Business Leadership in the Classroom

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Abstract

This action research assesses a framework that assists business educators in promoting leadership within a classroom. It is designed to better prepare students to assume leadership and fill the "leadership gap" in business. Two classes of 2nd-year community college business students participated in running and managing their own business community as teams of sales professionals by developing and practicing their own individual leadership for 28 weeks during their sales courses. The intent was to assess the development of leadership resulting from the implementation of the "Business Leadership in the Classroom" framework. This framework balances leadership principles to simulate a business environment with the practical elements of a learning community under the facilitation of an experienced business educator. The action research approach was used to assess and adjust approaches to business leadership on a continuous basis throughout the research.

Data were collected from 61 students based on journals, surveys, peer group reviews, and my (facilitator) reflective journal.

The findings reveal that both individual and
collective business leadership views and practical skills
developed over time. A business leadership mind-set
evolved that ranged from a general awareness of the
importance of leadership, to a conscious and deliberate use
of individual leadership. Areas important in building a
progression of leadership included: leadership teams,
membership roles, weekly leadership teams, peer feedback,
and activity-based learning. Emerging themes included
leadership, leadership style, teamwork, as well as
influence and motivation. The research framework was
effective in supporting the development of business
leadership but required some adjustments. These included
increased structure and feedback mechanisms.

Interpretation of the findings demonstrates the
importance of real-world practical education in the
classroom. Results show how focusing on a single mind-set
such as business leadership, can result in enormous
individual growth and development. When business students
are encouraged to act as real businesspeople, managing
their own learning, the results are effective in preparing
them for the business world. All participants expressed
their leadership in different ways based on personality and
individual strengths. There was an overwhelming and, in

some cases, passionate interest in leadership. The use of action research with a range of data collection methods provides a way to measure and track individual student learning and to generate adjustments to the research framework design and learning approaches.

The findings generate implications and recommendations to continue this research further. Key recommendations center around how to ensure leadership development is sustained, including improved approaches to heighten the real-world feel of the classroom. Specifically, the use of leadership goals and action plans for each individual participant and an active use of outside business resource people as contacts for participants is recommended.

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CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH FOCUS

Introduction

Today's business world expects graduates to be leaders who are self-reliant, resourceful, and are prepared to implement changes to move organizations into the future. The impetus for this stems from recent research conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, which identifies a "leadership gap" in Canadian companies. Executives of top firms report that organizations lack leadership and are not putting the required resources in place to develop good leaders (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001). Up to 70% of those interviewed believed building leadership capability to be their most important issue.

Leadership is something that Canada desperately needs, according to the Conference Board of Canada (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001) who cite the Niagara Institute's 1999 study. Based on responses from executives in major Canadian companies, business performance in today's information age "depends to a large extent, on intangible assets"(p. 2). "Intellectual capital" has become a business's most important asset, which subsequently calls for a new approach to leadership. In response to this, the Conference Board of Canada suggests, "Companies need to

create a context that allows each employee to lead, within his or her sphere of influence" (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001, p. 1).

There needs to be a process in place for organizations to encourage a variety of leadership styles and approaches to ensure leadership is cultivated and recognized throughout an organization to fill the leadership gap. Successful organizations that get the most from their management work to cultivate individual and collective leadership. The research findings from these Canadian Business Executives suggest that individual leadership is specific to each individual's style and personal needs as he or she traverses each level of an organization (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001). The findings from the report reveal that the old belief, that leadership is concentrated at the top, is out of step with the way Canadian business operates today. Robert Bexon, of Imperial Tobacco for example, notes that "strategic leadership" which includes strategic vision, should be carried out by senior management while "operational leadership" should be carried out by employees who implement leadership in the areas of their responsibility (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001, p. 9).

This leadership gap is also evident in the post-secondary schools that prepare students for the business

world and are a training ground for business. In response to this, many of Canada's top MBA business schools have adjusted their approaches to include more interpersonal skills as part of their leadership focus (Brown, 2002). Such schools suggest that students should foster both leadership skills in addition to the many detailed technical skills required by their program. The implication of this is that business students require educational approaches that facilitate the development of practical mind-sets to prepare them for success in the crucial first "getting established" years of real business. Students need to clearly understand that practicing leadership in preparation for a more challenging business environment is what organizations require of them.

Business leadership is one of the key mind-sets that clearly should be developed for individuals to achieve success. This requires a paradigm shift in how students approach business education. Specifically, from my community college experience, many business students have a tendency to sit back and not assume leadership, which has implications for their future work responsibilities. They have been conditioned to glean knowledge without always having the context to apply it to real business situations. Howard Gardner's (1991) *The Unschooled Mind, How Schools*

Think and How Schools Should Teach addresses the need for
some basic learning or coping skills that make the learner
independent and self-reliant beginning in the early years
of school. These include initiative, organization, and
communication skills. Combined, they provide the basis for
building a leadership mind-set. The leadership gap needs
to be addressed both by postsecondary business education
and by business itself.

The possible implications of a leadership gap are
unsettling as Robert Greenleaf (1979) notes in his essay
entitled, "The Servant as Leader":

> In short, the enemy is strong natural servants who
> have the potential to lead but do not lead or who
> choose to follow a non-servant. They suffer. Society
> suffers. And so it may be in the future…the future
> society may be just as mediocre as this one. It may
> be worse. (Greenleaf, 1979, p. 35)

A passive approach to leadership leaves a leadership
gap and has immediate and long-term implications as noted
by Greenleaf (1979). This impacts on both individual and
collective business success.

From a personal perspective, I realized many years ago
through trial and error, that one of the most important
mind-sets for success in business is leadership. The

impetus to conduct this research is directly related to my own personal experience as a businessperson and as a community college business educator. Prior to becoming a business educator in 1993, I had a business career in marketing for over 10 years. During this time, I also ran my own small business for 2 years. I had opportunities to learn and to demonstrate my business leadership. Although my education was important, very little of what I had learned at school in my business degree prepared me to assume leadership in a business environment. At school I learned the importance of thinking through business problems as well as planning and working with like-minded people. What I failed to learn as a student is that a personalized individual leadership style is essential to build one's leadership influence and power in business. From my experience, an individual needs a strong sense of one's own leadership to have an impact on the business one manages in order to obtain results. It is with this strong sense of leadership that one is able to work with a range of different business people with competing personalities and agendas.

Early experience in school should better prepare students for leadership roles in business. Had I developed my personal business leadership earlier during school, I

might have been better prepared for practicing leadership in the business world. I was successful in business, but without leadership experience, I always had difficulty influencing people, even when the end result made perfect sense for the organization.

My return to the classroom, as a business educator (1993) after 10 years in business, gave me the opportunity to see what future leaders need in preparation for the rigors of the business world. Based on my experience, they need a strong sense of personal business leadership. All too often, in my experience, students learn a number of different business skills in a variety of connected but fragmented courses, without consistently developing an all-encompassing leadership mind-set. Business education needs to be conducted in a practical businesslike environment that promotes individual business leadership to prepare them for the real business world.

The postsecondary business classroom has the potential to simulate the real world by being run like a business community. There is enormous potential for individual leadership development, especially in smaller 2nd and 3rd year community college business classes where there are between 30 and 40 students. These students have completed their first year of business education covering business

fundamentals and, for the most part, have only limited practical business experience. They need to begin practicing and developing their business leadership.

The Basis For a Learning Community in the Classroom

The learning community format (based on Wenger's 1998 *Community of Practice* model), defined as a learning organization where everyone takes on leadership roles, was selected for this research to create a shared environment for building business leadership. It provides a framework for students to look beyond their own learning to what the entire business or class can learn from each other. The learning community is designed to simulate the real business world by providing opportunities for leadership as part of the classroom learning activities.

There are a number of courses that I teach where this learning community format could apply. Starting in the fall of 2000 (prior to this research), I began to build a learning community in one of my entrepreneurship classes where students viewed themselves as business professionals/entrepreneurs. Through active involvement, students demonstrated leadership by managing and running part of the class and by taking on roles in groups on a

weekly basis. They appreciated the approach we had taken.

For example, one student wrote in a feedback survey:

> It was a nice structure for this class. It made me
> realize that running a business as a team is harder
> than it looks. I didn't think I'd have to compromise
> on so many ideas. I would recommend this learning
> method for future classes.

It became increasingly apparent as the class
progressed that students were a lot more attentive and
involved with this learning community format where everyone
had a responsibility to be a part of the learning process.
For example, in one 2-hour class, each group (business)
worked on developing marketing concepts for their new
business. Each group designed two different marketing
programs that met their communication objectives. They
then made mock-ups of their concepts using pictures,
bristol board, markers, glue, and other colored paper.
This "hands-on" cooperative learning activity brought out
individual leadership within groups and within the
class/learning community. Students presented their
concepts to the class and then each group recommended
constructive feedback. Building on this approach, we used
the "Do It Guide" concept (an entertainment information and
coupon book) as the class focus. This was a real business

that was later launched by a student from this class in May 2001. Prior to the launch each group in the class developed one solid marketing program for the student/entrepreneur behind the "Do It Guide" (not the real name). In the next class the entrepreneur acted in a leadership facilitator role describing his/her business and providing a sample of what the guide would look like. This created a central focus for the organization, as most participants wanted to help the entrepreneur succeed. Each business/group presented their program ideas and received an enthusiastic response from the entrepreneur. Ten (a third of the class) of the students were given roles to develop and implement the "Do It Guide" under the overall leadership of the entrepreneur and the educator (myself).

The experience of building a learning community where all students contribute to the learning both individually and collectively was effective. However, I found that it still lacked a real ongoing focus that could be used time and again to motivate students to be true active business professionals and leaders. Somehow the students needed to view the classroom as a real job with all of the responsibilities and opportunities for personal growth. There needed to be both an individual connection as well as a collective one. This prompted the question: "How could

students assume a business role while in school?"
According to Covey (1991), leadership is important because
organizations and individuals that promote and practice
leadership tend not to compare themselves to others but to
lead the way with innovation and good management. The
focus should be on the leadership principles as opposed to
customers and profit. Covey puts it this way: "The
challenge is to be a light not a judge; to be a model, not
a critic"(p. 25). Business leadership is something that
can be tangible if given a context that provides the focus
for individuals to practice and develop for their long-term
personal growth and success in business.

Research Focus

The purpose of this research is to facilitate the
development of *Business Leadership in the Classroom*[1]. This
research study involved 2nd-year community college business
students who were approximately 20 years of age at the
time. The goal was to provide a detailed approach to
simulate and build a comprehensive learning community in
the classroom over 2 semesters (28 weeks) that stressed
leadership among all of its members. The study followed

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[1] *Business Leadership in the Classroom* refers to the name of this
research wherever it appears throughout this thesis.

two sales classes (61 participants in total) building and running their own business community, as teams of sales professionals. The study assessed the impact of emphasizing leadership as a key focus or mind-set in the classroom. All participants assumed leadership roles. Within this framework the classroom was run like a business, simulating experiences and roles to facilitate the development of leaders in a simulated business community. In the study there were a lot of opportunities for each student to assume an active role and to take on responsibility in delivering the communities' goals as set out by the community mission statement and as managed by the appointed or elected community leadership team. My role within the research framework, as the educator, was to provide some facilitation to help deliver the course theory.

