


## 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.

The final stage is Knowledge Provider Reflection, where the participants provide a referenced reflective narrative or discursive reflection on the impact of the unit and the task on their educational management and leadership beliefs and practice. The key to this stage is providing participants with choices in how they can submit their reflection, and the course allows them to use writing, audio and video formats individually or in pairs or small groups (Jandigulov et al,2023). This reporting element often strengthens the new knowledge structure and moves the new found beliefs and practice to the core of their professional selves.

This teacher knowledge developmental cycle provides a transformational framework, which is described in more depth in the next section, drawing on participant reflections and feedback.

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **DREAM Educational Management and Leadership**

This section now aims to take the reader on a journey through the Introduction to DREAM Educational Management and Leadership course, drawing on the contributions and feedback of the participants of the last three courses in 2022, 2021 and 2020.

The first introductory unit takes participants through the structure of the course, the reflective assignments at the end of each unit and then breaks participants into groups to discuss a question on each of the ten principles. Participants are asked to introduce themselves to the group on the discussion board and reflect on their first impressions of DREAM and expectations of the course.

#### **Develop**

The second unit introduces participants to the strategic planning approach of DREAM with pre-readings on democratic leadership and an example of a StratPlan Day from one of my old colleges where everyone from driver to director participated in a guided development of the annual plan alongside student and community representatives. The day focused on collaborative goals and creative initiatives that could be launched in the coming twelve months. Feedback was taken from all participant groups and collated before being circulated for review and final publication. Regular follow up and clear communication throughout the year as the plan was implemented was prioritized, and the following year's StratPlan Day began with a review of the successes.

The synchronous discussion guides participants through the formulation of Ethos, Mission, Vision and then the strategic planning to take the team from mission to vision. The knowledge user task then requires participants to discuss with their teams their unit goals for the coming year and reflect on these and how they will follow up with the team as the year progresses.

One of the 2020 participants reflected on the experience of this task stating that "I strongly believe in working as a team. A team can bring together a variety of experiences and skillsets. I noticed the faculty was very enthusiastic and were sharing their ideas during the meeting." This inclusive approach to strategic planning is a critical element of the DREAM approach, and the Develop principle ensures this is highlighted from the beginning of the course.

## **Recruit**

This unit focuses not just on the recruitment of new faculty and staff to the department and institution but also the recruitment of faculty into teams and committees demonstrating that the underlying principles are the same. In other words, you recruit to the team balancing skills and knowledge with personal characteristics for team cohesion. The unit looks closely at structured interview techniques (Kimbrel, 2019) that determine future expectations on past performance as well as the characteristics displayed in the present during the interview or team formation process.

Both the synchronous and asynchronous discussions look at the full recruitment process from screening and interviewing to onboarding and integration into the team, and the task for the unit asks the participants to continue this discussion with their teams looking in particular at the best practice their faculty and staff have experienced in their careers.

Finally, the reflection requires participants to outline how they would plan the recruitment process for a new adjunct faculty position in their team targeting a specific need based on their annual goals. This reflection has been especially enlightening when two or three participants have discussed this in recorded video conference discussions. One such exchange presented the following summary of their discussion on how they would attract and interview potential candidates:

*“Reach more national and international candidates via a virtual tour (VR) to broadcast and engage via social media, and then interview using technology having viewed their performance in videoed presentations or lessons and read not only their CVs but also their research and portfolios.”*

This example demonstrates how the unit begins to stretch the participants and encourage them to think outside the box whilst empowering them to attempt new ways of approaching tasks that they may otherwise consider an institutional norm, which they must follow.

## **Enhance**

This unit introduces a new way of looking at professional development (PD) based on a teacher knowledge development model (Quirke, 2008) that the participants have already experienced as this DREAM course is structured in the same way. This experience appears to give participants confidence in discussing how they would adapt the model to best address both the individual and department needs with previous participants pointing out that traditional workshops could be seen as knowledge seeker and discussor examples, whereas action research may be considered knowledge user and provider approaches. Whilst not all agreed, the discussion allowed a wide ranging variety of professional development options to be raised in lively forums.

The task for the unit requires the participants to discuss the PD plan for the coming semester with their team using the same model, and then reflect on the outcome and how it may differ from previous PD plans they have run with their teams.

