


Chapter 9

DREAM Educational Management and Leadership: A Student– and Teacher–Centred Approach to Inspire Change and Growth

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes the DREAM educational management and leadership approach, which the author has been implementing, researching, and developing for two decades. The DREAM acronym is based on ten principles inspired by teachers that ensure the educational teacher leader focuses on students and their learning by placing teachers at the heart of the institution. DREAM stands for develop, recruit, enhance, appraise, motivate and delegate, respect, enjoy, attend, and mentor. These ten principles are sequenced to provide a pathway of continuous teacher leadership development although they are all interdependent and practiced as a coherent whole. Each of the sections within the chapter is based on a principle and describes how it has been applied in a variety of contexts using feedback from previous course participants. The aim is to provide the reader with a series of short case studies of the DREAM approach in action.

INTRODUCTION

The DREAM Educational Management and Leadership model, developed to prioritize teaching, learning, and student welfare, involves teachers in leadership based on ten principles created by educators (Quirke & Allison, 2008). Enhanced over two decades through professional development courses, the DREAM approach fosters collaborative learning, aligning with the social constructivist nature of learning (Wink & Putney, 2002) and always considers student welfare (Atkinson & Claxton, 2003). This chapter gives insights into the DREAM approach and the transformational impact of professional development on participants, empowering them to apply and evolve the model.

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BACKGROUND

The DREAM Educational Management and Leadership model, designed to enhance teaching and learning, is structured around ten principles: Develop, Recruit, Enhance, Appraise, Motivate and Delegate, Respect, Enjoy, Attend, and Mentor. Each principle aligns with leadership literature and contributes to a collaborative learning environment. The model emphasizes professional development, effective data use, and innovative assessment methods to improve teaching and student outcomes, drawing from various leadership theories. The DREAM approach involves teachers in decision-making and fosters continuous improvement, aligning with sustainable leadership concepts.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Issues, Controversies, Problems: Transforming Teacher Leadership Practice

As noted above, the DREAM approach and philosophy aims to bring students and their learning back to the centre of all decisions made at the institution by empowering the teachers and staff to involve their students as they are involved in the management and leadership of the institution. A key element of this approach is the consistent offering of DREAM professional courses to the teachers, staff and students, so this section describes in depth how the courses are run and the impact they have had over the past two decades, drawing on participant reflections and feedback.

There are eleven courses in total with an Introduction to DREAM Management and Leadership as well as a course around each of the principles. Each course has 12 units with an Introduction, ten units on content, and a Conclusion. Each unit is broken down into four stages based upon the author's work on teacher knowledge development (Quirke, 2009), which draws on social constructivist theories (Darling-Hammond, 2016; Maturana, 2012) that view knowledge as a collaborative process dependent on interaction with the community that constructs meaning from our experience and the earlier work of Tsui (2003) on teacher knowledge.

The first stage is Knowledge Seeker Preparation where the participants are required to read articles and view videos that introduce the principle and the underlying theories. This stage is where the participants begin to explore how this new information aligns or differs from their own understanding of themselves, their practice and their teaching and leading context, and they begin to theorize their practical knowledge and scaffold this new input to their existing knowledge schema.

The second stage is Knowledge Discusser as reflection and application of new knowledge is seldom complete without the involvement of others as we attempt to articulate how our developing understanding is compatible with the context in which we work. At this stage, the course provides participants with the possibility to discuss both asynchronously via a discussion board and synchronously via video conference sessions.

The third stage is Knowledge User as participants must apply the new principle in their workplace as they complete a task requiring them to lead a team using the unit's principle. This stage is crucial in the transformation of our knowledge structure as it is this practicalization of theory which confirms the applicability of the new knowledge to our teaching and leading context.

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