Odette School of Business Publications **Odette School of Business**

2015

Working Papaer: A Quantitative Analysis of ePortfolio Reflective Learning on Personal Leadership Development

Martha A. Reavley
Odette School of Business, Uversity of Windsor

Martha A. Reavley
University of Windsor, Odette School of Business

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/odettepub

Part of the Business Commons

Abstract

In this pilot study, ePortfolios were used to digitally present reflective learning on aspects of personal leadership in a graduate management course in Interpersonal Dynamics. Thirty- three students participated. Students reflected on personal leadership development, in particular, the attributes of the fundamental state of leadership (Quinn, 2004) and authentic Leadership (George, 2003). Results indicated that students adept at reflective practices over the semester. They began to transform in their thinking, reporting more of the attributes ascribed to authentic leaders. Reflective practices were not sustained beyond this course. It is recommended that ePortfolio-based learning be used in promoting reflective practices and personal leadership development at the program level rather than only at the level of a course.

Key words: ePortfolio, reflective learning, personal leadership development, authentic leadership, fundamental state of leadership

Literature Review

Reflective Learning

Reflective learning (RL) competency is increasingly being required as leaders must learn to learn and adapt in the midst of change. This practice, in fact, is one key to the continuous improvement cultures that 21st century workplaces want to build. Reflective learning practice "encourages the framing and re-framing of questions, with the aim of gaining new insight into an issue" (Rich, 2010, p. 57).

(Argyris, 1991) argued persuasively that the hardest target of reflection is oneself and that, especially in high achievers, there is a bias to attribute failure to external factors. Introspection and the questioning and testing of personal "theories in practice" are feared. Yet, this exercise can be one of the most important learning experiences that practicing managers, aspiring leaders and MBA students undergo. "Teaching people how to reason about their behavior in new and more effective ways breaks down the defenses that block learning" (Argyris, 1991, p. 2).

RL focuses on observing, being and listening (Hedberg, 2009). Reflective practice allows for the extraction of meaning from everyday experiences (Gosling & Mintzberg, Reflect Yourself, 2004). When effectively practiced, reflection has the potential to make decision making and leader behaviour more creative, relevant, and responsive. In discussing the benefits of RL in the training of medical students, Koole et. al. (2012) state that "reflection gives a comprehensive view of contextual factors that affect clinical decisions, helps practitioners identify gaps in personal knowledge and gives direction to personal development" (p. 1). The authors go on to articulate the dangers of unreflective medical practice. "Practitioners have been reported to perpetuate routine behaviours and not open them to discussion, have narrow

perspectives on their practice, find it difficult to identify learning goals and accept feedback, and find it difficult to adapt their practice" (Koole et. al., 2012, p. 1). Perhaps there is no profession or professional that would not benefit from enhanced reflective learning competency. Business leaders are not immune to the need for greater reflection in decision-making.

The Importance of Reflective Learning to Leadership Development

For leaders, reflective practice is essential and transformative. According Gosling & Mintzberg (2003), managers desperately need to stop and think. "Unless you get a reflective frame of mind, you cannot open yourself to new ideas (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003, p. 56). Reflective practice allows for personal agency and "mindful engagement" in leadership development (DeRue et. al., 2010).

RL is much more than simple self-reflection (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003). It involves the active and conscious and mindful observation of the interplay between the external and the internal. "[T]his means going beyond introspection…so that you can better see out in order perceive a familiar thing in a different way" (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003, p. 57). Reflective practice for leadership development requires four things: a focus on a few critical issues; reflection in close temporal proximity to the action; following a structured process and, leading back to action quickly (DeRue et. al., 2010).

Authentic Leadership

According to Bill George, authentic leaders are true leaders (George, 2003). The intrapersonal aspects of authentic leadership include self-awareness and alignment between self-awareness and self-regulation (Chan, Hannah, & Gardner, 2005). Since authentic leadership is enhanced by greater self-awareness, it is therefore a type of leadership that will benefit most

from reflective practice used as a development strategy. To become authentic requires a transformative process, beginning with personal reflection on one's current state of leadership development wherein a leader enters the Fundamental State of Leadership.

The Fundamental State of Leadership

Figure 1 depicts two contrasting leadership states – the normal and the fundamental.

Insert Figure 1

The normal state is characterized by a reactive orientation, externally driven control, self-focused thoughts and behaviours and an internally closed attitude. The fundamental state of leadership is characterized by a proactive orientation, internally driven control, other-focused thoughts and behaviours and an externally open attitude (Quinn & Spreitzer, 2005). "The fundamental state of leadership is focused on self-alteration or the repair or reintegration of self while operating in relationships" (Quinn & Spreitzer, 2005, p. 13). Because of this, reflecting on the process of moving from the normal state to the fundamental state of leadership is an apt subject matter for reflective learning practice.

According to Quinn:

When we are in the fundamental state of leadership, we are very different than (sic) when we are in the normal state. We begin to attract new flows of energy. We overcome entropy and slow death. We become more fully alive. Furthermore, we begin to attract others to the fundamental state of leadership…we become extraordinary, and our organization changes. It becomes a system of positive

4

organizing, a more productive community with increased energy, commitment, and capability (Quinn, 2004, p.23).

Most leaders begin in the normal state and, if self-aware and reflective, can change and progress towards the fundamental state of leadership, at which time they demonstrate authentic leadership. Creating and maintaining a reflective practice including a narrative reflecting on one's actions and thinking can assist in this transformation.

ePortfolios and Reflective Learning

An ePortfolio is a digitized collection of artifacts which can include demonstrations, resources, and accomplishments that represent an individual, group, community, organization, or institution (Ittelson & Lorenzo, 2005). E-portfolios can also be defined as personalized, web-based collections of work, responses to work, and reflections that are used to demonstrate key skills and accomplishments from a variety of contexts and time periods (UBC Center for Learning, 2014). PebblePad, a proprietary web-based e-portfolio system, provides a broader definition: "An e-portfolio is a purposeful collection of digital items, such as ideas, evidence, reflections and feedback, which presents a selected audience with evidence of a person's learning and/or ability" (PebblePad, 2014).