This research was used to assess the impact of emphasizing individual and collective leadership as the main focus of the learning experience with specific course curriculum as a secondary focus. It also served to assess a framework for learning that cultivates business leadership in every class and simulates a "real" business environment, where every individual is responsible for his

or her own success. Participants received feedback on their leadership from the educator and their peers.

The business leadership concept explored in this research is based on the leadership theories of Covey (1991), Greenleaf (1979), Sergiovanni (1992) and others. Covey, like other contemporaries, defines leadership from a personal attributes perspective, showing how an individual can build his or her own strong leadership. Other leadership theories like Greenleaf's (1979) provide a more spiritual, giving approach, which identify leadership as an act of self-sacrifice and putting others first. These leadership theories and other practical leadership skills were provided and applied in the study to help each participant build his or her own business leadership by exercising influence in the classroom.

This research enhances learning by attempting to simulate a real business environment where all aspects of the experience are managed and organized by the students within a framework provided by the educator. By design, students have many opportunities to build their leadership. Opportunities for leadership include: being on the community leadership team, acting as meeting leaders (once per term), managing their group work (each week), and adding to the learning community's experience with

individual independent learning (ongoing) from the outside business world.

The benefits of this research include the development of leadership competence and job readiness in participants, the building of effective feedback into learning through the use of action research techniques and the testing of the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework (outlined later in this chapter).

Based on the previous learning community in the classroom experience described earlier, I anticipated that participants would benefit from the research by developing their leadership mind-set to apply to any learning environment. The leadership experience, independent learning skills, increased individual identity, and research skills are expected to make this experience valuable for the future. From this, students will be responsible as leaders for shaping and designing their own learning based on their own personality and needs. This is expected to help shape the business capabilities of most students by preparing them to take an active and meaningful role in the leadership of business and in their own lives.

I am developing more effective approaches to college business education through action research. Because action research provides a mechanism for self-reflection to assess

ideas and uncover student's needs it supports teaching and learning.

The teaching and learning community will benefit from this study because it provides an innovative approach to build leadership mind-sets for both education and work. The results of this research will be shared at future professional development teacher conferences. I intend to assess, over time, the benefits of action research in the classroom (see "Inquiry Methods" section of this document). Gradually more educators may begin to experiment with their own action research to assess the effectiveness of their curriculum and teaching.

Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study

Problem Statement

The purpose of this research is to identify:

> How a business educator such as myself can facilitate
> and/or enhance individual and collective business
> leadership among students within a classroom.

Objectives of the Study

1)   To facilitate and practice business leadership attributes and approaches in a simulated business community.

2)   To create through 2 semesters (28 weeks) of 2nd-year sales courses, a learning community (e.g., sales management team) where all students are actively engaged, take responsibility, and are involved in the designing, running, and learning of the organization. In effect, the learning community will simulate a "real-life" business.

3)   To assess the effectiveness of a *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework for learning in the community college (Business) environment. The framework is outlined subsequently under the heading Research Method.

4)   To build a learning community (students) that has a life of its own where the educator is only a facilitator as opposed to a controller of the process or knowledge dissemination.

5)   To integrate and experiment with cooperative learning approaches including problem-based learning techniques.

The Research Method

Research Framework

The following research framework (Figure 1) is based on several models, theories, and practices. It provides a guide for the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research. In addition, the framework will be assessed as part of the research study.

The framework draws upon elements of both Covey (1991) and Wenger (1998), in addition to some practical applications from Doherty (1998) and business education experience. The framework balances leadership with the practical elements of a learning community under the facilitation of an experienced business educator. Problem-based learning (Rideout, 2001) is included as an innovative way to give responsibility and opportunity for leadership to all participants.

The framework provides some structure to help support the building of business leadership in the classroom. In practice the structure includes specific roles, feedback, practical examples and some individual accountability.
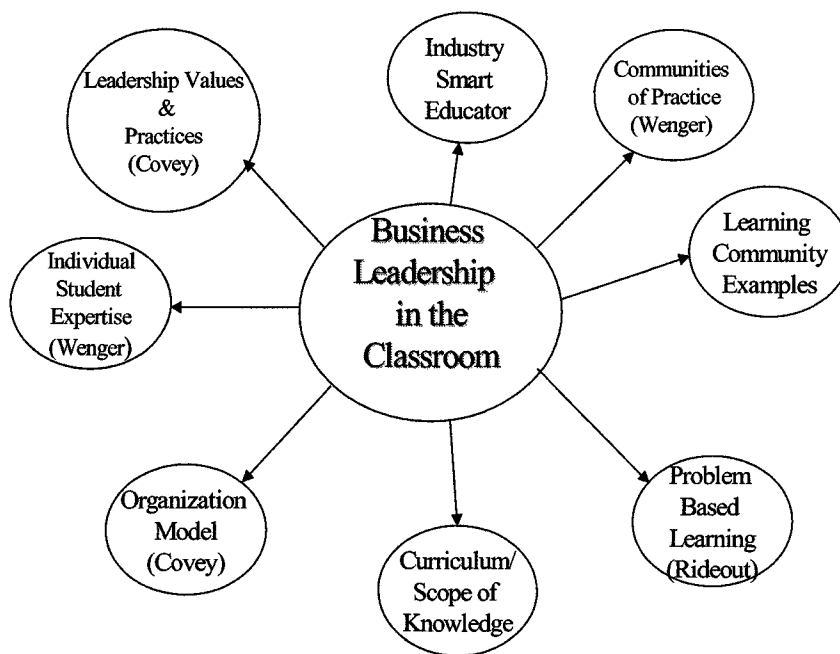
Figure 1. Business leadership in the classroom research framework.

Inquiry Methods

Kemmis and McTaggart's (1982) action research method was the primary approach used because it is effective in facilitating continuous improvement to support quality education in the classroom. Action research is becoming more common in education (Ghaye, 1998). It is similar to "Action Learning" which is now being employed by major businesses (e.g., Whirlpool Inc.) to solve real problems and facilitate learning within organizations (Marquardt, 1999). This action research study allows for the assessment and evolution of business leadership over time. In the study students have the opportunity to respond differently to various classroom approaches based on their own set of collective and individual needs. Capturing their responses (e.g. surveys) and inputs to the approaches and logistics of learning provides a more responsive way to meet the needs of the learner while maximizing the engagement of each learner. Action research captures a range of student responses that allows the facilitator to adapt approaches for the larger group and for individual learners.

The study followed action research principles, utilizing the "Model for Reflection: Kemmis & McTaggart (1982): Cyclical Action Research Spiral." The model

includes the development of plans that test goals,

observations to show the results of the action research,

and reflections on the approaches, problems, and

constraints. The nature of the "Cyclical Research Spiral"

is one of continuous action and self-reflection. After

reflection with the use of a journal, approaches are

adjusted. As part of this research, this implies adjusting

approaches in the classroom to begin another cycle of

action and reflection. There is a constant adjustment of

teaching based on what is learned from individual and

collective reactions of students. Further details of

reflective practice in action research are outlined in

chapter 2.

Definition of Key Terms

There are a number of key terms that need to be

defined in this chapter. They include: Leadership and

Business Leadership, Learning Organization/Community,

"Community of Practice",(Wenger, 1998), and Leadership

Facilitation.

Leadership and Business Leadership

For the purpose of this research, I have chosen to

define business leadership based on Covey's framework

(1991). Covey (1991) describes four essential "Internal Centers of Strength" for leadership that allow individuals to be effective in leadership roles. These "Internal Centers" include a sense of personal strength and confidence, a set of guiding standards or principles, a drive to make things happen, and a common sense perspective of the way things should be. Based on the principles of Covey, students should practice these centers of strength to learn how to foster and hone both their personal and collective leadership. The strength from these centers helps build the self-esteem that students need to move ahead. Students may begin to see from these that they can build a unique business leadership mind-set that will help them drive for personal success.

Learning Organization/Community

For the purpose of this research the learning organization is integral to the *Business Leadership in the Classroom*. Garvin (1993) defines a learning organization as "an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and modifying its behavior to redirect new knowledge and insights" (p. 80). It is further described here as a basis for defining "community of practice" (Wenger, 1998, p. 7). The learning

organization, once established and given regular maintenance and support, will assume a life of its own.   A true learning organization engages people to assume an active role, which reflects their individual personally and contributes to everyone's learning. By bringing out the individual, a much more connected and greater organization emerges if it is built on the principles of the "Learning Organization" model. Land and Jarman (1992) in *Breakpoint and Beyond* state:

> Everything and everybody is connected. Everything affects everything else. No matter how different, no matter how far away, we are all part of an interconnected whole. (p. 103)

Senge (1993) speaks about how people have tended to operate within their "positions." In a classroom environment students sit, take notes, and wait for direction, operating the way they always have in the past. A true learning organization goes outside the usual mode of operation and evolves. Each member of the organization needs to take responsibility and set his or her own direction within a general framework. Students need to adjust their attitude to become active and responsible participants. The learning organization provides the framework for this to happen!

"Community of Practice"

For the purpose of this research, the learning community is based on Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* model. A *Community of Practice* as described by Wenger, is a learning organization taken one step further. It is about respect for the individual and the sharing of individual experience and expertise to build a community. The community must reflect each of its members and be meaningful. It is more important to have the basis for a community of practice or learning community than it is to have the latest textbooks or computers. The learning experience needs to be practical, reflecting the nature of a real business environment. Many of Wenger's principles are put into practice in this research.

Wenger (1998), for example, describes the school and classroom context as a place where active "membership" in these "communities of practice" (p. 7) results in significant personal growth. He says that to support learning you need individuals who contribute, a collective community of loose members, and an organization that promotes interconnected communities of practice by "knowing what it knows" (p. 8). Students need to share their knowledge for the entire class to fully benefit. Wenger

defines "communities of practice" as ones that have "mutual engagement," a "joint enterprise," and a "shared repertoire" (p. 83). He uses an example of a group of workers doing a seemingly very straightforward job but shows how the work and the learning goes beyond the task. The "community of practice" they share has its own life, making it truly a workplace community.

Leadership Facilitation

For this research, leadership facilitation is the term I give to my role in classroom management. I act as a "Leadership Facilitator," combining my business leadership experience with my experience in the classroom, delegating as much responsibility as possible to the participants. Wherever possible the participants manage their learning with only my general input.