The reflections often went into some depth on how the approach taken had generated a refreshing teacher-centred variety of professional development offerings as exemplified by this one submission:

*“This approach ensures local ownership, which not only encourages more faculty involvement, it also rewards those who participate in ways far beyond what mere attendance ever could, both through the*

*process itself as well as the outcome, nurturing a creative initiate, instilling a sense of pride, facilitating cooperation, encouraging delegation and above all providing our faculty with the sense of belonging that comes from being part of something greater than themselves, something they believe in, something they love.”*

This example echoes the positivity many experienced from having taken a new approach to planning the professional development plan with their teams and requiring them to look at both their personal and team needs together in a new way. It is another exemplification of the transformational impact of the course on the daily practice of the participant leaders.

## **Appraise**

The preparatory reading for this unit is based on a portfolio based appraisal system (Quirke, 2015) that was developed with teachers and focuses on development rather than evaluation. The discussions that follow have often argued for how participants can take this approach with their team even if they are forced to use a more evaluative, quantitative, and summative institutional direction. By taking this formative, appraisal process with teachers, even when it must lead to a summative conclusion for the institution, it is posited that teachers feel more respected, involved and understood. This has been my experience throughout my career, and it is a cornerstone of DREAM Educational Management and Leadership, especially when explicitly linked to the Enhance principle for personal and professional development.

The knowledge user task requires participants to implement this approach to appraisal with a number of faculty volunteers from their teams and specifically discuss with them the following questions around each of the main stages of the system.

**Goal Setting:** Is there anything you want to specifically highlight from your goals this year? e.g. Classroom management or research publications.

**Observations:** How would you like to be observed (self/peer/supervisor/students/other?), and what would you like the observer to focus on?

**Student Faculty Evaluations:** How valid and reliable do you believe student faculty evaluations are, and how could we ensure they are more valid and reliable?

**Faculty Chair Meetings:** How can we use our meetings to demonstrate factors beyond our control to justify difficulty in meeting goals set (e.g. when a central directive prevents a goal being completed)?

**Overall thoughts:** What is your initial impression of this approach to your appraisal?

The participants are now given time to complete the reflection for this unit so that they can apply the approach over the semester, and this has resulted in a much greater reflective depth in the submissions as exemplified in this extract from a recent participant.

*“I am motivated to update the previously mentioned process into a monthly online performance tracker that can be completed by the employee and help the leadership visualize the progress before attending the final evaluation meeting. ... This tool will improve the validity of the evaluation tool and exclude any level of subjectivity.”*

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It is particularly interesting to note how the participant returned to the earlier discussions around using an appraisal approach within an evaluative system and found that that a further tool was needed to support the faculty and management bridge the gap between the formative portfolio construction and the institutional evaluative assessment. The example also demonstrates how participants' reflections move from an initial description of what they have done in the first couple of units to a deeper reflection that sees them expand and extend the input on the principles providing creative initiatives and new ways of leading their teams.

### **Motivate**

Motivate is the principle that brings all the other principles together and allows participants to reflect on the four previous principles whilst having a preview of the five principles yet to be covered in depth. The preparatory reading introduces participants to range of motivational theories and the discussions are framed around the main motivational aspect of each principle as follows:

The motivation of **inclusion** – **DEVELOP**

The basic motivation of **safety and security** – **RECRUIT**

The motivation of **personal advancement** – **ENHANCE**

The motivation of **purpose** – **APPRAISE**

The motivation of **responsibility** – **DELEGATE**

The motivation of **RESPECT**

The motivation of **happiness** – **ENJOY**

The motivation of **recognition** – **ATTEND**

The motivation of **teamwork** - **MENTOR**

The discussions focus on the individual motivations of the participants asking them to discuss in smaller break out groups what motivates them and which are their most important motivators. These breakout sessions continue on the asynchronous discussion board and are guided by the following questions:

How can we include others in our day to day work?

Why are safety and security so essential to motivation?

What is the most motivating PD you have experienced?

How can appraisal motivate?

When have you been given responsibility that has motivated you?

How do RESPECT and ENJOY motivate you?

When was the last time you felt motivated when someone praised?