While the broad range of its uses are becoming one of the emblematic attributes of the ePortfolio approach, its ability to create reflective learning or reflection opportunities has also been considered as an important role of the ePortfolio for teaching and learning. Empirical research has documented improved reflection abilities when using ePortfolios (Bryant & Chittum, 2013). In fact, the electronic nature of ePortfolios with its greater flexibility and applicability, allows users to be more organized, interactive, and reflective (Bryant & Chittum,

2013). Furthermore, the introduction of networked ePortfolios has extended the ways in which information can be accessed, used, updated and integrated, broadening the range of reflective activities that can be supported (Stefani, Mason, & Pegler, 2007, p. ix).

Types of ePortfolios vary by target user and by purpose. There are three different categories of users: Student ePortfolio, Teaching ePortfolio and Institutional ePortfolio (Lorenzo & Ittelson, 2005). This study focused on the student ePortfolio.

The Student ePortfolio

The student ePortfolio is a powerful tool for representation, reflection, and revision. The Student ePortfolio has been identified as having the following basic functions: storage, information management, connections, communication, and development (Walz, 2006). It is used to showcase accomplishments, document specific learning outcomes, and archive digitized artifacts of learning and performance. It may be shared with a prospective employer or used to document specific learning outcomes in a course (Acker, 2005). At the broadest level, student e-Portfolios can be aggregated into an institutional e-Portfolio containing a wide variety of digitized representations that provide evidence for self-study and accreditation (Ittelson & Lorenzo, 2005).By using the Student ePortfolio, students are encouraged to make their own judgments about their learning and priorities and therefore become more self-aware and self-reliant. The key concept is "reflection incorporated with the fundamental need to identify acquired or to be developed specific transferable skills and abilities" (Wright, Knight, & Pomerleau, 1999, p. 92).

While there are various approaches to the creation of ePortfolios, a school-hosted ePortfolio system can achieve better visibility, security, management, and integration relative to students' data than stand-alone authoring tools (Herman & Kirkup, 2008).

Learning portfolios move students along the learning continuum and are said to positively influence reflection (Scott, 2010). ePortfolios can be used as an electronic means to archive, display and analyse a range of learning and achievement and to interpret experiences. Hallam and Creagh (2010) identify 6 major types of ePortfolios: assessment, presentation, learning, personal development, multiple-owner and working (p. 180).

ePortfolios have been proposed as a means to encourage RL in this age of social media. They capture learning as it occurs as well as providing evidence of learning from a broad range of experiences (Faulkner M. , Aziz, Waye, & Smith, 2013)They provide portability in an age when youth are more likely to be global citizens (Faulkner et. al., 2013). They allow students to present a truer version of themselves and with much more nuance than does the more traditional resume (Okoro, Washington, & Cardon, 2011).

If the development of RL is the goal, the ePortfolio or any form of learning portfolio or journal may be most appropriate for adult learners. According to Faulkner (2013) age impacts the ability to reflect and 21 to 24 year olds are at a quasi-reflective stage. Scott (2010) found that age, gender, GPA and work status influenced willingness to voluntarily participate in her project oriented to enhance reflection skill through learning portfolios. In contrast, Koole et. al. (2012) found an opposite effect and reported that older, more experienced medical practitioners performed worse in reflective practice than their younger, less experienced counterparts. These conflicting findings are indicative of the need for further research into the efficacy of ePortfolios for enhancing RL in higher education.

ePortfolio may be suitable for use in higher education by a broad demographic of learner, regardless of their work experience. This may be particularly true, where the ePortfolio is used across courses at a program level (Scott, 2010). In fact, favourable perception of the ePortfolio as a learning tool may grow over time and reflective learning competency may be enhanced where the use of the of the ePortfolio is continued over several semesters and integrated into several different courses (Gerbic et. al. 2011).

Student commitment to the process is essential. "The ePortfolio is (or should be) part of a student-owned, student-centred approach to learning which makes it possible for students to actively engage in their learning rather than just be recipients of information (Tosh et. al. 2005, p. 1). Even if these prerequisites exist, there is no guarantee that students will perceive the ePortfolio favourably. One study found that students had fairly negative reactions to ePortfolios used to enhance professional development and employability (Woodley & Sims, 2011). The authors reported that few students planned to use them beyond the assessment period and many did not find them interesting or useful (Wooley and Sims, 2011, p. 164).

From the beginning, for ePortfolios to be successful in addressing learning outcomes related to building RL competency and to be viewed as a useful tool from the students' perspective, students need to be convinced of their value. Buy-in and the perceived effort-reward contingencies must be established early (Tosh et. al., 2005). Successful implementation requires extensive coordination, time and the provision of good models (Okoro et. al. , 2011, p. 350). There is some evidence that ePortfolios may be more suitable to on line learning. (Bollinger & Shepherd, 2010)found that on line students valued the ePortfolio and that the experience positively impacted some students' perceptions of communication, connectedness

and learning (p. 295). Prior experience with reflective learning correlated with favourable

attitudes toward the ePortfolio (Bollinger and Sheperd, 2010, p. 295).

This paper describes the results of a pilot study implementing the ePortfolio approach to

enhance reflective learning on personal leadership development framed in terms of authenticity

and the characteristics of the fundamental state of leadership in a Masters of Business

Administration course.

The Master of Business Administration Program

The MBA program in which the research took place is 14 months in duration and

comprised of five learning modules. The students tend to be young (in their early to mid-

twenties) and have limited work experience.   On the website, the program is described as

"transformative" and aims to attract "youthful, fresh thinking and industrious students"

(University of Windsor, Odette MBA program description, 2015).

In module 1, the incoming students are required to take five courses covering business

fundamentals. These include, Interpersonal Dynamics, Accounting, Finance, Marketing, and

Research Methodology (University of Windsor Graduate Program Descriptions, 2015).

This pilot study was implemented in the first module of the MBA program in the

Interpersonal Dynamics course.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The purpose of the Interpersonal Dynamics course is to assist students in building personal leadership competency. It focuses on developing intrapersonal awareness and interpersonal skills. It is also designed to build the skills required for effective and rewarding work within a team.