The key terms of leadership, business leadership, learning organization/community, "community of practice," and leadership facilitation provide a grounding of terms for this action research study on *Business Leadership in the Classroom*.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

It is important to recognize the limitations of this research study. It is an action research study based upon critical reflective practice. Any findings cannot be extrapolated beyond the group. The study is an action research study that reflects findings in two 2nd-year business classes at Sheridan College at a specific given time. Results can be used as the basis for further action research as is outlined in the final chapter of this thesis. The research is a result of constant experimentation and adjustment based on feedback and student responses. The results will provide directional findings that can be used for further testing and research.

Another important limitation is the fact that I, the author/researcher occupied a dual role as both the researcher and educator. Both these roles must be acknowledged in conducting and reporting the findings so to be as impartial as possible.

This dual role required that steps were taken to ensure that the student's efforts and actions were not motivated by the desire to please the educator and thus earn extra consideration when marks were finalized. From the outset students were assured that this was not the

case. The participant permission form and research letter

clearly outlines this (Appendix A).

The process of this research was intended to be a

positive one and should not in any way have interfered with

student learning. Each data collection method tied back

into the business curriculum so that it served a double

purpose. Students participated, knowing that my action

research was part of their learning. All feedback from the

research and resulting new directions in class, were shared

on a regular basis so that students could see how the

process works. Students not only learned about leadership

but about reflection and action research for their personal

development.

Other issues concern the means of data collection. I

needed to be very professional both in the type of data I

collected and how it was collected. I wanted to work on

facilitating and encouraging each participant to assume

active roles in the *Business Leadership in the Classroom*

research. To this end, I focused on encouraging the unique

leadership strengths of each student.

To ensure that individual participants were not

negatively affected by the research, I consulted with

students and reflected on their written feedback, including

student journals. In effect, the participants were

partners in the research and responsible for their learning community/"community of practice." I met with the community leadership team weekly to ensure the process was as positive as possible and that any differences amongst community members were worked out. As part of the process I committed to respecting the leadership team's feedback and making the changes that they recommended after discussing them with each class.

In addition, I met with each weekly meeting leadership group (different group each week) to facilitate the design of their class meeting and to get their feedback after the class. This ensured there was a balance of approaches in class. It also helped make students responsible for the evolution and management of the "community of practice."

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis shows the development of my research, the context, the findings, and the scope for future use. Specific details of the contents of each chapter are outlined below.

Chapter 1 introduces and focuses the thesis problem, research methods, the nature of leadership, other key terms, and scope and limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 provides a context for the research by reviewing literature on the Leadership Gap in Business Education, Business Leadership, Business Leadership in the Classroom, and Reflective Practices. It connects the literature to the theme and purpose of my research, which is *Business Leadership in the Classroom*. This chapter sets the stage, grounds my research, and provides a basis for my research method.

Chapter 3 provides details of the research method including the research approach, business leadership community design, data collection process, sample data, and validation group. The inquiry methods, the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework, the researcher's role, intervention, and specific data collection methods used, are covered. All of the research methods and approaches are clearly laid out in this chapter.

Chapter 4 reports the detailed findings, including an overview of the findings, emerging themes, the progression of leadership development, the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework, the action research process, the comparison of data, and the summary of findings.

Chapter 5 ties together conclusions, and implications, identifies future research, and recommends new directions or applications for business students at Sheridan College.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter explores the literature that examines how a business educator such as myself can facilitate and enhance individual and collective business leadership among students within the classroom. The review first discusses the existing literature on the leadership gap in business education and further, details the three main literature streams. These include business leadership and business leadership in the classroom, as well as critical reflection and action research. Findings from the literature on the "leadership gap" in business education indicate a need for business education to focus more on the development of practical mind-sets such as leadership. The remaining three literature streams provide the basis and background for this research.

This literature suggests that understanding business leadership in general, builds a foundation for helping participants form their own personal leadership. Business leadership writings provide guidance on how to help business leaders (including business students) develop and practice their own leadership. The second literature stream, business leadership in the classroom, provides learning community models and research that help to

contribute to a framework and design to support the business leadership in the classroom research. The third and final literature stream, encompassing critical reflection and action research, provides a background and understanding of why it is appropriate for facilitating business leadership. This chapter demonstrates that the range of the literature supports and provides a basis for the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework that I have used in my research.

Leadership Gap in Business Education

The leadership gap has been identified as a problem for both education and business to tackle. This thesis focuses on college business education as it prepares young business people for the business world. A recent article in the *Canadian HR Reporter* (Brown, 2002) cites a number of respected MBA-granting universities that are working to make business education more practical and appropriate for the current needs of business. The Dean of York University's Schulich School of Business, Dezso Horvath, claims that these business schools have lost touch with the real world and have become too focused on the theoretical, with students "learning more and more about less and less" (Brown, 2002, p. 2). Horvath and others in

many of Canada's most respected MBA schools are now
striving for students to develop a repertoire of
interpersonal skills that include both leadership and
entrepreneurship. Many of their approaches are well
suited to undergraduate business schools at universities
and community colleges. Queens University for example,
has remodeled its MBA program for graduates to become
"more strategic, to have a better sense of the whole
business…to be better leaders, with strong interpersonal
skills and (to have) the ability to demonstrate leadership
in all roles and start new initiatives" (p. 4). These
approaches represent a significant shift in the way
learning is delivered. They require more teamwork, peer
input, peer counseling, and faculty involvement with
students. The emphasis on "peer counseling" is a new
focus at the Richard Ivey School of Business at the
University of Western Ontario. It is designed to provide
more feedback and teach future business people how to
coach peers and motivate others at the same level, without
explicit authority.

Another approach to help fill the leadership gap and
better prepare students is one used by University of
Western Ontario entitled, "Integrative Thinking," where
students are encouraged to take different perspectives

from across a business organization and learn how to work with other people to solve problems. Business simulations are also being used more often to make business education more practical.

The leadership gap is not specific to Canadian business. For example, a London England, research study indicates that 63% of 12- to 25-year-olds agree "that schools and colleges are not preparing them for the real world" (Anonymous, 2000, p. 55). In addition, 82% of 16- to 25-year-olds "believe that practical or vocational training should start at school" (p. 55). One of the recommended strategies for closing the gap between education and work is the creation of partnerships between education and business.

American research suggests the need for new approaches to business education that focus on integrative studies across business disciplines (Aurand, DeMoranville, & Gordon, 2001). The objective of an integrated approach to learning is to foster a more practical cross-functional set of skills for students to achieve business success rather than the "well-defined and often well-siloed, disciplines" (p. 21). Once again there is recognition that to be practical, business education must focus on key mind-sets such as teamwork and leadership that will

prepare future business graduates for business and working with others.

All of these teaching approaches and ideas require a rethinking of how curriculum is designed and delivered, including a team approach by faculty members to balance and integrate approaches between courses. For example, this could include cross-course assignments and common course objectives including key business skills. The depth and rigor of steps taken by major MBA-granting universities demonstrates how serious the leadership gap in business education has been. The same rigor could easily apply to community college business programs in order to address the leadership gap.

Community colleges have always strived to find ways to make their programs more practical and in some cases help develop students' leadership skills. There has been a recent emphasis on new approaches to better meet the changing needs of business, specifically the knowledge economy. "Community colleges must reshape and revitalize their roles in economic development…as the need for certain occupations has waned and new ones have emerged" (Ivany, 2000,p.1). There is a renewed emphasis on occupational preparedness including a need for new technologically specific skills (i.e., computer) as well

as interpersonal skills that include communication and an ability to work well with others. There is also a need for ways to simulate real business (i.e., business incubation) in post-secondary institutions. In the U.S., over one-third of community colleges have business incubators (Ivany, 2000). Business incubators advise small and medium size businesses to help them grow and can provide real business experience for students within the education system. In addition, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges' Innovation Strategy (ACCC, 2002) calls for community colleges to run business incubators, have centers for global entrepreneurship and e-business, conduct applied research, provide workplace skills and training and build more partnerships with business.

Partnerships are one area that community colleges have emphasized both as links with entire industries and individual companies. For example, in Nova Scotia regional training councils link entire sectors and have been around since the 1980's. They serve sectors such as fisheries, forestry, and manufacturing and technology (Kenny & Shaw, 2001). Colleges work with the training councils to provide skills, customized training and pre-employment programs as well as leadership and innovation.

There are many examples of partnerships between Community Colleges and business (ACCC, 2002) including Centennial College's technology alliance with Compaq Canada and Avaya Canada to build better facilities for programs such as e-commerce. Additional programs include Yukon College's tie with 41 private businesses in 8 communities to provide leadership experience through work placements, as well as Assiniboine College's partnership with the Royal Bank Financial Group to provide input on curriculum and cooperative education placements. Other examples include the use of learning networks, program advisory committees and college's running the training center for a specific company. These examples demonstrate how community colleges are finding innovative ways to build relationships with business to better meet the needs of business in practical ways. The approaches may help students develop better leadership mind-sets and begin to address the leadership gap in business.

The remaining Literature streams address business leadership, business leadership in the classroom, and critical reflection and action research. They constitute the conceptual framework for my research question.

Business Leadership Stream

In this section, I explore leadership attributes, as well as emotional leadership and practical leadership skills perspectives. This leadership review is not intended to be an exhaustive one due to the size and complexity of the leadership literature. However these explorations provide a balanced look at how to develop and practice business leadership. They also assume that every individual needs to develop his or her own unique leadership style. The leadership attributes perspective focuses on sets of attributes for good leadership using Covey (1991) as being representative of other contemporary business writers (Peters, 1982; Welch, 2001). Each writer has common elements in their approaches to leadership. For example, Covey's customer-focused leadership is "service oriented," which is comparable to Peters's "Close to the Customer." Similarly, Welch uses the term "boundless company," where customers and suppliers are all part of the leadership process. These attributes are important because they provide a foundation for what business leaders do. They are especially important to young adults who have not had time to think about or develop their own leadership attributes.

To address emotional leadership I have reviewed Daniel Goleman's "Emotional Intelligence" concept (Goleman, 1998) and some more spiritual leadership writings (Greenleaf, 1979; Sergiovanni, 1992) that represent a more "giving" approach to leadership. In addition I have included more practical or "how-to" leadership skills (Levine & Crom, 1993; Zuker, 1983) which are a key part of helping business leaders practice leadership.

Leadership Attributes

Covey (1991) identifies a number of business leadership attributes and approaches that can be used to build personal influence and leadership. His ideas provide a foundation for helping business professionals and students develop a leadership mind-set. It provides insight to understand the way organizations operate and function effectively.

For example, Covey (1991) identifies "internal centers" as key attributes for internalizing leadership. The four centers can be employed like an internal compass for leadership with four directions to draw from. Covey identifies the four "Internal Centers of Strength" as Security, Guidance, Power, and Wisdom. He argues that

individuals require both self-esteem and personal strength
to create a secure focused business environment that is
within their control. He notes that they should be able
to build their leadership by drawing on guidance or
judgment, power or drive, and wisdom or common sense to
influence business processes regardless of the existing
uncontrollable factors. Above all else, business
leadership derived individually can make a difference in
solving problems, motivating others, and achieving
objectives. This is especially true in business where
there are so many uncontrollable factors (i.e.,
competition) that tend to prevent people from achieving
their objectives.

