# Leadership and Teaching Practice

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My second year of teaching has allowed me to further refine my teaching practice and utilise my new understanding of leadership.

Situational Leadership and 10DTG - 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.
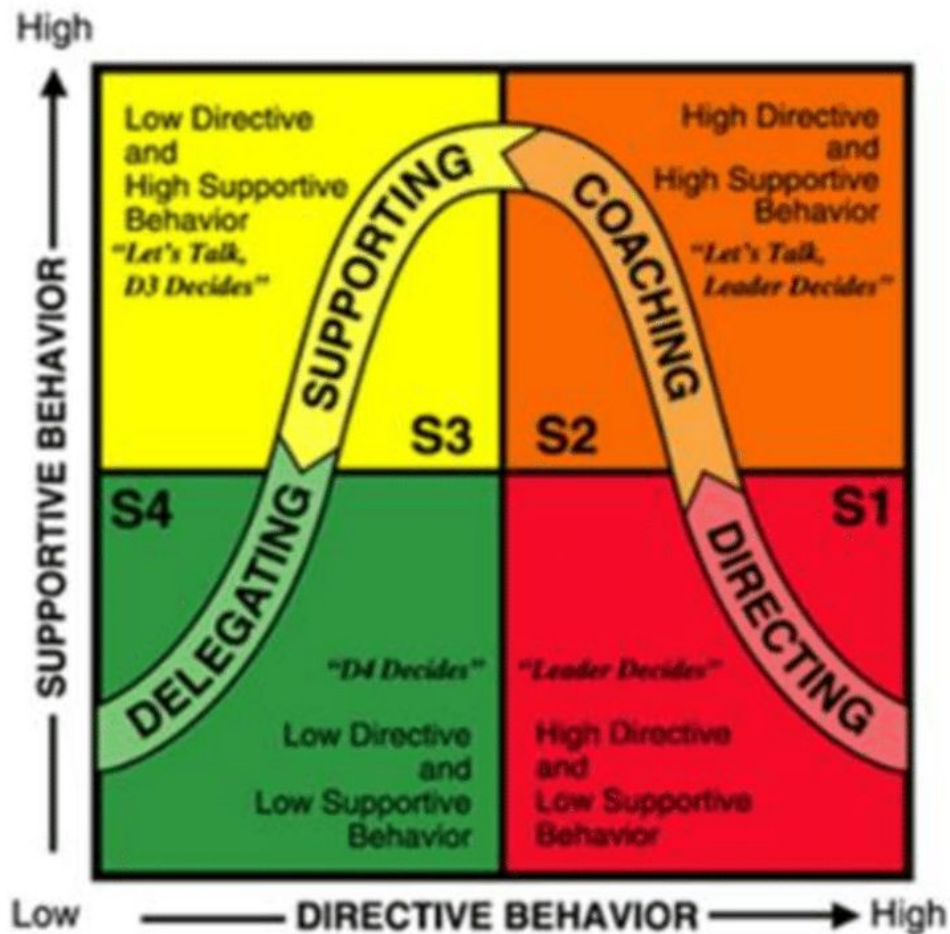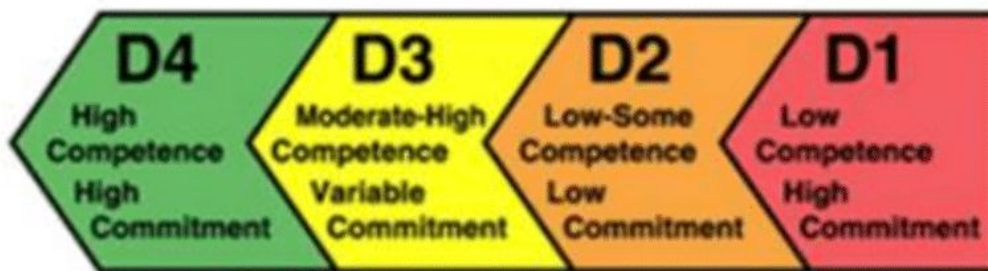
Above: Situational Leadership Model (Zigarmi, Blanchard & Nelson 1993)