One course learning objective explicitly referenced reflective learning and the ePortfolio as the vehicle for engaging in RL. Students were asked to apply RL to experiences gained from in-class and community-based individual and team activities and experiences. These included leadership assessments, lecture materials and interactions with authentic community leaders. They were to use the ePortfolio to reflect on their personal leadership development and progress toward attainment of the fundamental state of leadership.

Introduction to the ePortfolio Experience

A class was set aside to introduce students to the ePortfolio. A learning specialist with experience in the set up and management of ePortfolios facilitated this class.   As part of the introductory workshop, students were given a link to the instructor's ePortfolio and the description of the ePortfolio assignment included in exhibit 1.

Insert Exhibit 1

Students were encouraged to be reflective, focus on character and present their best selves in an authentic manner. Five of the posts required students to report and reflect upon personal learning. The sixth post was a team report and reflection on a leader from the community with whom the students had interacted. An analysis of the five individual posts is reported in this study.

The Learning Process

The course encouraged a strengths-based approach to personal leadership development. It stressed the concept in authenticity. Students were encouraged to leverage their strengths as individuals and within their teams and to work from their values in executing leadership in everything they did. The process of self-awareness began by identifying the students' values using the Competing Values Framework (CVF) (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, McGrath, & St. Clair, 2011), Rokeach values assessment (Langton, Robbins, & Judge, 2013) and Seligman's Values in Action Character Strengths assessment (Seligman).

Course meetings were broken into 10, four-hour workshops. The focus of the first session was Robert Quinn's Competing Values Framework (Quinn et. al, 2011) and included and assessment and analysis of the students' perceived leadership preferences and managerial competency strengths. The second workshop concerned leadership values and character. In addition to an investigation of values, the concept of authentic leadership and its underlying qualities and dimensions formed the content and framework for the second workshop (George, 2003). Subsequent workshops addressed personality, personal leadership visions and leadership development goal setting and planning.

Following each workshop, participants completed a reflective learning exercise using the ePortfolio tool. The descriptions given of each of the entries appear in exhibit 2.

Insert exhibit 2

Methodology

ePortfolio's of 33 MBA students, from the fall 2013 section of Interpersonal Dynamics, were reviewed in this study. A qualitative analysis of students' responses to each of the five ePortfolio posts was performed.

NVivo was first utilized to categorize participant's responses into five folders, each folder representing one of the assignment topics. Word frequencies were then run on all of the responses within each folder. The ten most commonly used words, excluding conjunctions, were identified. From these, three words were chosen for further review. The three words that were chosen were not necessarily the three most commonly used words as the use of the top words often appeared to be prompted by the assignment topic. For example, the word 'values' was the most commonly used word in the first assignment. However, the assignment topic was stated as "How can I use the Competing Values Framework to strengthen my authentic leadership?" Since the word 'values' was prompted by the topic it was not reviewed further. Words that were prompted by the given ePortfolio topic were eliminated as they did not indicate original thoughts or unique developments through reflective learning.

After identifying three commonly used unique words from each of the ePortfolio topics, a word tree was developed for each word using NVivo. Word trees outline the context surrounding how a word was used. All three word trees that were developed per ePortfolio topic, were reviewed together to determine whether similarities existed between the ways in which the popular words were used. Common themes emerged within the responses from each ePortfolio assignment; overall these themes indicated that student's self-awareness was improving.

To ensure that the themes developed for the ePortfolio topics were accurate each participant's responses were reviewed. Multiple quotes from the collection of responses to each ePortfolio topic were retrieved to support the findings presented by NVivo.

Results

Table 1 compares the results of the content analysis of all five posts.

Insert table 1

Overall, the students appear to have engaged in reflective learning on personal leadership development and entering the fundamental state of leadership. In the second part of the presentation of the results, the analysis focuses more discretely on reflective learning within each aspect of the fundamental state of leadership. These results indicate significantly more reflection on the internally-directed and purpose-centered aspects of the fundamental state of leadership in comparison to the externally-directed and other focused aspects of the FSL.

Growth within the Fundamental State of Leadership

Following is a summary of the results for each of the four aspects of the fundamental state of leadership. To begin, an analysis of the qualitative results (word frequencies) arranged by each of the four aspects of Quinn's Fundamental State of Leadership (FSL) is presented in table 2.

Insert table 2

Internally Directed

The reflective exercise appears to have had the greatest impact on thinking about the internally directed and purpose centered aspects of the fundamental state of leadership. Slightly more than 67% of the posts included terms related to and identified with these two paradigm components.

Quinn describes the move to internally directed as being related to a change of thinking "where one moves from sticking with what one knows (self-centred) to venturing beyond familiar territory to pursue new outcomes" (Quinn R. , 2004, p. 21). Reflection on this aspect of the FSL occurred with frequency in each of the five assignments (table 2). This may indicate that the students were actively trying to push themselves to think differently and change their frames of reference on underlying attributes of fundamental leadership. At the beginning of the course, students often commented on wanting to like a leader who they admired. They talked of wanting be to Jack Welch or Richard Branson, for example. As the course progressed they appeared to see more value in becoming authentic leaders and in being the best, values-based leader they could be. They began to be comfortable with the notion of leveraging their own strengths.

Insert table 3

Leadership strengths and leveraging these strengths were mentioned most frequently and comprised almost 50% of the terms associated with internal directedness (48.5). Personal Strengths were addressed in 4 out of 5 posts. Students were concerned with using and leveraging their strengths in their own right and as a path to achieving authentic leadership.

ePost 2 asked the students to reflect on their values and strengths. Prior to this post, the students completed the Gallup Strengths 2.0 assessment and three assessment of values: the Rokeach Values, Quinn et al. Competing Values Framework in which they identified their preferred

quadrant as well as the perceived strength of managerial roles in each of the four quadrants, and Seligman's Values in Action (VIA Character strengths).

As one student stated:

> "Authenticity describes the quality of being original or genuine. Therefore, applying authenticity to leadership entails being individualistic and acting on your strengths."

Interestingly, another reflected that he would like to become more authentic but not more internally directed:

> "I would like to be more content with simply being who I am and not caring about what others believed in me. I do not think that I can get away from that, and deep down, I know that I don't really, truly, want to. That being said I am very internally directed. I am quite confident about myself, my beliefs, and who I am. I think that for these reasons I am OK with being externally directed and seek significance. If I was not proud of myself or my accomplishments I think that my external direction would be significantly less."