Potentially, the practice of drawing on these centers
will bring results that build a powerful presence within
business to help individuals build their leadership for
personal success.

Another important issue to be addressed by business
leaders is the need to identify what constitutes effective
leadership attributes. Covey (1991) describes eight
characteristics/attributes of effective leaders that
include: constantly learning, a service and team
orientation, positive energy, a belief in the potential of
other people, leading a balanced life, taking on life's

opportunities, being open to others, and physical,
emotional and spiritual well-being.

These attributes provide a basis for students to
understand how to practice the four centers of strength
from Covey's (1991) *Principle-Centered Leadership* model.
They are representative of lists of leadership attributes
outlined in several business leadership books, including:
In Search of Excellence (Peters, 1982), *Straight From The
Gut* (Welch, 2002), or *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective
People* (Covey, 1989). One of the key points made by Covey
and others is for leadership to be built on the strength
of a company and its people. It is important to therefore
recognize and take stock of each individual's contribution
to an organization. This recognition of others will
result in a balanced, caring relationship that is
essential for encouraging business leadership and for
engaging others in a specific cause.

According to Covey (1991), building leadership
attributes in a business requires a set of shared values.
Some of Covey's principles could be used as a basis to
help business leaders pick shared values for their
organization. The "motivation of people," for example, is
a value that can be shared by an entire business. It
allows individuals to humanize and personalize leadership

as well as their business. According to Covey, managers need to focus on people motivation and do more leading than managing. They need to provide some direction and then let others make decisions.

Covey's (1991) model and its application to specific business practices provide a basis for individual and collective business leadership. The benefit of exposing business people or business students to Covey's attributes and approaches, is that it provides a practical starting point for any organization. The attributes and approaches of business leadership from Covey generate discussions on leadership and develop a picture of how it can be useful. This is a very good first step in providing a basis for a leadership mind-set. However there is still a need for diverse perspectives on leadership that include an emotional and practical skills perspective. These provide insight into how leadership theories can be implemented by business leaders.

The emotional leadership and practical leadership skills perspectives remain in this business leadership literature stream.

Emotional Leadership

Goleman (1998), Sergiovanni (1992), and Greenleaf (1979) provide the basis for a more emotional perspective on leadership in this business literature stream. These writers suggest, for example, that business requires not only technical and intelligent leadership, but an emotional and personal component that builds enthusiasm in individual leaders and those that work with them. This approach to leadership helps to encourage different styles for business leaders. This perspective of business leadership is based less upon the individual delivering leadership, than it is on their ability to provide personal solutions and directions that serve affected employees and customers, as well as the overall organization.

Goleman (1998) defines Emotional Intelligence as an ability to work with, and lead by adjusting approaches to the needs of people. The components of emotional intelligence are self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. Self-awareness is the ability to know your emotions and their effect on others, while self-regulation is the ability to control your emotions before you act. Motivation is the passion to seek goals beyond money and status. Empathy is an

ability to understand others and react accordingly, while social skill is the ability to manage and build relationships with others. Psychologists have debated the importance of emotional intelligence in determining the effectiveness of individual leaders. However according to Goleman's (1998) research, emotional intelligence is a much more important part of effective leadership than other leadership determinants including technical ability and IQ. It can be developed, but requires coaching and varying amounts of time depending on the participant's existing level of emotional intelligence.

Sergiovanni (1992) identifies spiritual questions as they apply to a learning institution. His approach ties into the emotional perspective of business leadership, as well as the building of a learning community. His framework calls for a moral leadership and explores the importance of empowerment within the boundaries of the organization's mandate.

Sergiovanni (1992) identifies a "Leader of Leaders" as someone who takes on the full responsibility of leadership:

> (The) Leader of Leaders and servant leadership styles
> bring stewardship responsibilities to the heart of
> the administrator's role…the administrator's position

moves to the periphery, and attention is focused on duties and responsibilities to others as persons and, more important, to the school itself. (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. 139)

Spiritual or emotional leadership builds on personal pride and makes business leaders focus, not solely on business, but on society as a whole. For example, many organizations become actively involved in society through organizations like the United Way and by being good corporate citizens with environmentally friendly practices. Business leaders tend to become energized with enthusiasm from their involvement outside their normal business sphere. This approach is supported by others including Greenleaf (1979), who calls on business people and others in positions of responsibility to make a difference by focusing energy and efforts for the good of all. In one of his last recorded conversations on Leadership, Greenleaf (1986) stated:

We've got to develop an ethic that says that the abler stronger people must take a lot more responsibility. At the time of the founding of this country (U.S.), we had...an extraordinary group, a very strong and able people, who worked very hard to put this society together, at first instance. (p. 341)

Greenleaf's writings on "Servant Leadership" call for a level of commitment to society that demonstrates exemplary leadership by going above and beyond the duties of being a good manager. Some of the more successful companies encourage managers to become involved in the larger community. It is believed that this kind of leadership contributes to a moral viewpoint that makes the leaders and the organization a real contributor to society as a whole.

This type of emotional leadership, otherwise entitled, "Servant Leadership," which reflects a total dedication to others, although admirable, may not be attainable for every person. However, it, along with Goleman's (1998) "Emotional Intelligence," does enhance the definition of business leadership from an emotional perspective by providing something for business leaders to strive for.

To help bridge the leadership attributes of Covey (1991) with the emotional business leadership approaches of Goleman (1998), Sergiovanni (1992), and Greenleaf (1979), there is a need for a practical leadership skills perspective to build and implement a leadership mind-set in both business and business education. Practical leadership skills that include listening, assertiveness,

visioning, values, culture, and positive influence are key to helping leaders practice and develop their leadership mind-set. To complete this leadership literature stream, a practical leadership skills perspective must include a discussion of Dale Carnegie (Levine & Crom, 1993) and Zuker (1983).

Practical Leadership Skills

Practical leadership skills comprise a range of skills that include reasoning, bridging, and visioning to have a positive influence on people and the companies that employ them. Central to leadership practice are communication skills which help generate self-confidence, which enables people to take the initiatives and risks required by business.

Using Dale Carnegie principles, Levine and Crom (1993) identify a number of techniques and habits that help individuals develop and achieve positive influence on people. These include communication, motivation, expressing a genuine interest in others, rewarding, and goal setting, as well as leading a balanced life. For business leaders and business students, these techniques provide a good understanding of how to get along and work with others. Positive influence skills are fundamental to

building effective leadership. These skills need to be developed individually to accommodate differences and foster a more natural approach to leadership. Another component that Levine and Crom identify as central to this is self-esteem. Not all business leaders have the confidence to speak up and voice their opinions. Activities promoted by the Carnegie principles such as public speaking, ultimately build confidence and self-esteem, and show business leaders how to work with different kinds of people.

Other important practical leadership skills include both listening and assertiveness. There needs to be a real connection or understanding of the person you are communicating with. Zuker quotes Edgar Wycott (1981):

> In order to have others see things your way, you must first see things their way. …You must have the other person's attention and interest before reasoning and communication can begin. (Zuker, 1983, p. 96)

Building a connection requires the development of skills that, according to Zuker (1983), include listening, assertiveness, visioning, and reasoning. Depending on the situation there is a need for building your connection and influence by using each of these skills in balance. For example, one assertiveness technique for improving

communication is to reveal one's feelings. Zuker believes

that people should not suppress their feelings, because it

can foster future resentment.

Zuker (1983) identifies multiple leadership skills to

facilitate interaction with people, including how to avoid

defensive messages and how to practice assertiveness. He

suggests ways to phrase language so as to make a point

without being aggressive and threatening. These specific

practical leadership skills help to build leadership and

foster open communication for a more effective business.

Based on the literature discussed so far, those seeking

to be effective leaders should consider leadership from the

perspectives of leadership attributes, emotional

leadership, and practical leadership skills. Business

leaders (including business students) need to define their

own leadership, and develop tools to implement and practice

it. The literature review thus far, provides a basis for

business leadership and for identifying how business

educators can facilitate individual and collective business

leadership among students within a classroom. However, the

type of framework for implementing and facilitating

Business Leadership in the Classroom is yet to be explored.

This is discussed in the literature review on business

leadership in the classroom. The literature includes the

writings of Wenger (1998), Doherty (1998), and Gardner (1991).

Business Leadership in the Classroom Stream

Literature on business leadership in the classroom identifies a framework for building a structure that promotes and encourages leadership in the classroom. A structure is needed for business students to be able to share their own personal experience and independent learning for the benefit of the entire class. The structure must support multifaceted opportunities to exercise their business leadership. Potential structures for business leadership in the classroom will be explored in this literature stream.

Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* model provides a foundation for encouraging business leadership within the classroom. To reiterate, Wenger's community must reflect and represent each of its members, be practical, involve and include what he calls "mutual engagement," a "joint enterprise," and a 'shared repertoire" (p. 83).

"Mutual Engagement" in the classroom setting involves course material the students are taking. The course material provides a common task or focus for building this engagement and for working together to learn. It assumes

that the longer the group works together, the greater the involvement. Wenger (1998) says that the group does not have to agree or disagree on everything when they are working and learning together. In fact, he describes mutual engagement as a balance between a number of factors including power and trust, pleasure and pain, and many others that most people have experienced in relationships with peers. This balance is what enhances the interpretation of course material and learning.

With this in mind, building a "community of practice" within the classroom to encourage leadership does not mean building a utopia where everyone is civil and speaks when it is their turn. As is common in a good discussion in class, there are a range of opinions that help students formulate their views and learning. The class needs to include respect for every member!

The community of practice should determine how this is facilitated. This includes a common focus that is, according to Wenger (1998), a joint enterprise that is negotiated. Students should be given options, asked for other options, and have a discussion to then get an agreement on how to tackle the course mandate. There needs to be an awareness that the course mandate may not meet all the needs of each member, but is agreed upon by the class.

This agreement means that the enterprise belongs to the group and that there is "mutual accountability" within it. The strength and power of the accountability is a key part of Wenger's (1998) model. The negotiation or discussion process helps to make all individuals involved accountable for its success. The process and the agreed-upon enterprise brings about new ideas and ways to approach the group's work. It also helps participants identify how they can be involved and responsible for the enterprise.

As much as possible, individuals are encouraged to bring themselves and their own character into the community to build what Wenger (1998) calls the "repertoire." This is a collection of resources including routines, gestures, symbols, and actions. I see this as a pot of collective learning that is developed and shared by the members of the community. It includes contributions of resources from as many members as possible to build real character for the "community of practice."

Central to the facilitation of business leadership in the classroom is for each member to be actively involved and recognized for their contributions to the community. Each member must be encouraged to build an identity within and outside of the class. To be effective in a college course that only runs for 14 weeks, there needs to be a

connection with previous courses as well as other educators that the group has identified with. Student participants develop relationships through sharing a number of classes, joint assignments, and common activities such as lunch, coffee, and student pubs.

