest “extended abstract” level, students should be able to think conceptually and relationally about material (Hook & Mills, 2011). I think that in the future, a tuakana teina system with these students could be better utilised to ensure that, through supporting and coaching other students, they reach an extended abstract level of understanding. I did attempt this with the students this term, but they were unwilling to engage with their peers outside of their defined friend group. In order for a tuakana teina system to succeed, I will need to foster the confidence of the students and provide them with a safe space to encourage them to step outside of their “comfort zone”.

On Students

Student One was addressed when they left in week four.

I observed that **Student Two** was quite heavily challenged in this class both by their inexperience with the English language, as well as their low level of commitment to the class. This student was also working below the level of the course and part of group three. I found that the student responded best to clear instructions and clear outcomes. Praising the student for on-task behaviour resulted in vast improvements in the focus of this student. This student did not complete the first NCEA assessment of the year, but instead chose to focus on the second assessment instead as their focus improved. In the future I would ensure to raise higher expectations with this student earlier on, and also provide the student with opportunities to demonstrate positive behaviours for praise.

Student Three did not attend class in term one.

Student Four was added to the plan in week nine, despite being an unrecorded focus earlier in the term. This student demonstrated high commitment to the work, but was working below the level of the course, and was in constant need of reassurance that they were completing tasks correctly. This student was part of group one. I found that this student responded extremely well to “see three before you see me” policies, as well as especially clear instructions with little independent experimentation. For the rest of the year I intend to focus on building this learner’s capacity and agency around independently completing tasks with minimal teacher support.

On Groups

Group One generally started the term with a high level of commitment to the class but working well below the level of the course. I found that many of these students were easily distracted and needed support staying on task. Students in this group also tended to be less sure of themselves than their classmates and often asked for support. I found that with this group, the following things worked best:

- Copying tasks at the beginning of the lesson to increase focus
- Well structured exercises with built-in support and clear instructions
- “See three before you see me” guidelines around asking for support

At the end of term one, all students in this group completed and achieved a unit standard, and I noticed that they asked me fewer questions as asking others before me became more habitual.

Group Two started the term with a high level of commitment to the course as well as working well above the level of the course already. These students completed tasks quickly and often found tasks to be too easy for their skill level. Students in this group tended to be unwilling to work with other students in the class that they did not know. With this group, I found that the following things worked best:

- Well structured exercises with clear instructions and related tasks to extend these activities
- Open-ended tasks that allowed these students to build on their already existing projects

All students in this group completed and achieved a unit standard at the end of term one. In the future, I would like to further encourage these students to engage with others around them and take a leadership role by providing some opportunities for tuakana teina.

Group Three was very much the same as group one in general, but with the additional challenge of some students having low commitment to completing the course. For this group of students, I found that the following things worked best:

- High expectations around the completion of work
- Well structured, highly accessible tasks, with clear start and end points
- Clear rewards and praise routines when work is completed

Students in this group were some of the hardest to monitor as I found that so much of my time was taken up by group one students who needed additional support. These students were by far the likely to “slip under the radar”. In the future, I’d like to ensure that self-monitoring systems are put in place, such as goal setting that was introduced in week nine. Formative assessment would also be beneficial in ensuring that the progress of these students is still being adequately monitored.

Above: Reflection on the impact of changes to teaching practice over term one in 10DTG (Please see the following for a more readable version “10DTG Classroom Management Improvement”, 2019)

Overall, I think that my understanding of leadership theory has impacted my practice and effectiveness in the classroom quite significantly. In the future, I intend to continue to utilise situational leadership and also look into using other leadership theories such as transformational leadership to guide me in further improving my teaching practice.

Bibliography

Gillies, D. (2015). Instructivism. Retrieved from <http://www.dictionaryofeducation.co.uk/i/i/instructivism>

Hook, P., & Mills, J. (2011). SOLO taxonomy: A guide for schools. Laughton, U.K.: Essential Resources.

Petersen, J. (2019, April 28). 10DTG Classroom Management Improvement. Retrieved from <https://www.evernote.com/shard/s338/sh/1edafdac-3767-4dff-9746-7f7673bde7e8/55a1038a1f851651696a9cdae30feb>

Petersen, J. (2019, February 8). DTW3 on Friday 8 February, collaborating to solve a problem on the whiteboard [Digital image]. Retrieved from <https://photos.google.com/photo/AF1QipMCR7y1Zoc54sE7y9QkELzJ4aprR2WGLxQ-DAea>

Petersen, J. (2019, February 7). DTP3 on Thursday 7 February, participating in ako [Digital image]. Retrieved from https://photos.google.com/photo/AF1QipOzJUZNjlAV8_3WMReBWb2H6_EdwCnXbHHX3rNu

Petersen, J. (2018, December 12). Critical Reflection to Improve Practice [PDF]. Auckland.

Zigarmi, D., Blanchard, K. H., & Nelson, R. B. (1993). Situational Leadership after 25 years: A retrospective. *The Journal of Leadership Studies*, (November 1993). <http://doi.org/10.1177/107179199300100104>