Students often reflected on the connectedness between strengths and authenticity. This is represented in the following two quotations:

> "Learning about my tendencies, strengths, and personality traits has helped me to envision the person that I want to become. I now have a good grasp on my current leadership state which will help me to achieve my ideal state of leadership."; and,

> "Even after knowing my strengths and figuring out ways to leverage them to become an authentic leader, I still have a ways to go before I become the leader I want to be. Knowing my strengths is the first step to being able to maximize those individual

strengths. Ideally, I would want to develop into a true authentic leader who is

responsible, competitive, respected, and empowers others while maintaining ethical

standards."

The word "values" and "authentic" were associated with more than a quarter (27.1%) of the

word families, a slightly higher frequency than "personality" and "personal" (24.4%). ePost 3

concerned reflecting on personality. Therefore, it seems logical that the term was used most

frequently in this post.

Purpose-Centered

Table 4 shows the frequencies for the purpose-centered aspect of the fundamental state of

leadership.

Insert table 4

According to Quinn (2004) purpose-centeredness involves clarifying the results one

wants to create and being committed and engaged, full of energy and holding an unwavering

standard pursuit of a meaningful task (p. 22). This involves not simply being a leader but being

and doing leadership.

Students seemed to understand this connection between being and doing. They discussed

growing their own ability to lead in a team setting and in the context of project completion. The

following quotations illustrate the students' reflective learning on the purpose-centered aspect of

the fundamental state of leadership. It indicates desires to find creative solutions, elevate work

to make a difference, help others, give and receive feedback and growth. As one student

proclaimed:

"I want to provide creative solutions to projects."

Two others articulated their goals as:

"Elevating my work to "make a difference," really putting that personal [aspect of leadership] to work.", and;

"I know that I am quick with a solution …and always ready to help my group members with problem.

Purposeful learning and the requirement to seek and act on feedback are represented in the writing of the following three students:

"Over the next year I will continue to learn from those around me, refine my leadership abilities, and grow my leadership development team",

and;

"My first goal is to be perceived by others as approachable. I want others to feel open to communicate with me. Immediately I plan to make a conscious effort to show interest in the lives of team members. I will also pose questions to team members to stimulate feedback. In six months' time I will aim to have developed relationships with team members, which should enhance communication.",

and finally;

"Besides self-reflection on your strengths and leadership abilities, the next best source of feedback is your peers and others around you who truly care about your leadership development. It was strange that after finishing my presentations the thing I was most anxious to do was read the reviews my classmates had given me. I truly value their opinions, no matter how critical, because I know they want me to succeed with my

leadership goals. I realize how important it is now to have these kinds of people whom

I can get honest feedback from."

Additionally, after stating a team description and reflecting on personal strengths, the word 'role' was used to tie together how the student would integrate what they had learned about themselves into different team dynamics. For example, the word 'role' was introduced by stating "leadership role" or "my role", and was followed by words such as 'within' or 'of'. This allowed the student to specifically reflect on what their role would be. The following quote demonstrates the use of the word 'role' in a participant's response to ePost assignment 1:

"I have already taken on the leadership roles of both facilitator and mentor, which have

both been associated with the value of collaboration in the Competing Values

framework."

Frequent use of the words 'team', 'strengths' and 'role' demonstrated a starting point of self-reflection.

Externally Open

Quinn (2004) describes the externally open aspect of the fundamental state of leadership as involving "moving outside of [one's] comfort zone, experimenting, seeking real feedback, adapting, and reaching exponentially higher levels of discovery, awareness, competence, and vision"(p. 22).

Table 5 shows the word frequencies for the students' reflective learning on this third aspect of the fundamental state of leadership.

Insert table 5

All of the references to being "externally open" occur in the last two posts. ePost 4 asked the students to reflect on what they had learned throughout the module and to create a leadership development plan. The reflective learning prompt was entitled "Personal Leadership Development Plan " and asked students to "Sum up what you learned this semester and where you take your leadership from here – how will you get from good to great? How will you go about asking for and acting on feedback and coaching?"

Given the title for the reflective learning ePost 4, it is not surprising that the word "plan" would show up frequently. Students articulated plans for personal growth and openness to change and to adjusting to the feedback from others in order to enter the fundamental state of leadership and achieve their leadership visions.

One student wrote that:

"I will create open discussion periods where group members can draw my attention to any concerns they may have. I want to utilize the feedback from my group members to determine if I am achieving my goal. I will also ask myself how many team members have I developed relationships with, and how many team members approach me with their concerns? I feel that these two questions will also indicate whether I am achieving my goal."

Continuous learning was emphasized by the students who wrote the following entries:

"I realize that I am just at the very beginning of my career, and that I should see my path as one of continued learning. This means that I do not see myself as an accomplished leader, but as one who has the characteristics and the other necessary ingredients to be a great leader. Keeping this in mind, I would try to learn from the best that I am exposed to.";

"Leadership is all about self-awareness and improving ones abilities and also their self-confidence. Just like editing your own essay over and over, it's hard to find any mistakes and make improvements to it, which is why you need a team to help you realize your shortcomings and improve upon them.", and;

"I know that in order to develop as a leader I need to get out of my routine and comfort zone more often, and learn the benefits that come from experiencing new things on the fly."

Embracing change was represented in quotations such as the following:

"My second goal is to embrace change and try new things. I was one of the students who said they hate change, but again every great leader has to deal with change at some point. I also need to try new things.", and;

"Being around great peers and great mentors in this program has really allowed me to be in an environment that fosters growth and change. I am frankly very excited to see where this growth and change takes me.", and, finally;

"I believe I can see different possibilities for my group. To be an authentic leader, I make connections and [will] be with a variety of people. I [will] make decision to impact others to achieve a consensus."

ePost 5 asked for reflective learning on the leadership development process that students had undergone and on the platform that they had used – the wordpress ePortfolio. The first question dealt most specifically with the former concern – personal leadership development. Students were asked the following:

"Identify the one assessment that that you completed this semester for this course that contributed the most to your personal leadership development and your leadership

development planning process. How (in what ways) did the assessment contribute to your personal leadership planning and development?"