To initiate the learning process and connect it with the curriculum, Wenger (1998) would say that the learning process must evolve. To this end, the educator acts as a facilitator in the classroom in conjunction with the student leaders. Educators bring their personal experience, as well as a current learning agenda into the classroom. Wenger (1998) and Gardner (1991) say that educators need to represent their communities of practice by sharing their practical experiences with their students in their communities of practice. This experience should be balanced with the need for individuals to contribute to their own learning by bringing their real-life business experiences into the class. For example, students could share what they have learned by researching a project or from their own work experience. This is part of facilitating the learning process-by creating opportunities for students to participate and practice their learning.

To facilitate a community of practice, the educator and facilities for learning must serve the needs of the

learner. In practice, the level of the learner dictates
the degree of structure. Young adults for example do not
have the context to create processes for building a
community of practice without some direction from the
educator. The framework and design must include a
structure that provides the student with the tools and
direction that Wenger (1998) describes in order to be
empowered and successful. However, once the tools are in
place, the learning can be developed individually, shared,
and then built together to create a community of practice.
Interaction in the classroom must be maximized to build a
strong vibrant community of practice.

Building on Wenger (1998) and Gardner (1991) as part
of the business leadership in the classroom literature
stream, Doherty's (1998) example provides an excellent case
study to draw from when designing the community of practice
for this research. It demonstrates that it is possible to
have measurable success for practical learning through
building a learning community in the classroom. Doherty
(1998) designed a learning laboratory in her university
Organizational Development course in order to create a
practical learning experience. The purpose behind the
learning laboratory, according to Doherty (1998), was to
create a "model for teaching students how to learn together

to achieve a tangible goal" (p. 604) and to assess the learning organization concept in a classroom. The course was chosen to allow students to experience the subject as they developed their own organization from the ground up. Doherty provided some facilitation up front to help establish the framework and leadership in the community of practice, but let the group manage their own activities thereafter.

Much of Doherty's framework parallels Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* model. In addition, Doherty (1998) draws upon Senge (1993) and Garvin's (1993b) learning organization approaches as the basis for her experiment. Garvin (1993b) provided the five building blocks for her research, including: systematic problem solving, experimentation with new approaches, learning from their own experience and past history, learning from the experiences and best practices of others, and transferring knowledge quickly and efficiently.

Doherty's (1998) research was designed to be highly participatory. The group was given the mandate to develop a mission, design and develop an organization, manage change and problems, and recognize and achieve personal growth. They had to agree on a cause to focus on as a "joint enterprise." Applying Doherty's (1998) positive

experience to my own classroom would vary depending on the subject matter. Picking a common focus that had broad appeal would require a couple of class discussions. More detail and direction is required in order to avoid some of the confusion noted by Doherty's students around implementing problem-solving situations.

The mission statement from Doherty's (1998) class was "…to create and develop an organization in a manner that enhances learning and personal growth while striving toward a worthwhile change in the community"(p. 607). The change in the community was to contribute towards saving horses by raising funds for HERDS, a nonprofit organization which saves wild horses. The organizational structure included task forces on strategic/focus, structure, human culture, human resources/reward, eventually an executive committee and a "joint enterprise."

One of Doherty's (1998) students said the course allowed students to practice group work, decision making, and responsibility that reflected the real world.

The Wenger (1998), Gardner (1991), and Doherty (1998) literature has provided strong practical models and experience to support and build business leadership in the classroom. They describe a structure for building an

effective and dynamic learning organization that involves as many participants as possible. In the context of this research, the use of the business leadership literature stream provides the learning and inspiration for participants to develop and practice their business leadership. The business leadership in the classroom literature stream *provides models (e.g., Wenger's Communities* of Practice and Doherty's "Learning Laboratory") and experiences for developing a framework for supporting leadership. The remaining part of this literature review is based on the critical reflection and action research stream. This includes considerations for action research approaches for business and education. The writings of Marquardt (1999), Ghaye (1998), McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1999), Newman (1998), and Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) are discussed.

Critical Reflection and Action Research Stream

I will cover the reflective practices literature stream by investigating why it is an appropriate research approach for business and education. I will then show how the practice of critical reflection in the action research process can be utilized to assess business and teaching strategies. This literature stream provides the foundation

for the research process that is used to assess the extent to which business leadership can be fostered in the classroom.

Action research/learning is now being used by major businesses to solve real problems and facilitate learning to make organizations more effective. According to Marquardt (1999), action learning is a team approach that solves business problems, by building learning that assists in identifying company-wide solutions. It allows people to apply their new learning to address changes on an ongoing basis. It also "provides group participants with the leadership skills, and self-awareness required to help the organization develop and adapt to the changing environment" (p. 119).

Some of the skills and attitudes (Marquardt, 1999) developed from the action learning process include: self-understanding from group peer feedback, self-reflection skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork, leadership, communication, and creativity. This approach is ongoing and has very few boundaries despite the fact that it is usually project specific (e.g., new product development). Cross- functional teams that include a facilitator are established for a specific problem. Questions are then posed as a means of better defining the real problem and

expectations. Using reflection, the action learning team has the power to initiate action and changes to address the problem. Action learning provides a process to solve problems and to adjust approaches over time within a company. It is a systemized approach to continuous improvement, and one that business uses for reflective practice.

From an educational perspective, regular reflective practice can facilitate a much more responsive classroom that constantly strives to meet the needs of each student. For teaching and learning it provides an engine for renewal that helps drive the business learning community and the leadership within it. This is a very effective approach for business students in that it models leadership and facilitates the continuous improvement process of the business world.

Critical reflection that reviews what was done at a certain point in time, what worked, what didn't, and what students were saying helps a teacher reorganize and adjust his or her approaches for the future. Anthony and Kay Ghaye (1998) note that reflection is an important approach to exploring how educators are doing in class, what materials and approaches worked, and what needs improvement. This makes teachers more than deliverers of

material; it makes them learners who improve their teaching practice by adjusting their actions.

Ghaye (1998) identifies four key elements (as part of a model in *Critical Reflective Practice*) to keep in balance when using reflection in teaching. These are just as applicable to leadership reflection in business. They include values, practice, improvement, and context. Values should be considered from both our own perspective and each student's perspective as part of our reflective practice. Action researchers need to pay attention to how values affect behavior, communication, and thinking in both the classroom and business. Practice or implementation of actions is the element that will result in the identification of areas for adjustment and change. Improvement is the element that represents the changes that are deemed necessary to improve the results of the classroom or business. In this research, areas of improvement can be put into place immediately to improve the leadership initiatives of students and their overall learning. The last element in Ghaye's *Critical Reflective Practice* model, context, refers to the way in which our reflective practice ties into what the school system structure and governments are trying to achieve overall in education and in this case, business requirements (e.g.,

Leadership development). The four elements of values, practice, improvement, and context need to be considered to ensure that reflection and research is as effective as it can be.

Action research is an important tool for measuring the effectiveness of teaching strategies and is a teaching strategy itself. Action research can bring educators closer to individual students and their needs by monitoring their progress and by being more inclusive. It also helps ensure that new strategies and actions evolve for continuous improvement in an educator's practice as it would in a business practice.

McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1999) describe an action researcher's purpose as reporting and interpreting events while changing them (action) for improved results. It is particularly appropriate for the classroom, where the research should help improve students' learning by being more responsive.

Action research can be applied as an ongoing investigation into an educator's practice. Action research is different from other research in the way it depends on action as part of the process. It focuses more on the teacher's professional values and is conducted by an insider researching his or her own practice. Like other

research, action research will lead to findings and provide evidence to support these findings and make changes.

In practice, results are recorded from the overall class and individual student contacts. According to McNiff, et al. (1999, p. 72), "Monitoring the action means generating data to use as a basis to reflect on and evaluate what has happened, and re-plan further action." For example, the action researcher keeps track of what students say and how they say it. Over time, a profile of individual students is developed and the class as it interacts together. With the use of reflection and feedback tools, more is seen of what is going on with one's teaching practice. For example, the use of a journal helps one recognize patterns of what has happened and to identify any need to adjust one's actions in the classroom.

Supporting diligence in collecting research data, Newman (1998) suggests recording moments that stand out to discern patterns and make discoveries. A journal, index cards, or audiotapes can be used to "record as you go."

There needs to be an ongoing emphasis on data collection throughout the research since there is not a start or finish as in other traditional research. Data collection is complex in the classroom context due to the numerous actions and interactions of many different

participants and different combinations of participants.
As such, the researcher needs to use different instruments
to collect enough data to gain a total perspective and be
able to take new actions for improvements in the classroom
practice or business practice.

Newman (1998) suggests that with action research,
one's use of professional writing allows people to reflect
on own their learning/teaching more clearly. The use of
someone else's experiences/arguments as a jumping-off point
for an examination of one's own helps to generate questions
about teaching and to connect with students.

Collecting critical moments of teaching over time
helps to build the data required to discern patterns and
understand the situation more clearly. "Unlike traditional
research, action research begins…with the muddle of daily
work, with moments that stand out from the general flow and
unless we record those moments they vanish-unavailable as
data for reflection" (Newman, 1998, p. 32). These moments
are triggered by a number of situations, including what
happens in the class and what students say about your class
learning.

Newman (1998) notes that the action research method
evolves from the situation itself. The method specifics
emerge from the inquiry. However, common to all forms of

action research, is the search for patterns (themes) that connect (Baterson, 1978). Careful analysis of the data will identify common themes.

Connections are not always obvious and may require a review of notes taken and a search for common themes. Another important part of action research is to connect personal experiences (reflections and notes) to the over-all learning, according to Newman (1998). Meeting with other people such as a teaching partner or some outspoken student could provide another perspective.

Newman talks about how interpretations of experience are often shaped by our assumptions and our biases. These should be identified in order to interpret what is really happening and to avoid making false conclusions. This could be accomplished by promoting self-directed learning as well as self-reflection, and by having a teaching partner to discuss teaching experiences. Newman (1998) cites Darling-Hammond's (1992) view of a teacher's role as helping diverse learners develop their own knowledge and strengths. Students must assume responsibility for their learning. The reflective nature of action research facilitates this and makes it possible to manage individual paths.

Given the uncertainty and complexity of results from action research, there needs to be a practical approach to collecting data. In this research I follow the use of reflective journals based on the "Model for Reflection: Kemmis & Mctaggart (1982): Cyclical Action Research Spiral." This provides an ongoing model for testing actions in the classroom. For each class a set of actions are planned. Results are recorded and reflections are then made. The cycle then begins again. The nature of the "Cyclical Research Spiral" is one of continuous action and self-reflection, where the researcher's plans evolve over time. After reflection, approaches are adjusted in the classroom to begin another cycle of action and reflection. There is a constant adjustment of teaching based on what is learned from individual and collective reactions of students.