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 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 in term one, 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 needed 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)

Since term one I have continued to reflect on the impact of this, and began implementing it in other classes. For example, I allowed my year ten general class to self-select their groups for their virtual reality unit. This was done intentionally to increase student agency by ensuring that they were able to work with people that they were already comfortable with, and also to ensure that they chose a topic that them and their peers were interested in and willing to engage with. According to key research, these things were essential to good engagement and differentiation (Tomlinson et al., 2003). Increasing student agency has been a focus for a number of my observations, in particular with my regional teaching advisor ("Jessica Petersen Observation 3", 2019; "Jess Petersen Observation 4", 2019; "Jessica Petersen Observation 5", 2019).

I worked with these students using the situational leadership model to engage with them effectively. Some of my students required little directive and supportive behaviour, so they were delegated tasks. Others required high directive and high supportive behaviour so I took on a coaching role. I found overall that it was effective, but I also question the limitations of the model, as I did have a small number of students who had a history of disengagement, and did not entirely respond to my efforts using the model. These students required an extended coaching intervention where they exhibited low competency as well as low commitment, and while this was technically leadership, it often became a situation where I was the only participant in the discussion. I think that this leadership model needs to be extended for this kind of commitment and competency.

I have also achieved similar interactions in regards to my year thirteen classes. My programming class had a range of students with a diverse set of prior knowledge and experience with coding, and my website development class did a number of self-guided or team exercises depending on their need for support and competency in the topic. Both of these situations are times that I have also applied my knowledge of situational leadership.

I have found situational leadership to be very helpful so far, but would very much like to employ it in a way where students take the role of leader as well as participant.

Distributed Leadership in All Classes - Applied Leadership that Supports Teaching Practice

Distributed leadership has been key in the implementation of my leadership project so far this year. Distributed leadership relies on a team of people collaborating and working towards the same goal, utilising the talents of team members to ensure the best possible outcome. Activity is used as an indicator of success, with tangible artefacts being an essential outcome (The Mind Lab, 2018).

Distributed leadership has been evident in my research project so far with the work undertaken by participants in the project, with the collaboration between each other, between them and myself, and between myself and my head of learning area.

My head of learning area and myself have been working closely throughout the project to ensure that it reaches its greatest potential. Through her role as a senior leader in the school, my head of learning area has been key in presenting the project to senior leadership and heads of other learning areas, as well as ensuring that spaces are booked and help for the project. She is also a very creative person, and therefore suggested changes to hui proceedings to make it more interactive and exciting for participants.