Following are student reflections on the tool or assessment that had the greatest perceived impact on personal leadership development. These excerpts are representative of overall reflective learning that indicates growth in being externally open. Personal vision, becoming a leader and accepting this transformational process as rather open-ended are themes in their writing. Their externally open thinking portrays them as wanting to "improve" things, "understand others", "get out of their comfort zones".

For the first student, the emphasis is on authenticity;

"Identifying my strengths allowed me [to] envision how I want to improve as a leader, and from there I was able set leadership goals which were discussed in my most recent post."

Another student observed that;

"The Strengths Finder was the most beneficial assessment I used during this course because it allowed me to identify my strengths. By identifying my strengths, I have been able to incorporate them into my leadership development plan that I believe will allow me achieve my vision of destroying discrimination in the workplace. Specifically, I have found a way to utilize each of my strengths to create the support network required to turn my vision into a reality."

Finally, one student had the following reflection on strengths;

"Based on my strengths I was able to see what areas of my leadership abilities need further development in order to better balance my leadership abilities. In order to help me with my leadership development process, the Strengths Finder Analysis allowed me

to set out goals that would enable me to develop parts of my leadership abilities that are not as strong as they could be. By looking at some of my strengths such as discipline and deliberative, I realized that in order to become a better and more capable leader I would need to become more open to experiencing new things. Being someone who is somewhat rigid and lives their life based on routine, I sometimes miss out on spontaneous and spur of the moment experiences. I now see that participating in these types of situations [is] important for me in order to grow and develop my leadership abilities and if I am to truly understand those around me and lead them I first need to experience and see what is important to them."

Another student saw the Competing Values Framework as playing an important role in their development;

"Since we were still trying to get to know one another in our groups during the first few weeks of class, understanding the CVF was helpful in understanding each other in the group. I feel that this helped contribute to my personal leadership development because it helped me understand my own individual leadership style and explain the way I tend to lead in a group setting." This student goes on to add that "Sometimes I will need go out of my comfort zone depending on the situation."

Other-focused

Quinn (2004) describes "other-focused" as involving transcending one's ego, putting the common good and welfare of others first, increasing in authenticity, nurturing trust, and

enriching the levels of connectivity in networks (p. 22). Table 11 shows the word frequencies for the other-focused aspect of the fundamental state of leadership.

Insert table 6

As table 6 shows, ePost 2 contained more than 40% of the other-focused terms "team", "people" and "others". In this post, students were asked to write about the following:

"My Leadership Strengths and Values. Describe these and discuss how you will leverage these for authentic and impactful leadership, starting today. Conclude with initial insights on your development needs and the path forward. Post this analysis to your ePortfolio."

Even at this relatively early stage of their engagement (after 2, 4 hour workshops) in the personal leadership development process, students seemed to understand that authentic leadership demands ego transcendence. Yet, relative to the apparent growth in reflective learning on the other aspects of the FSL, other-focused development was the least frequently referenced.

Among other themes reflecting other-centeredness, they talked about "creating hope", being guided equally by the heart and the mind" and providing a "bandage" for others. These ideas are reflected in the following three posts.

From one student strengths and compassion were related:

"Awareness of my top strengths will allow me to concentrate on improving my effectiveness in building trust within my team, demonstrating compassion, providing stability to others, and creating hope.";

Another student emphasized the requirement to serve others:

"Authentic leaders have a desire to serve others through their leadership and are interested in empowering the people they lead to make a difference. They are guided equally by the heart and the mind, and lead with purpose, meaning and values. Their

people relationships are extremely strong and people follow them because they are consistent, reliable and strong.", and;

A third student chose a bandage as his personal leadership symbol and wrote that:

"I recognize that everyone in today's society does not live an inclusive lifestyle, being accepting of all individuals, which has motivated me to pursue an authentic leadership style that allows me to be instrumental in protecting people who are unable to defend themselves against discrimination. Symbolically, I would consider my envisioned leadership position to be similar to a bandage. Like a bandage, I plan on making it my sole priority to protect people until they are strong enough to continue on without me."

The context surrounding the use of the word 'team', was often providing a description. For example, many people introduced the word team by stating "my team" or "a team", the word was then followed with words such as "members", "success" or "player". The following quote demonstrates the use of the word 'team' in a participant's response to assignment 1.

"When I think of the word facilitating and relate it to teamwork, I think of ensuring that team members get an equal opportunity to share their ideas and opinions. I also think of resolving conflict in a way that results in consensus about what the team's direction should be and that ensures each team member's satisfaction with the process as to how the conflict was resolved. I value facilitating so much because I think that a good facilitator can ensure that a team stays focused and continues to work efficiently."

Overall, words reflecting other-centeredness accounted for only 16% of all references to any aspect of the FSL. This is less than one-half the frequency of entries related for purpose-centered. As described by Quinn, moving from being self-centred to other-centered requires putting the needs of others first, having empathy and becoming part of something larger than

oneself (Quinn, 2004). This shift may be the most difficult of any that is required to enter the fundamental state of leadership. It may be particularly challenging for young adults with limited work and world experience.

Discussion

Summary

The results of this study demonstrate that students were engaged in the process of reflective learning through their use of ePortfolios. Based on the analysis of each of the five assignments an increase in the students' self-awareness and reflective capacity was observed. One prominent characteristic of reflective learning is the ability to pose and repose questions. Throughout the responses, students continually asked themselves and sought the answers to the following questions, "What are my leadership strengths?", "How has my self-awareness changed the way that I will lead?" and "What type of leader do I want to be? And "What type of leader am I becoming?" These questions and their reflective answers were embedded in nearly every ePortfolio response. The response quality and detail of the answers were also observed to improve over time.

The three elements of reflective learning, including awareness of experience, understanding of experience and consideration of the impact, were also evident in each collection of student responses. ePost assignment one revealed students' introductory self-reflection skills including awareness of their leadership strengths. Students' responses to assignments two and three demonstrated understanding of their strengths. Many students expressed the value of certain leadership strengths and preferences. Finally, responses to assignment four brought the

three elements of reflective learning together. Students expressed how they would use their leadership strengths to interact in groups in order to work effectively.