What is the most motivating team you have worked with?

The knowledge user task then requires the participants to have the same discussion with their teams, find out what motivates them and continue to contribute to the discussion board by posting their team's motivations and what surprised them.

Finally, participants are asked to reflect on how they motivate their teams and what they would now change given the responses they have received to the questions and discussions they have had with their teams. These reflections have often been very illuminating with, for example, one recent participant

focusing on how they found the appraisal approach very motivating for their team and how each stage of the appraisal from goal setting to the final meetings with the Chair had a different motivational aspect. Another participant began the reflection with this extract:

*“From my perspective there are so many aspects that go into developing motivation and many layers of motivation itself. I think that most people could separate out motivation as having 2 realms personal and professional. And, that we need to consider levels of motivation change as situations change. ... Based on the assigned task I have asked my colleagues what motivates them and through my data collection I also decided to ask what demotivates them as I found the responses to be a mixed bag.”*

The participant then went on to draw from a range of literature to analyze the responses of her team, noting in both personal and professional terms what they had gained from this process. The reflection was a very good example of how the unit’s work can impact participants profoundly and potentially transform their leadership approach.

## **Delegate**

The preparatory readings look at delegation as an art and a science with five short papers including one on distributed leadership and another on situational leadership. The discussion sessions then take participants on a journey through delegation asking them what to delegate, when to delegate, who to delegate to and how to delegate before considering why they should delegate.

The task then requires participants to keep a record of everything they delegate during a week adding who they delegated to as well as how they delegated the task and why they delegated this task in that way. They are also asked to track what they did not delegate and why.

The final reflection asks them to review how successful their week of delegation was and if they would do anything differently based on this experience. One recent participant wrote at the beginning of their reflection:

*“Before this course, if I were asked about delegating at work, I certainly would have answered that I was a much happier person simply getting my work done, and that while at times this meant that I was over-tasked and quite stressed, it also meant that I could control what was happening and how it was getting done.”*

They then described in some detail what they had delegated during the week based on the task set and concluded the reflection with this transformation:

*“I can see the value and the ease that it does bring into life, and definitely believe that it is something that I can continue to work on to help develop myself both professionally and personally.”*

As teachers, we have grown professionally to rely on ourselves as the leaders of our classes behind closed doors, and this makes us generally very poor delegators, so that when we move into management and leadership roles, it is delegation that is often the skill we most struggle with. This unit has consistently managed to present delegation as an essential part of our managerial and leadership toolkit and transform participant practice.

## **Respect**

Respect is the first of what we call the two intangible principles with Enjoy being the second. Respect is crucial in leadership as it is in all aspects of life and work yet we very seldom explicitly discuss or address respect until we are faced with conflict. Therefore, the four short preparatory readings are used simply to ensure participants consider when they feel respected, when they feel disrespected and how they show respect to others at work.

This, then, allows the discussions to focus on these three questions before they tackle the task which requires them to consciously note throughout a week how they show respect to their team, other faculty, managerial colleagues, staff, contract staff (e.g. the security, cleaners etc.) and senior leadership.

Finally, they are asked to submit a reflection on how they managed to cover the following demonstrations of respect presented during the discussions:

- Know your students and colleagues.
- Understand your students and colleagues.
- Respect your students and colleagues.
- Involve your students and colleagues.
- Give your students and colleagues choices.
- Consult your students and colleagues.
- Rely on your students and colleagues' input.
- Value and reward your students and colleagues' input.

This guided reflection structure has been a powerful trigger for some very deep reflective submissions, which have often been very personal and powerful. One of the advantages we have in working in a multi-cultural environment with many different nationalities in our teams is that the discussions on respect often highlight differences in what we consider disrespectful, and it allows the conversations to enlighten us as we realize much workplace conflict is a result of misunderstandings with one party feeling disrespected when no disrespect was intended. This awareness can result in some transformational approaches at work as one participant related when summarizing their learning in the institution over twenty years.

*“In an environment like ours where people come from different backgrounds and cultures showing respect is a necessity to build healthy relationships and develop a strong organizational culture, because respect will make people ignore the differences in others and focus only on their relationship with that person. ... Respect is a simple act with a powerful reaction. There is saying which I keep memorizing and reminding myself of: “Treat others the way you want to be treated.”*

This short extract is from a long three-page reflection, but it gives a glimpse of the personal depth of reflective writing that this rare, explicitly focused discussion on respect almost always generates.