Action Research is an ideal approach for researching business leadership in the classroom since it allows for the collection of data in a dynamic, changing environment and can accommodate the adjusting of approaches as the research progresses through reflective practices. The literature explored in this literature review provides a clear discussion of the leadership gap in business education, as well as a basis for business leadership

(attributes, emotional and practical skills), business leadership in the classroom, and critical reflection and action research. The literature includes some comparable situations and research for building a framework to assess a business learning community that could foster business leadership. Chapter 3 outlines the research method used in this research including the *Business Leadership in the Classroom research* framework. The framework is based on the literature streams and interpretations of all the literature just reviewed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD AND PROCEDURES

This chapter provides a detailed description of the method and procedures that I have used in this research. It includes the overall research approach, inquiry methods, the research framework (including the detailed communities of practice design for implementation), the data collection process, the data analysis approach, sample data reporting and the validation group role (educators providing feedback during the thesis process). My research follows the action research approach as outlined in chapter 1. I have used reflective journals and other data collection tools (outlined later in this chapter) to collect and analyze data based on the "Model for Reflection: Kemmis & Mctaggart (1992): Cyclical Action Research Spiral." For each class meeting a set of actions was planned, results and other data collected (through surveys for example), and reflections made. The data were grouped by individual participants, and emerging themes for linking and classifying and comparing purposes. Individual participant data identifies the progression in student self-assessments as well as views and actions around business leadership while emerging themes show common outcomes between participants. The remainder of this chapter outlines the

method and procedures and provides some examples of the
data collected.

Research Approach

The research framework for facilitating individual and
collective business leadership in the classroom is outlined
in chapter 1. The framework provides a basis for
participants to define and practice their own business
leadership mind-set within their community of practice.

Inquiry Methods

The action research approach provides an opportunity
for the learning process to be in the hands of the
participants. Based upon my experience, it ensures that
the overall objectives of building individual and
collective leadership are implemented on a weekly basis.
It also provides a built-in approach for ongoing
assessments of the learning environment. The approach
gives the educator a greater opportunity to work with
individual learners and to know how the learning process is
impacting on each learner's specific needs. This is very
important at a time when decreased provincial funding is
driving community college education to be less and less
personal. By following each participant on a weekly basis,

the educator is able to make adjustments and use different approaches. For example, in this research I was able to identify roadblocks to student learning that included a lack of confidence. This allowed me to interact with participants and engage them in the learning environment by understanding what approach worked best for them. The reflective nature of action research provides opportunities to get to know individual students by bringing them into the learning arena one by one. To assist with the research process, weekly reflective journals and surveys provided progress checks while peer group progress reviews (Rideout, 2001, Appendix C, Form 4) provided feedback from the peers directly affected by each leadership participant. The result is more flexibility for continuous improvement to meet the individual needs of learners. The types of data and the timing of data collection are outlined later in this chapter under Data Collection Process.

The study followed the "Model for Reflection: Kemmis & Mctaggart (1982): Cyclical Action Research Spiral." This provided an ongoing model for accessing actions in each community. For each weekly meeting, a set of actions was planned, results recorded, and reflections were then made and the cycle continued.

The following provides a detailed overview of the progressive steps:

i) Develop a strategic plan for the two sales courses, including accountability for potential risks, constraints, and unpredictability. Set out deliberate action to test goals.

ii) Make careful observations to document the effects of actions and the action research process.

iii) Take retrospective reflection to make sense of the processes, problems, issues, and constraints and to set new direction.

This study assessed the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework. In addition, action research has allowed me to explore different areas such as:

i) The utilization of my "people influence" skills to encourage business students to act as leaders developing leadership skills, while experiencing the love of learning.

ii) The facilitation and implementation of inclusive methods of teaching, including cooperative learning techniques, self-managed, independent, self-directed learning, and problem-based learning.

iii) The contribution to the long-term success of college business students by encouraging a professional approach and attitude.

iv) The evaluation and modification of my approaches and curriculum reflecting the learning from the two communities of practice.

In seeing myself as a leadership facilitator, I have collected data and feedback from my students to show the impact on the learning environment and learning experience as well as the specific objectives of this research. I have also taken note of the opportunity to share my experience with fellow teachers and administrators to encourage them to put action research into their teaching practice. As part of this research, I have created an active validation group with members that include fellow Sheridan College educators to review my practice (details later in this chapter). I have asked them to assess and critique my findings in order to improve and move ahead with my teaching practice. This research has helped me to improve my teaching and learning by:

i) Expanding on the scope of my research.

ii) Collecting more data and evidence to assess my impact.

iii) Relating and connecting in more relevant and meaningful ways by linking and connecting points of data.

iv) Demonstrating my commitment to improve student interest and involvement as active business leaders within a community of practice. The participants' mission was to build a Sales Team that promoted sales leadership and professionalism.

Research Question

The primary question of this research was to identify how a business educator such as myself can facilitate and enhance individual and collective business leadership among students within the classroom.

My Role

An obvious limitation to this type of research is the fact that the researcher (me) is also the educator of the participants. In order to report findings impartially, the role of researcher and educator should be distinct. This was specifically addressed within my application to the Brock University Research Ethics Board. I ensured that the marks in this course were not tied to student participation

in the research. In addition, the research was an open

process with all of the feedback shared with the student

participants as the study progressed. Students were not

merely participants in the research, but learned about

reflection for their personal development as business

leaders. To this end I worked to encourage the unique

professional leadership strengths of each student. In

effect, the participants (from each community leadership

team to the individual participants) were partners in the

research. I respected each leadership team's feedback and

made changes that they recommended after discussing each

change with them.

Intervention

My primary approach as an educator and researcher was

to act as a facilitator and become somewhat inconspicuous.

Initially I left each community of practice management

almost entirely up to the participants. However, I

gradually adjusted my level of involvement to add core

curriculum and tools to smooth out any management gaps in

each community of practice. In the second half of the

research the participants were able to assume more control.

Curriculum

This action research was conducted as part of my sales course over two 14-week terms. The class was structured so that students (with my input) built a sales team that promoted sales leadership and professionalism in order to simulate a real sales leadership environment. Business leadership was the primary focus, with a secondary focus on learning and applying sales concepts to cover the course curriculum in a very practical, real-life way. Some key topics included Sales Preparation, Presentation, Needs Assessment, Objection Handling, Closing the Sale, and Buying and Negotiating.

Business leadership curriculum was integral to this course and included many of the theories and skills from the literature in chapter 2. Business leadership was applied to the sales content and fit very well, given the highly practical and participative nature of sales.

Communities of Practice Design For Implementation

The following is a chart (Figure 2) showing the overview of the communities of practice design for implementation used to facilitate *Business Leadership in the Classroom*. Details of how the design works are outlined following the chart.

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Communities of Practice Design For Implementation
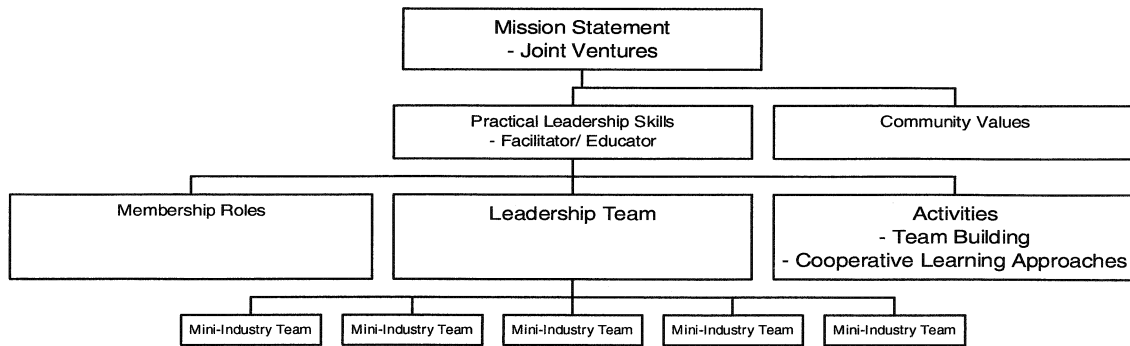
Figure 2. Overview of the communities of practice design.

Mission Statement and Values

Each community of practice was required to develop a mission statement that incorporated values and a "joint venture" (Wenger, 1998). The joint venture was a focal point for the community of practice's work. In addition, each community of practice took stock of member skills. Member skills were established through the initial survey (Appendix B, Survey Results) and shared with all participants. The mission statement was discussed and debated over 2 weeks before a final copy was distributed to participants.

Mission statements considered by each class included, "to build a sales team that promotes sales leadership and professionalism" and "to build a venture that could work as a sales association that meets to promote leads, new sales techniques and the sharing of information."

The agreed-upon mission statement for example, from one of the two classes was:

> To create a sales team that promotes sales
>
> leadership and professionalism within an
>
> enjoyable supportable open environment. All
>
> sales leaders on the team will learn and become
>
> "business ready" by respecting and supporting

each other openly and by encouraging all members

of the team to be involved and active.

Values (e.g., open minded to everyone's ideas and

input) needed to be established and agreed upon by the

community. To help provide some guidance for students to

select values, Covey's (1991) eight "Characteristics of

Effective Leaders" (p. 33; as outlined in the Literature

Review in chapter 2) were used. These included, for

example, constantly learning from courses, others, and

experiences and becoming service- and team-oriented. They

helped provide inspiration for participants to select the

values for their community and the attributes for

individual leadership.

The actual values selected by each community of

practice included: honesty, encouragement, support,

motivation, trust, teamwork, focus, communication, equal

opportunity, dedication/hard work, punctuality and time

management, professionalism, goals, and respect for

encouraging individual and collective uniqueness. In

addition to values, the list of skills and relevant

experiences by members (e.g., organization, presentation,

sales, communication, entrepreneurship, etc.) were shared

to promote the strengths of other community members and to

help students develop expertise and roles within their community of practice.

To make this mission possible, every student acted as a sales leader representing the companies from their research project (on how sales is approached at a real company) as part of a greater "sales management" community of practice.

Practical Leadership Skills Development

To ensure the development of practical leadership skills, there needed to be a leadership team, articulated membership roles, ongoing team building, and cooperative learning approaches. As well, the structure of the organization needed to be defined and agreed upon by each community of practice. Participants collectively agreed upon the use of what we called "mini-industry sales teams" (4 members) as well as one overall leadership team. The leadership team was comprised of 4 volunteers who were accepted by the class unanimously. Each mini-industry team had an opportunity to run the meeting for at least 1 week during each half of the research. The leadership team's responsibilities evolved throughout the research and included communication, feedback for an improved learning community, team building, weekly leadership award (best of

4 weekly meeting leaders), and other functions to keep the community of practice active (e.g., humor).