Contributions to the Literature

This study revealed that many students experienced transformational changes throughout the duration of the course. Different aspects of the transformational change from the normal state to the fundamental state of leadership were evident through students' ePortfolio-based reflective writing. At the beginning of the course, the majority of the students were in the normal state. Self-reflection via the ePortfolio assisted students in becoming, in particular, more internally directed and purpose-centered.

This is a very good start in transformative personal leadership development. Once students became aware of their strengths and understood the value of them, they were able to identify how their strengths and preferences would impact those around them. Furthermore, students expressed the importance of developing goals and visions for achieving success in regards to their authentic leadership.

Many students stated that they planned to continue to utilize their ePortfolio to track their leadership progression. However, very few did so. Therefore, although students felt that they benefited from documenting their personal leadership development throughout the course, the positive results generated by "forced" self-reflection were not enough to instill continued self-reflection. These results are commensurate with results from previous research that concluded that beyond an assessment period, few students continue to engage in active self-reflection through the use of ePortfolios. As Faulkner. et. al. (2013) noted, age plays a role in reflective practice and the young adults in this study may have only reached the quasi-reflective stage.

Students'' transformation was not as noticeable in the FSL aspects of externally open and other-focused. It is suspected that these transformations require a greater commitment to reflective learning over a longer time period in order to experience this degree of growth. As well, these FSL aspects may simply require more life experience and time that one can dedicate to reflective practice. Study participants were mostly relatively young and very busy students.

These reasons may account for the disengagement from the process following the course. If the students were more externally open, they may have embraced this new way of thinking about personally leadership development and the new platform for reflective learning in their own right. Further, the degree to which the students still remained externally directed could have played a role here. They may have been more motivated by the need to achieve a certain grade than the value of personal transformation, in its own right. Extrinsic motivators are inherently weak over the long term. By their nature, ePortfolios "nurture student engagement by shifting the locus of control from the teacher to the student (Bryant & Chillum, 2013). Students have to take full ownership of the process – particularly once, the assessment period has passed. For reflective practice to become part of a routine way of acting, the learner has to want the shift to internally directed to occur. They have to want to take responsibility for what can be a very challenging learning process involving introspection and deep personal change. Students do not always prefer the instructional methods that results in the greatest learning gains (Bryant & Chillum, 2013). They have to become significantly more internally directed.

Reflective learning through ePortfolio posts has demonstrated its effectiveness in helping students enhance their intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness. However, benefits sought through reflective learning, via the use of ePortfolios, are discontinued at the completion of an assessment period.

A post-course survey of the class on ePortfolio use was conducted 8 months following the conclusion of the course. Thirteen of 33 students (39%) responded. While 54% found the ePortfolio experience useful in evaluating their own leadership, only two students reported that they were continuing to using the ePortfolio for leadership development. The reasons for discontinuing use included the public nature of the social media tool used "wordpress.com". Two students reported that:

"I prefer Dr. Walker's approach with journals. I think it's important to track your progress but making it public might skew its honesty and effectiveness." and;

"A little too personal to put out to the business world, in my opinion."

Another student cited the structure of the ePortfolio assignments as inhibiting continuation and reported that:

"I found the length of the ePortfolios to be too long. I regularly browse through blogs, and find it deterring when I see a long, solid block of text with no photos. I think it would be easier to share our leadership development through shorter, more interactive posts. It would also be less intimidating to write!"

Applied Implications

The beginning of high quality self-reflection and higher-level learning (synthesis and evaluation) was noted in some of the posts and the quality of reflection did improve over the course of the semester's posts. It has been argued that in order to retain this learning and to enhance reflective practice among these managers-in-training, ePortfolio-based reflective learning used to develop personal leadership is better positioned at the program level as opposed

to being a one-off course-based teaching and learning approach (Scott, 2010; Gerbic et. al., 2011). The results of this study would support program level implementation.

Research Limitations

This research constitutes a pilot study. It investigates leadership development processes through reflective learning in a small sample of relatively young and inexperienced graduate business students in an MBA program. The results related to the nature and extent of reflective learning on the aspects of the fundamental state of leadership may not extend to programs that attract students with different experience levels and demographic characteristics.

In conducting the analysis, decisions were made by the researcher in terms of which words to include and exclude based on the researcher's interpretation of the terminology that would best represent and reflect leadership, leadership development and reflective learning as these terms relate to Quinn's (2004) articulate of the fundamental state of leadership. These decisions were also driven by the course content. Therefore, words associated with what was taught and what was available to the students in regard to course resources and experiences were more likely to be included. Another analysis of these data could reveal different results.

Future Research Directions

Future research should focus on determining ways to improve continued commitment to the use of ePortfolios. Longitudinal analysis of the impact of reflective learning on transformative leadership development may offer insight into how the evolution to other-centeredness occurs. Age and gender can play roles in the efficacy of reflective learning techniques (Faulkner et. al., 2013; Bollinger et. al., 2010). The teaching and learning of

reflective practices are vital for students. They become even more so as curriculum becomes more experiential. Students must know how to reflect on what they have experienced and how to draw personal meaning from activities and what to do next with that knowledge to grow in the future. Understanding the conditions that will motivate reflective practice in young learners will help create better learners and better learning environments.

Research comparing the reflective practices of male and female students may reveal insights into how to structure teaching and learning to most appropriately match the learning styles and motivations of students.   As enrollment in undergraduate and graduate business programs grows, it is also important to understand how leadership is learned and the mechanism that can assist students in becoming values-centered, authentic leaders and maintaining, even after graduation, a fundamental state of leadership.

Bibliography

Acker, S. R. (2005). *Overcoming Obstacles to Authentic E-Portfolio Assessment*. Retrieved
 2014, from Campus Technology:
 http://campustechnology.com/articles/2005/03/overcoming-obstacles-to-authentic-
 eportfolio-assessment.aspx

Argyris, C. (1991, May-June). Teaching Smart People How to Learn. *Harvard Business Review*,
 99-109.

Bollinger, D., & Shepherd, C. E. (2010, November). Student Perceptions of ePortfolio
 Integration in On-Line Courses. *Distance Education, 31*(3), 295-314.