## **Enjoy**

I often introduce this unit by saying that ENJOY is the centre of DREAM and my favourite principle. The underlying motto for the principle is that we enjoy coming to work alongside our team and dem-



onstrate this constantly. The ENJOY principle is therefore about creating a positive work environment. In today's business and education world, we are surrounded by 'Happiness Centres' and a range of key performance indicators (KPIs), which have happiness as their focus. However, we cannot make someone happy. Happiness is an internal characteristic and controlled by the individual. You cannot force happiness (Spicer & Cederström, 2015). What we can do is create a positive environment that is conducive to a better learning and teaching environment. We can exude positivity, and thereby give our faculty and staff more opportunities to feel happy at work. The preparatory readings address this difference between happiness and positivity, and the discussions focus on how this distinction can impact how we create a more positive teaching and learning environment for our team (Abdallah & Alkhrabsheh, 2019).

The knowledge user task requires participants to consciously record how they demonstrate the ENJOY principle around their department and throughout the institution for a week, and then they submit their reflection on what differences their expressions of ENJOY made to the week at work and among their team. They are also required to include at least one reference of an article that best describes how important ENJOY is to them and their management and leadership style.

Reading the reflective submissions often brings me a lot of joy and happiness, and they brighten up my day and help me create more positivity around me. My favourite, recent submission is below, and I hope it brings you that same feeling.

*“What I enjoy the most at work is talking to students as they bring so much joy, and they lighten up my day. A couple of weeks ago a group of students visited my office to enquire about summer and fall courses, and while chatting away we drifted from one topic to another until we ended up talking about dreams and future plans. Then, one of them told me that he might be a singer, because he has a nice voice, so I dared him to sing for us, and the surprise was that he didn't have a nice voice at all, and we all had a great laugh. That was total enjoyment. Just enjoying the simple things in life that can bring happiness into our lives and lighten up our day.”*

This extract was fronted and followed by a reflection on how the unit task made little expressions of ENJOY, that were done largely subconsciously, more explicit and made the participant more aware of how important the little details are and the impact they make on so many colleagues across the institution. As the old saying goes, a smile goes a long, long way.

## **Attend**

The ATTEND principle is the most managerial of the ten principles, and it is introduced with its motto of 'Never ask someone to do something you are not prepared to do yourself'. So, if you are asking your team to do a late shift until 10pm, then you, as the leader, must be available at least once a week alongside them. It is a simple motto, but a difficult one to follow consistently.

The preparatory readings and viewings are a series of short extracts from a range of sources, which serve to introduce the participants to the agenda for the discussions. The agenda includes Management by Walking around (MBWA), managing time by effective use of calendar features, an approach to survive email overload, email etiquette for communication with clarity and care, and how we can best share, support and understand one another.

The knowledge user task then asks the participants to practice the principle throughout the coming week by:

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Walking around and talking to everyone,  
Using your Calendar features very day,  
Deleting your Inbox to zero by the end of the week,  
Sending emails of only one sentence,  
Smiling,  
Asking questions, and  
Helping someone at least once every day.

In other words, by following the ATTEND principle we ensure we lead by example.

The final reflection asks participants to describe their experience of the week and how they managed to complete, or not, each of the ATTEND actions and the difference doing these made to their working week. These reflections tended to be some of the longest in the course as participants wrote detailed paragraphs on each of the seven actions, and the example below illustrates this with one paragraph on using the calendar features.

*“Most work clashes, hard feelings towards others and misunderstandings can be avoided if we develop a culture of showing consideration to each other. Among the many wonderful things I have learned ... is the brilliant practice of using the outlook calendar as a reminder to reply to emails, complete tasks, follow-up, call someone back or even to drop by someone’s office for a quick chat. ... These little notes are not just reminders. They are a commitment to attend to someone because he/she is important. ... In my opinion respect, enjoy and attend complement each other ... these qualities are the foundation to build healthy and strong connections with others professionally and socially.”*

As with the reflective tasks in other units, the example provides a good indication of the transformational impact the application of the principles can have on not only the participant’s management and leadership approach but also on the environment of the department and institution where they work.