Team Building and Cooperative Learning Approaches

Team-building activities were designed to help mix up groups (mini-industry teams) and participants to build a more connected community of practice. For example, having participants identify the characteristics of salespeople conversing with other group members was one team-building activity used. In addition to activities for team building, the use of name cards helped everyone get to know each other and work together. To further enhance team-building efforts, all participants in the class were asked to use their names and fellow group member names during presentations through proper introductions.

Many activities were cooperative learning approaches designed by me, the educator with input by the weekly leaders. Activities included problem-based learning, presentations, and independent studies. These approaches were designed to help facilitate each community of practice and deliver sales course curriculum.

Mini-Industry Teams

Each student/participant needed to develop a sales pre-call research paper by researching and contacting a sales organization. The intention was to demonstrate their leadership by sharing their progress with their group (mini-industry team) and the entire community of practice on a regular basis. Each class was run like a business meeting. There was an agreed-upon regular agenda that included an introduction, a leadership team report and/or team-building activity, a leadership segment, a sales segment, activities, sales awards, leadership/sales community of practice feedback, and a summary. A different mini-industry team (group of 4) was in charge each week. Between the leadership team report and the mini-industry team responsibilities, more than 50% of the meeting was managed by the participants with the balance managed by me, the educator/researcher.

Feedback, Rewards and Evaluation

Each participant provided his or her own thoughts in a "Reflective Selling Journal" and received additional feedback from his/her own group (Group Process Forms), community of practice, and educator (journals and interaction at meetings). In addition, the leadership team

provided feedback. Copies of the surveys and feedback forms used are included in Appendix C.

A peer group process form was used to provide feedback for the group or individual team members (Appendix C, Form 4). This form measures an individual's specific contribution to the group as viewed anonymously by peers. Typically, three peers provided written feedback on each participant's contribution to the group and his/her leadership efforts. Copies of these were given to all participants for review in order to understand how others perceived their leadership.

There were value added marks for student participation awarded by the facilitator, which was partially based on the student's weekly self-evaluation. A couple of different rewards including chocolate bars and "Sales Bucks" were assessed for participation. The Sales Bucks were to be collected to bid on prizes later in the term. These rewards helped to ensure that students saw a clear benefit to their efforts in the community of practice beyond their learning. Tests were designed to include reflective questions that drew upon students' individual and collective learning. The leadership team helped to develop some of their own rewards that included having a weekly sales leadership award for outstanding leader.

Educator's Contribution of Current Self-Directed Learning

In my facilitation role, I assumed the same responsibilities of a student, which included visiting a company (plastic packaging manufacturer), going on a sales call, and identifying problem scenarios from my business experience. These were all used in class discussions and for problem-based learning, which helped me to understand, firsthand, what participants were going through. I tried to be careful not to always act as the expert but rather as their equal in each community of practice. I wanted all participants to view their personal contributions to the learning as equal.

Data Collection Process (Sample Forms in Appendix B and C)

Data were collected through class observation, meeting with the leadership groups and written feedback, participant's journals, participant surveys, and peer group process review forms.

Data Objectives

The specific objectives of the data collected in this action research study are as follows:

1) To assess the effect on participants of practicing business leadership attributes and approaches in a simulated business environment.

2) To identify and assess the extent of other themes of personal development resulting from the research framework.

3) To assess the extent to which a community of practice (e.g., Sales Management Team) was created. The community of practice was designed so all students could take responsibility and be involved in the designing, running, and learning of the organization. Each community of practice role was to simulate a "real live" business according to their mission statement.

4) To assess the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework for learning in the Community College (Business) environment. Results will allow for the framework to be adjusted for future action research.

5) To assess the effectiveness of cooperative learning techniques in building participation.

Types of Data Collected

The following specific data collection processes were used:

- Daily records of interaction captured in a reflective journal that uses the actions, results and reflection approach outlined by using the "Model for Reflection (Kemmis & Mctaggart, 1982): Cyclical Action Research Spiral"

- "Participant Journals" that recorded individual student learning were collected and responded to six times (See Data Timing section to follow)

- A "Business Leadership" survey was used at the start, middle, and end of the research study to collect the thoughts of each student around being a business leader, including their strengths and weaknesses and their leadership growth (Appendix C, Forms 1a and 1b)

- A "Stop Start Continue" in-class survey was completed two times during the research study. This asked students what they wished to stop, start, or continue within the community of practice (Appendix C, Form 2)

- Leadership team focus groups after each community of practice meeting to collect feedback for critical reflection

- A collection of student work including overheads from presentations assignments and tests

- Individual Leadership profiles and Self-Evaluation (Appendix C, Forms 3a and 3b) completed over the course by each participant

- Peer Group Process Review for anonymous individual feedback from fellow group members (Appendix C, Form 4)

- Presentation/workshop of findings to the validation group as the research progressed.

Data Collection Timing

The following tables show the timing of the collection of specific data for the first half of the research (Table 1) and the second half of the research (Table 2).

Table 1

Data Collection Timing for the First Half of the Research

Data Collection Events	Wk. 1	Wk. 2	Wk. 3	Wk. 4	Wk. 5	Wk. 6	Wk. 7	Wk. 8	Wk. 9	Wk. 10	Wk. 11	Wk. 12	Wk. 13	Wk. 14
Daily Records of Interaction and Reflective Journal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings with Leadership Teams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Participant Journals			X			X			X					
Initial Survey	X													
Stop Start Continue In-class Surveys								X						
Sales Presentations*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mid Point Surveys													X	

Note.

* Sales Presentations were every week with formal sales presentations by each participant in one of weeks 12, 13, and 14.

Table 2

Data Collection Timing for the Second Half of the Research

Data Collection Events	Wk. 15	Wk. 16	Wk. 17	Wk. 18	Wk. 19	Wk. 20	Wk. 21	Wk. 22	Wk. 23	Wk. 24	Wk. 25	Wk. 26	Wk. 27	Wk. 28
Daily Records of Interaction and Reflective Journal	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Meetings with Leadership Teams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X					
Participant Journals			X			X			X					
Peer Group Process Reviews		X					X							
Stop Start Continue In-class Surveys						X								
Sales Presentations*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Leadership Profiles and Self Evaluations														X
End of Research Surveys														X

Note.

* Sales Presentations were every week with formal sales presentations by each participant in one of weeks 26, 27, and 28.

Characterize Data

The data collected are associated with the development of participants' personal leadership definition, influence, and actions. Leadership developments, reactions, and definitions are collected from different perspectives including self, peers, and the instructor/researcher. Due to the nature of action research the data include results as well as reflections on these results. The data are rich in the sense that the research environment is one of constant assessment.

Data Quality Collection and Timing

Data have been collected for the purpose of assessing student responses and actions as they relate to leadership and each community of practice's mission statement. The mission statement for one of the two classes (M1's) was:

> To create a sales team that promotes sales leadership and professionalism within an enjoyable supportable open environment towards becoming 'business ready' by respecting and supporting each other openly in their individual involvement.

The data collected around leadership and the communities of practice mission statements will assess how effective the implementation of the *Business Leadership in*

the Classroom framework has been in building business leadership.

Data Variety

Data were collected using a number of instruments and resources over the course of the research. This provides a window on both collective and individual business leadership development, and is designed to yield strong data with multiple linkages.

Data Linking

Data are linked to show in what different ways, and to what extent, leadership has been developed individually and collectively in the communities of practice. For example, participants completed an initial survey, a midpoint, and an end of research survey on leadership development (Appendix C, Forms 1a, 1b). The initial survey asked participants in Question 1 to define leadership, while the midpoint and end of research surveys asked if their view of leadership has changed. The data (all participants) from these were compared to identify the relationships in terms of similarities and differences in the way individuals experienced leadership development and the resulting emergence of themes. A sampling of 10 students had their

data linked individually (chapter 4) to assess leadership

development and their impact on the business leadership

community and mission. The 10 were selected on the basis

of the investigator's perceptions to include a balance of

men and women and different personalities. For example,

one participant defined a leader initially as someone who

does not direct people but leads by example. In the end-

of-term survey this participant stated a leader must take a

more assertive approach. This participant experienced a

dramatic change in his/her view of leadership. This

example shows how longitudinal research provides an

opportunity for linking to identify any meaningful changes

in an individual's approach to leadership (from beginning,

middle, to end) and other emerging themes such as

communication. It yields much rich data over time that

exceeds what a cross-section of data can provide at one

point in time.

Other relationships were also identified through data

linking. Data from different sources can be compared and

contrasted. This was achieved for individual

participants(sample of 10) and the larger group of all

participants by linking journal data from the researcher to

peer group comments, participant journals and individual

surveys, and data from the leadership team. Data were

linked to show how they interact to identify any emerging themes or specific developments around leadership.

Coding

The data were coded based on only the themes that emerged and not overly categorized. This was to avoid limiting links and learning. Dey (1993) speaks of coding as being too mechanical and restrictive for managing data through qualitative research. "Qualitative analysis, in contrast requires the analyst to create or adapt concepts relevant to data rather then apply a set of pre-established rules" (p. 58). Therefore these research data are organized along emerging themes from the action research.

Data Quality

When collecting and organizing the data, I ensured that it was directly observed or recorded at a time when it was appropriate and did not reflect any biases or ulterior motives. Most of the data were collected firsthand or observed (from myself, participants about themselves, and regular group peers). The group peer data had to be considered carefully to avoid any potential for bias resulting from an ulterior motive. A more triangulated

approach with multiple data collection methods helped to corroborate data to minimize bias.

Data Analysis

In chapter 4, I assess the effectiveness of the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework and resulting engagement of students. The results are shown by:

- A comparison of the students' quotes and actions around leadership development from the beginning to the end of the research

- The development of participant profiles (sample of 10) showing leadership growth, including issues and themes to help with (e.g., self-esteem through journal entries, leadership profiles, and self-evaluations)

- An analysis of common themes emerging from the action research (e.g., leadership style, communication, self-confidence, personal growth, and others)

- A comparison of student survey results (measuring satisfaction levels, personal growth) and my personal reflective journal entries to assess the simulated business learning community framework on how it

evolved, worked, and delivered on business leadership development

- A validation group that provided feedback by reviewing my thesis, practice, and data to keep my research in focus and moving ahead (meet at the start, middle, and end of the research)

Organization and Management of Data

All data, including comments, self-assessments, and activities from each survey point (initial, midpoint and end of research) as well as the participant journal, facilitator journal, and peer group feedback forms were collected in separate computer databases. The data from 10 participants were grouped to assess leadership development. In addition, the data from each collection instrument were color-coded based on emerging themes. For example, blue for leadership, black for self-confidence, black squiggly line for communication, and so forth. A sample of how participant and theme data were analyzed and reported follows under the heading Sample Data Reporting. All the data for a participant (10 reported) were identified along with emerging themes. Representative quotes and actions were then selected from each source. Each piece of data for a participant were generally one or two sentences for

any given theme, or two, or three, for any question in a survey or journal entry. They were organized based on the first half and second half of the action research to identify any changes or trends in the types of comments. Some interpretations (results and reflections) of the data were added. A nonparticipant name or number masks all data. One example of participant data and a theme data are reported under Sample Reporting to show how the data were grouped and reported.