Bryant, L. H., & Chittum, J. R. (2013). ePortfolio Effectiveness: A(n Ill-Fated) Search for
 Empirical Support. *International Journal of ePortfolio, Vol. 3 (2)*, 189-198.

Bryant, L., & Chillum, J. (2013). ePortfolio Effectiveness: A (n illfated) search for Empirical
 Support. *International Jounal of Eportfolio, 3*(2), 189-198.

Chan, A., Hannah, S. T., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Veritable Authentic Ledership: Emergence,
 Functioning, and Impacts. In W. L. Gardner, B. J. Avolio, & F. O. Walumbwa (Eds.),
 Authentic Leadership Theory and Practice: Origins, Effects and Development (1st ed.,
 Vol. 3). San Diego: ELSEVIER Inc.

Faulkner, M., Aziz, S. M., Waye, V., & Smith, E. (2013). Exploring ways that ePortfolio can
 support the progressive development of graduate qualities and professional competencies.
 Higher Education Research & Development, Vol. 32 (6), 871-887.

Faulkner, M., Aziz, S. M., Wayne, V., & Smith, E. (2013). Exploring ways the ePortfolio can
 support the progressive development of graduate qualities and professional competencies.
 Higher education Research and Development, 32(6), 871-887.

George, B. (2003). *Authenitc Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets of Creating Lasting Value* (1st ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gerbic, P., Lewis, L., & Norasieh, M. A. (2011, December 4-7). Students Persepctives of ePortfolios: Change over Four Semesters. *Proceedings Ascilite*, 423-436.

Gosling, J., & Mintzberg, H. (2003, November). The 5 Minds of the Manager. *Harvard Business Review, 81*, 54-63.

Gosling, J., & Mintzberg, H. (2004, September). Refelct Yourself. *HR Magazine*, 151-156.

Hedberg, P. R. (2009, February). Learning Through Reflective Classroom Practice: Applications to Educate the Reflective Manager. *Journal Of Management Education*, 10-36.

Herman, C., & Kirkup, G. (2008). Learners in transition: the use of ePortfolio for women retureners to science, engineering and technology. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 45(1)*, 67-76.

Ittelson, G., & Lorenzo, J. (2005). *An Overview of E-Portfolios.* The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI).

Koole, S., Dornan, T., Scherpbier, A., Valcke, M., Cohen-Schotanus, J., & Derese, A. (2012). Does reflection have an effect upon case-solving abilities of undergaduate medical students? *BioMed Central Medical Education, 12*(75), 1-5.

Langton, N., Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2013). *Organizational Behaviour: Concepts, Controversies, Applications* (6th Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Higher Education.

Lawrence, H. (2013). Personal, Reflective Writing: A Pedogogical Strategy for Teaching Business Students to Write. *Business Communication Quarterly, 76*(2), 192-206.

Lorenzo, & Ittelson. (2005). An Overview of E-Portfolios. *EDUCASE*.

Okoro, E., Washington, M. C., & Cardon, P. W. (2011, September). ePortfolios in Business Commmunication Courses as Tools for Employment. *Business Communication Quarterly, 74*(3), 347-351.

Quinn, R. (2004). *Building the Bridge as You Walk on It.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinn, R. (2004). *Building the Bridge as You Walk on It: A Guide to Leading Change.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Quinn, R. E., & Spreitzer, G. M. (2005). *Entering the Fundamental State of Leadership: A Framework for the Positive Transformation of Self and Others.* Michigan Ross School of Business.

Quinn, R. E., Faerman, S. R., Thompson, M. P., McGrath, M. R., & St. Clair, L. S. (2011). *Becoming a Master Manager* (5th ed.). Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons.

Rich, M. (2010). Embedding Reflective Practice in Undergraduate Business and Management Dissertations. *International Journal of Management Education, 9*(1), 57-66.

Scott, S. G. (2010). Enhancing Reflection Skill Through Learning Portfolios: An Emperical Test. *Journal of Management Education, 34*(3), 430-457.

Secretan, L. (2015, February 19). *http://www.secretan.com/blog/.* Retrieved February 19, 2015, from The Secretan Center Inc.: www.secretan.com

Seligman, M. (n.d.). *Authentic Happiness.* Retrieved October 1, 2013, from University of Pennsylvania: https://www.authentichappiness.sas.upenn.edu

Stefani, L., Mason, R., & Pegler, C. (2007). The educational potential of ePortfolios supporting personal development and reflective learnng. *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Issue 2*, 102-105.

Tosh, D., Light, T. P., Fleming, K., & Haywood, J. (2005, Fall). Engagemtn with Electronic

    Portfolios: Challenges from a Student Perspective. *Canadian Journal of Learning and*

    Technology, 31(5).

UBC Center for Learning, T. a. (2014). *UBC Center for Learning, Teaching and Technology*.

    Retrieved 2014, from University of British Columbia:

    http://ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/teaching/portfolios/

University of Windsor Graduate Program Descriptions. (2015, February 18). Retrieved February

    18, 2015, from University of Windsor:

    http://web4.uwindsor.ca/units/registrar/calendars/graduate/cur.nsf/Search+Main/27133D3

    D90739E9D852572BF00576968?OpenDocument

University of Windsor Odette MBA program description. (2015, February 18). Retrieved

    February 18, 2015, from Odette School of Business MBA program:

    http://web2.uwindsor.ca/odette/mba/

Walz, P. (2006). An overview of student eportfolio functions. In Jafari, & Kaufman, *Handbook*

    of Research on ePortfolios (p. 194). Idea Group Reference.

Woodley, C., & Sims, R. (2011). ePortfolios, Professional Development and Employability.

    Campus-Wide Information Systems, 28(3), 164-174.

Wright, W. A., Knight, P. T., & Pomerleau, N. (1999). Portfolio People: Teaching and Learning

    Dossiers and Innovation in Higher Education. *Innovative Higher Education, Vol. 2, No.*

    2, 89-103.