My own strengths are in the area of organisation, critical thinking, and planning. My major role was leading the project while also creating the basis of hui proceedings, resources for hui, and planning the rollout of the project itself.
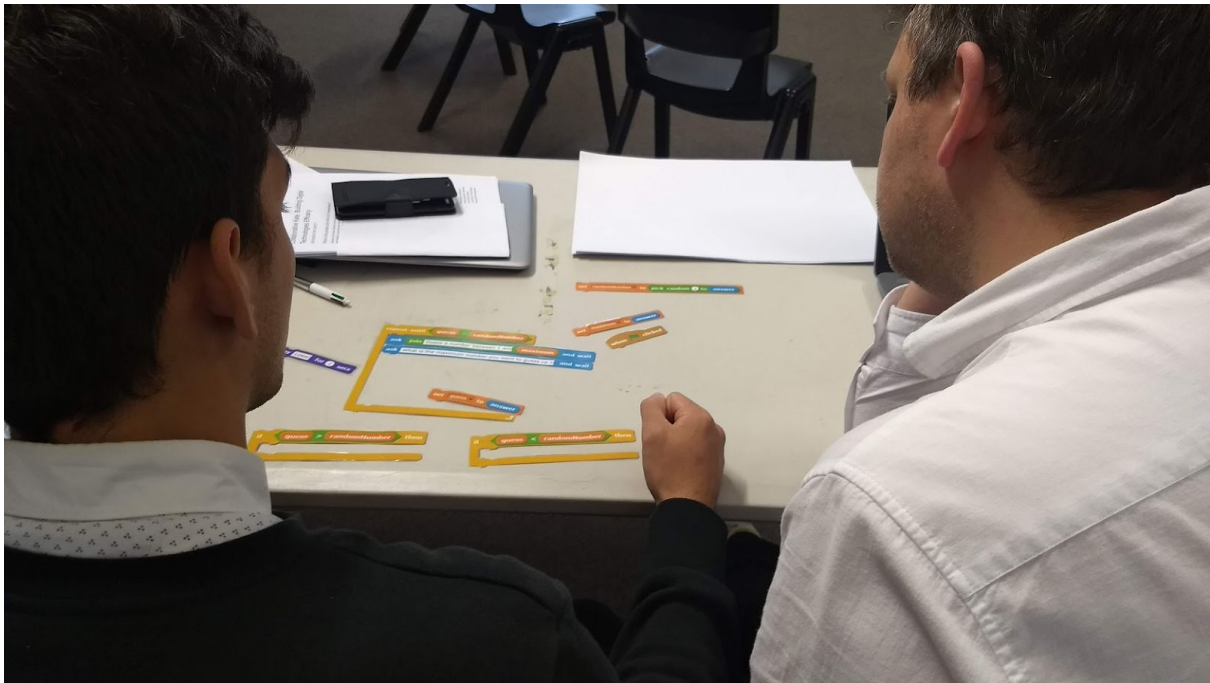
(Above: "Leadership project participants engaging in a creative activity during hui one 20190528")

I observed a huge amount of engagement in the second hui when participants took part in the activities that my head of learning area modified, and through her leadership in the area of creative activities, that part of the project was a huge success. I had initially been sceptical of the activities as it was my understanding that the (adult) participants would not be interested in taking part in activities that I saw as childish, but her experience in running professional learning sessions in the past gave her insight that I did not yet have. This collaboration had a huge impact on the first hui, and utilising her strengths and experience meant that it was more successful than it otherwise would have been, and gave me an opportunity to learn and reflect on my own biases.

(Above: "Some students fly, while others make planes 20190131")
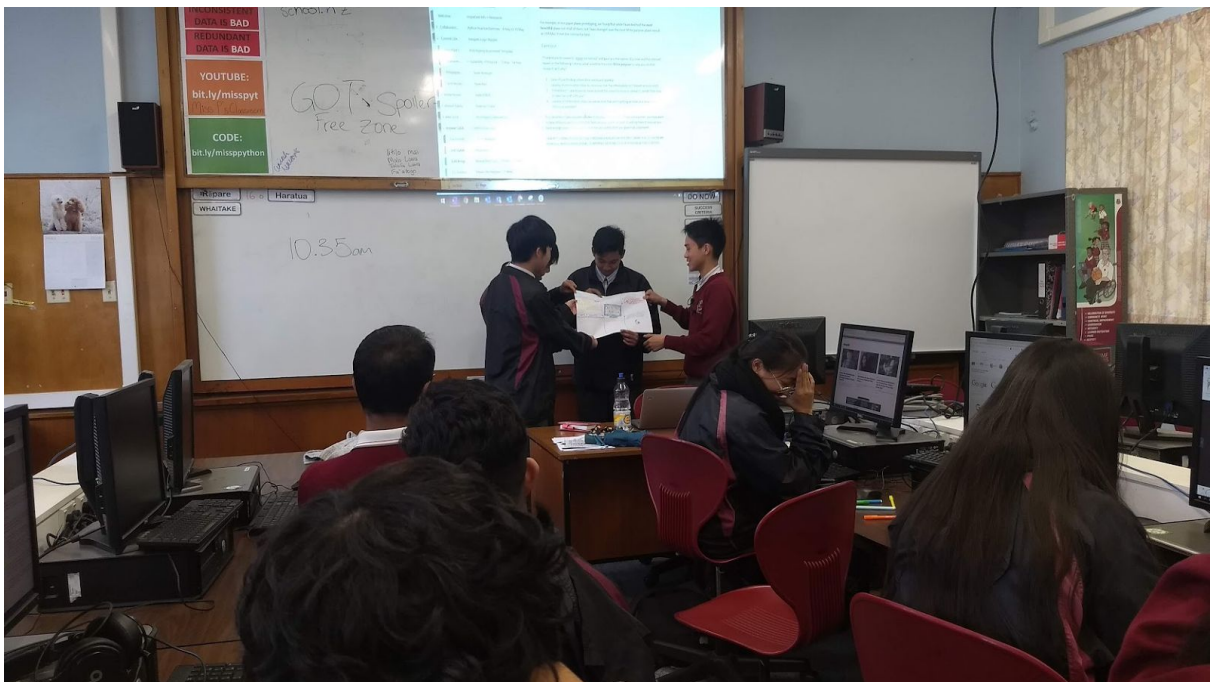
(Above: "Students present their group work to the class 20190521")