## **Mentor**

The final principle covered in the course looks at how building mentorship relationships among the team can generate a positive teaching and learning environment, and the readings and discussions focus on how these can be structured and set up whilst ensuring that no relationship is forced. An effective mentoring relationship can only be generated when both the mentee and the mentor enter into the relationship willingly and understand the positive impact the experience can have on both.

Numerous examples are discussed from teaching mentorships to research mentorships and even ‘buddy’ mentorships to help new faculty and staff settle into a new working environment. As the unit falls at the end of the course, the task and reflection ask the participants to select one person they would like to mentor in the coming year, why they have chosen them and what the focus of the mentorship would be as well as the expected outcomes. They are also asked to choose one person they would like to be mentored by, answering the same questions. The example below is a typical extract introducing a long description of how they would like the mentorship to be structured and the learning expectations they would expect from the mentorship.

*“I would like to be mentored by the Dean of Academic Operations. As a program team leader, I am interested in learning more about the inner workings of the academic system and how decisions are made*

*at a higher level. I believe that being mentored by the Dean will provide me with valuable insights and perspectives that will help me improve my own leadership skills.”*

By finishing on a reflection that looks forward to the coming year, the course aims to ensure that the DREAM experience is continued and will continue to impact the participants’ reflective practice long after the course itself is completed.

The final conclusion unit reviews the principles and gives participants space and time to reflect on the course and its impact as they complete a structured review and feedback document. By ensuring that the final reflection is the course feedback, the participants can see in the coming year how the course has changed thanks to their input. So, they see their voices have been heard, they feel empowered and the course itself is strengthened as it is continuously updated.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

This continuous research of the DREAM Educational Management and Leadership course and approach ensures that the model is always changing and evolving with the latest insights from the field and is, therefore, sustainable. DREAM, in this way continuously models sustainable leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and looks to the future.

The next development for the course is a steady move towards making the course more accessible by transforming the content into a fully online medium. Most feedback from participants has commented on the importance of the synchronous discussions, and the author’s research is currently focused on how these synchronous elements could be included in a fully online version effectively.

The model, I hope, will continue to evolve with the research and new trends in management and leadership as research takes us in new and unexpected directions. The key is to always keep the students, and those closest to them, the teachers, at the heart of the approach. That is now the DREAM will continue.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has achieved its objective if you, the reader, have gained a clear overview of the DREAM professional development programme, and felt the impact it has had on the participant managers and leaders who have attended the course. The application of the DREAM approach empowers teachers, creates a culture of continuous improvement, improves retention and builds a supportive community. It is an impactful and transformational series of courses that requires practitioners to question and reflect on their managerial priorities and leadership styles. We hope you will continue to explore DREAM and the leadership literature that drives the model and its humanistic and empathetic focus on students and teachers. It is this that truly creates a creative and inspiring learning environment.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Adaptive Leadership:** A model introduced by Heifetz (2009) which aims to mobilize teams to handle non-technical problems using emotional intelligence, organizational justice, development and character.

**Authentic Leadership:** A style that emphasizes transparency, genuineness and honesty to inspire trust and a positive working environment.

**Democratic Leadership:** A style that actively involves staff in participative management seeking feedback and inviting input.

**Distributed Leadership:** An approach that focuses on shared management with decision making dispersed to collaborative groups.

**Ethical Leadership:** An approach that requires the active demonstration of thoughtful conduct respecting the beliefs, dignity and values of others.

**Learning-Centred Leadership:** An approach that requires the leader to be a role model, who is interested in teaching and learning, and keep in touch with what is happening in the classrooms.

**Servant Leadership:** An approach that prioritizes serving the greater good putting the team and organization first.

**Situational Leadership:** A theory developed by Hersey and Blanchard (1988) that requires adaptability and the application of the leadership style that is most appropriate for a given situation and team.

**Transformational Leadership:** An approach that generates valuable and positive change, supporting teams to develop within and to changing social systems.

**Values-Based Leadership:** A style and philosophy based on shared common beliefs generated with the team to strive for enhanced development.