Figure 1. Normal State vs. Fundamental State of Leadership (FSL) (Quinn R. , 2004)

Characteristics				
Normal State	Self-Focused	Internally-closed	Comfort-centered	Externally-directed
FSL	Other-focused	Externally-open	Purpose-centered	Internally-directed

Exhibit 1
Description of the ePortfolio Assignment for the MBA Interpersonal Dynamic Course

---

Your Personal Leadership Development ePortfolio

You will receive a skills workshop from the learning specialist to introduce you to the wordpress.com ePortfolio tools on October 25 – bring your laptop to this session

You will be using wordpress.com to create your ePortfolio. Visit my site: **name of site.wordpress.com**

 Background

As part of the assessment criteria for this course – you are to create your own leadership development ePortfolio. You will make a total of six posts for this course – but this is just the beginning. This is where you offer proof that you are a strong, impactful, articulate, success-driven and authentic leader. You will use this ePortfolio for the next 18 months building your "profile of leadership with character". Character matters much. As John Wooden said, "Be more concerned with your character than your reputation, because your character is what you really are, while your reputation is merely what others think you are."

Yet, what others think of you is also critical. Reputation does matter. This platform - what and how you write, the events you record and memorialize can build your reputation as an authentic leader – don't ever forget this.

First Things First

1.   Get comfortable with the site and the tools. Create an empowering and authentic title for your ePortfolio – something that will build your social media credibility and expresses your leadership character.
2.   Consider your audience – this is the place that you want potential employers, team members, community members and others who you respect to visit to learn more about you as a leader and what you have to offer. If I am looking for a new Board Member form my organization, I might want to look at your EPortfolio and what you can offer and how you might fit with other members.
3.   Once you have set up the ePortfolio, send the link to the learning specialist and the course Graduate Assistant.
4.   You are ready to write your ePortfolio! Post your first required reflection on the CVF framework by no later than October 26.

Exhibit 2
ePortfolio Assignments as described in the course outline

ePortfolio Posts (45%)
The Competing Values Framework: How can you use the Competing Values framework to strengthen your authentic leadership? (750 words)
My Leadership Strengths and Values. Describe these and discuss how you will leverage these for authentic and impactful leadership, starting today. Conclude with initial insights on your development needs and the path forward. Post this analysis to your ePortfolio. (1500 words)
Reflections on your personality and how you can leverage it for authentic and impactful leadership. (750 words)
Personal Leadership Development Plan – sum up what you learned this semester and where you take your leadership from here – how will you get from good to great? How will you go about asking for and acting on feedback and coaching?(1500 words)
Leadership Building and career planning in the age of social media. (1500 words) 1.   Identify the one assessment that that you completed this semester for this course that contributed the most to your personal leadership development and your leadership development planning process. How (in what ways) did the assessment contribute to your personal leadership planning and development? 2.   Identify one assessment that you did not complete during this course that you plan to complete in the future to add further enhance your leadership development. How and in what ways did building your wordpress.com ePortfolio contribute to your leadership development? 3.   Which ePortfolio tools were the most and least useful? Why? 4.   Which additional ePortfolio tools would be useful in planning your personal leadership development? 5.   How do you plan to use the ePortfolio to support your leadership development in future semesters? If you don't plan to use it – why not? How do you plan to use the ePortfolio to support you career development and job search in future semesters? If you don't plan to use it- why not?

Table 1
Analysis and identification of key words used by post for the 5 ePosts in relation to each of the 4 key components of the Fundamental State of Leadership (Quinn, 2004)

Fundamental State of Leadership	Most frequent words	Frequencies					
		ePost 1	ePost 2	ePost 3	ePost 4	ePost 5	total
Internally directed	values	207	197				404
	authentic	106	191	154			451
	strengths	204	821		217	288	1530
	personality			610			610
	personal					158	158
	total internally directed	517	1209	764	217	446	3153
Purpose driven	leadership	201	417	177	473	545	1813
	leader	148	237	123	232		740
	leader and leadership	349	654	300	705	545	2553
	competing	152					152
	framework	148					148
	competing and framework	300	0	0	0	0	300
	role	101					101
	work	173					173
	total Purpose driven	923	654	300	705	545	3127
Externally open	vision				231		231
	Development/assessment					543	543
	Plan/use				144	339	483
	goals				181		181
	future					160	160
	total externally open				556	1042	1598
Other focused	team	137	274		144		555
	people	89	210	164	191		654
	others		151	122			273
	total other focused	226	635	286	335		1482
	total FSL words	1666	2498	1350	1813	2033	9360

Table 2

Total Word Frequencies and Percentages for each of the Four Aspects of the Fundamental State of Leadership

Fundamental State of Leadership Aspect	Frequency	Percent
Internally directed	3153	33.7
Purpose-centered	3127	33.4
Externally open	1598	17.1
Other focused	1482	15.8
Total	9360	100.0

Table 3
Word Frequencies for the Internally Directed Aspect of the Fundamental State of Leadership

Internally-directed word frequencies						
Post #	values	authentic	strengths	personality	personal	total internally directed
ePost 1	207	106	204			517
ePost 2	197	191	821			1209
ePost 3		154		610		764
ePost 4			217			217
ePost 5			288		158	446
total	404	451	1530	610	158	3153
% by word	12.8	14.3	48.5	19.4	5.0	100

Table 4

Word Frequencies for the Purpose-Centered aspect of the Fundamental State of Leadership

Purpose-Centered Word Frequencies							
Words used	leadership	leader	competing	framework	role	work	total Purpose centered
ePost 1	201	148	152	148	101	173	923
ePost 2	417	237					654
ePost 3	177	123					300
ePost 4	473	232					705
ePost 5	545						545
total	1813	740	152	148	101	173	3127
% by word	57.97889	23.66485	4.860889	4.732971	3.229933	5.532459	100

Table 5
Word frequency of the Externally Open aspect of the Fundamental State of Leadership

	externally open					total externally open
	vision	Development/assessment	Plan/use	goals	future	
ePost 1						
ePost 2						
ePost 3						
ePost 4	231		144	181		556
ePost 5		543	339		160	1042
total	231	543	483	181	160	1598
% by word	14.5	34.0	30.0	11.3	10.0	100

Table 6
Word Frequency for the Other Focused Aspect of the Fundamental State of Leadership

	other focused			
	team	people	others	total other focused
ePost 1	137	89		226
ePost 2	274	210	151	635
ePost 3		164	122	286
ePost 4	144	191		335
ePost 5				
total	555	654	273	1482
% by word	37.44939	44.12955	18.42105	100