Reflecting on this, it reaffirms my own belief that working in groups is incredibly important, especially for learners.I have seen my learners also utilise a form of distributed leadership earlier in the year when they were tasked with building paper airplanes and flying them into buckets. The students split their groups into subgroups based on their strengths to ensure that they would achieve the best possible results. I have also observed this in group research activities, where some members research the topic, others design the poster, and a final subgroup presents their findings to the class.

(Above: "Students explore their Minecraft recreation of B Block 20191014")

I decided to continue experimentation with this model of leadership and focus on ako as well as tuakana teina later in the year. It was my intention to incorporate it as part of an assessment, so it made the most sense to attempt it with my year tens as they were not restricted to the assessment conditions that seniors would have been through NCEA. In this implementation, I asked students to group themselves with students that they were most comfortable with. They were then asked to choose from a selection of roles in the project - the creation of a virtual reality space. Students were encouraged to choose a role that aligned with their perception of their strengths. In this way, students would be leaders of individual sections of the project, as defined by them. For many students, this was perfectly fine and they engaged in the project right away, but I observed others disengage from their work. I was initially concerned that they were just not interested in the work and did not want to participate, but as I had learned through the implementation of my own leadership project, it was important for me to speak to them about their own perceptions of what was happening to work out exactly why they were disengaged. Based on my own experiences and world-view, it was my assumption that students would identify with at least one of the roles - writer, planner, tester, or builder - but those who disengaged were students who did not feel that any of those roles fit. After speaking to both them and their group members, they decided to take a tuakana teina approach and work with others to contribute to the project, and began to engage once more.

Having dedicated roles appeared to make the students work more productively than I had observed them working in the past, and it is my understanding that this is at least in part due to their confidence in their ability to fulfill the duties of their role. I think that this was an exceptionally useful approach to engaging students, but it could still be improved. There were times that students were not able to engage with their roles as they had completed all of the work that was part of that role. There were also some students who did not feel wholly comfortable with others in the class which meant that they were delayed in finding a group to work with, and once they had joined a group, I observed them being delegated a role rather than selecting one that aligned with their strengths. I think finding a balance between student familiarity and inclusivity should be a focus in the future.

In the future, I think that it is important for me to continue to explore how and when my world-view and experiences influence the way that I teach and interact with students. While I have sometimes been aware of my own world-view in designing my lessons, it isn't often that I've critically examined my viewpoints to ensure that my lessons are as accessible to as many students as possible. Active reflection has been a powerful tool to ensure that my teaching is effective and following expert recommendations, and I think that it is key to my continued improvement in practice. In addition to this, speaking to colleagues has also been essential to understanding my decisions and how to best approach different situations, so it will be important that I continue to do that throughout my development. The use of both of these tools will allow me to continue to improve as a teacher in the future.

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.

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