Leadership Development, Themes, and Categories

Initial linking of data show the development of individual leadership. Leadership development results and progress were assessed under the entire communities of practice, as well as the leadership teams and individuals. Other linking of data show the emergence of several themes or categories, including: leadership, leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth, communication, and real world. Based on the nature of the research and the conceptual framework, certain themes were hypothesized including leadership, leadership style, and communication. However, the extent or direction of the themes was not. Other themes including teamwork, influence and motivation, personal growth, self-

esteem, and real world were not expected as themes. In addition the themes of sales professionalism and values were expected to emerge but did not. The themes that did emerge show the extent to which the leadership focus of this research had on participants' learning.

Other research outcomes and data are reported under the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research framework. The research framework is reviewed as a whole and by its elements, including: mission, values, meeting flow, roles, rewards, motivation, feedback, and learning approaches.

Interpretation in this Action Research Data

There may be different interpretations of business leadership development and the extent to which the mission statement and communities of practice have evolved based on the observer's position. For example, interpretations may be different between the researcher who is on the sidelines, and the leadership team members who are reflecting more on the results each week to the individual participant. Links of data sources from actual participants were made to assess the progression of leadership development. In addition links of data on

similar themes were made to add some perspective to the research findings.

Connections between themes and some conclusions will be identified in chapter 4. However, as part of outlining the method, sample data reporting below demonstrates the way data will be reported. It is reported by data category (Figure 3), including: i) Overall Leadership Development (including a participant profile data sample), ii) Emerging Themes (with a sample of the communication theme), iii) *The Business Leadership in the Classroom* research framework, and iv) the Action Research Process.

Business Leadership in the Classroom
Data Organization

Leadership Development	Emerging Themes	Business Leadership Framework	Action Research Processs
- Communities of Practice - Leadership Teams - Individual Participant profiles	- Leadership - Leadership Style - Self-Confidence - Personal Growth etc.	- Organization - Rewards and Feedback - Learning Approaches	- My Role and Intrevention, Curriculum - Curriculum - Validation Group Feedback

Figure 3. Data organization summary.

Sample Data Reporting

Overall Leadership Development Category Sample Data

Data on overall leadership development, the primary focus of this research, were also collected from the same sources by color-coding. The reflective journal, meetings with each leadership team, and student journals provided rich data on the progression of leadership. Examples of quotes reported in chapter 4 are cited below.

When comparing student comments regarding "how their view of leadership has changed since the beginning of the term," there was a shift from comments about what leadership is to what leadership means personally to individual participants. Comments were increasingly personal and contain more passion for the leadership concept as the research progressed. For example, a typical comment midway through the research was, "I have seen there are different types of leadership." In contrast, a typical comment at the end was, "I think my leadership skills have improved. I learned what my personality is like and that I should listen to other ideas more often." There is not only more passion but there is a lot of evidence in student comments on leadership that shows specific areas that students are working on and will make a difference.

Participant 1 profile sample data. A sample of one of several student profiles reported in chapter 4 follows. This was organized by putting all pieces of data for an individual participant together and then reviewing it to identify trends in their leadership development and personal themes (e.g., Self-Esteem). The profiles reported in chapter 4 are a representative group of male and females from this action research.

One female participant, who was on one of the class leadership teams, developed a more direct leadership and communication style. I noted early in the research that this participant needed to put her ideas across more forcefully. She continually offered ideas on how to improve the process in leadership team meetings after class. Her own initial survey comments show her as admittedly "not confident with crowds of people." By the midpoint survey however, she was more confident in speaking out loud. At the end of research follow-up survey she concluded that "if one didn't take charge they would have communication problems." She also commented at the end of the research survey that "people tend not to listen to you if you don't speak up." Group peer evaluations (midpoint and near the end of research) identified that she was active being a leader but still needed to be more

assertive. This female participant continued to recognize the need to be more assertive. In one of her last journals she noted, "In the business world I have to be more assertive to get results." The participants' leadership was very consistent from all sources.

This is just one example of 10 participant profiles reported in this research. The other 9 are in chapter 4.

Communication Theme

Communication was one of the themes expected to emerge, given the nature of the activities and the number of presentation opportunities for leadership participants. Survey comments were full of communication points. The initial survey (Appendix C, Form 1a) when this action research began, indicated communication was important for leadership sales and business. The follow-up midpoint survey (Appendix C, Form 1b), self-assessments, and comments indicated progress on the development of communication skills.

Comments were very general at the midpoint of the research but showed the importance of the communication (Table 3). It also indicated from the last quote that the environment was important in encouraging and supporting

participants in their communication. This environment is further explored under the teamwork theme.

The term presentations (at the middle and end of the research) demonstrated the strength of communication skills in the number of outstanding sales presentations. This was to be expected but showed just how important this theme was.

The first two quotes from the End of Research Survey comments in Table 3 are illustrative of others and show an understanding that communication is something you have to develop specific strategies for if you are going to have any impact on others. Another key indicator that participants were promoting communication skills was in their exposure to personality differences. The last two quotes in Table 3 were illustrative of participants' understanding of the importance of being flexible with communications based on the person one is communicating with.

Leadership affects multiple aspects of business learning and helps students to excel in areas that require interaction, influence, and communication. Communication provides a sample of one of the themes that has emerged within this business leadership in the classroom research.

Table 3 contains some illustrative self-assessments on communication from the midpoint and end of term surveys.

Table 3

Midpoint and End of Research Survey Data of Illustrative

Self-assessments on Communication

<u>*Midpoint Survey Data:*</u>

"I have been able to communicate better with people"

"I have learned to speak more effectively"

"I am...ready to learn to listen and communicate in

a positive way."

"The environment was supportive and enjoyable based with open

communication."

<u>End of Research Survey Data:</u>

"My attitude towards leadership has changed. I realized more and more

this term that if you don't take charge you have communication

problems. People tend not to listen to you if you don't speak up."

"I view leadership as a chance to leave a mark in other's minds and

make sure your voice is heard"

"I learned that people have different personalities and styles of doing

work. I also found out that I can be a good leader."

"Being able to accept people's differences and being able to stand my

own ground."

Business Leadership in the Classroom Framework's Impact on Leadership

All elements of the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research framework are reviewed in chapter 4. Data from various sources but primarily from the researcher's reflective journal are used in the data reporting and assessment.

Validation Group Role

The validation group for my research included a Brock University Master of Education Professor, an Associate Dean of Sheridan's Business School, and two Sheridan College Business Instructors who teach in other programs and are concurrently completing their Master of Education at Brock University. The validation group members acted as critical friends in providing input on the research.

The validation group played an important role in reviewing my research proposal and operational plan. They provided input on how to strengthen the general framework and the specific aspects of the research. They reviewed my plans and met with me twice individually and once as a group. We will meet again upon the completion of this thesis to share the research results.

Some examples of the types of direction and input from this group included a recommendation to switch from the use of a "business professional" focus to a business leadership focus early on in the design of my research proposal. This helped address the issues in more practical terms. Other direction included the use of more qualitative surveys to collect data at specific points during the research in addition to the use of reflective journals. One of the members also suggested I survey students before the research began on the definition of leadership to get their comments and self-assessments prior to the business leadership development process. The validation group continually recommended that I simplify my approaches to make the research more focused and manageable. I took some of this advice, reflected, and made adjustments to my approaches.

The validation group assisted in the identification of business leadership literature and methods appropriate for this type of research. This led me to identify the three perspectives of business leadership: leadership attributes, emotional leadership, and practical leadership skills as outlined in chapter 2. This allowed students to draw from all three while developing their own personal leadership style.

In sharing some of the preliminary results my validation group even identified other educators with similar approaches to student learning. These educators will be contacted and I will share my research results with them.

The Method and Procedures in this chapter have outlined the research approach (including the research question), the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research framework, the communities of practice design and implementation, the data collection process, data analysis, and sample data reporting. In addition, sections on sample data and the validation group were included to further demonstrate the approaches taken in this action research. The research findings follow in chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview of Findings

The scope of collective and individual leadership in this research is clearly demonstrated by the findings. Data are organized and reported under four main categories in this chapter: Leadership Development, Emerging Themes, the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework, and the Action Research Process. Data organized under the category of leadership Development are compared throughout various stages of the research process. The role of leadership development within the classroom is assessed in depth under three areas: the community practice as a whole, leadership teams and individual participant profiles of leadership. Leadership development was indicated by the increasing degree of clarity used by students in describing leadership and by the types of practical leadership skills they demonstrated. The need for and interest in leadership development expressed by participants reinforces the leadership gap discussed in the literature (Benimadhu & Gibson, 2001 & Brown, 2002). In addition, the literature on business leadership attributes (e.g., Covey, 1991) and practical leadership skills (Levine & Crom, 1993; Zuker, 1983) were directly applicable to the classroom that

simulates business. For example, one participant summed up how his leadership developed in a practical way by saying, "I think my leadership…has definitely improved. I learned what my personality is like and that I should listen to others' ideas more often." A more emotional self-assessment by another participant was, "I now know what kind of a leader I am and how I can improve myself to become an even better leader."

The research provided multiple opportunities for participants to assume leadership. Collective leadership was reflected in the data with respect to communities of practice, the leadership teams, and the individual leadership participants. Ten individual participants were profiled to show the range of leadership development as well as emerging themes from the different sources of data. Both male and female participants demonstrated leadership, but for some it was more apparent than for others.

In addition to the development of leadership, the data reflect a number of important emerging themes including leadership style and communication, among others. Additional data are reported on the impact of the research framework (i.e., mission statement) and the action research process. The findings follow under each of the four data categories.

The Progression of Leadership Development

Data from the community of practice as a whole, leadership teams and a sample of individual participants showed the progression and depth of leadership.

Community of Practice as a Whole

Leadership development has evolved continuously throughout the action research. It has been demonstrated by participants' increasingly specific comments and actions (practical leadership skills). When comparing student comments regarding how their view of leadership has changed since the beginning of the term (Survey Question 1, Appendix C, Form 1b), there was a shift from comments about what leadership is, to what leadership means, for individual participants. Comments from all data sources were increasingly personal, and contained more passion for the leadership concept as the research progressed. This parallels Doherty's (1998) "Learning Laboratory in the Classroom" experience with university students as outlined in the literature review. Doherty included a leadership team to determine the structure and manage the class. The major difference was that Doherty's participants were provided with an opportunity to exercise complete control of the structure and management of the classroom or

community of practice. Consistent with Doherty, this research showed leadership as a process of development. For example, a typical comment at the midpoint of the research was, "I have seen there are different types of leadership". In contrast a typical comment at the end was, "I think my leadership skills have improved. I learned what my personality is like and that I should listen to other ideas more often." There is not only more passion but there is a lot of evidence pointing to specific areas that students are working on to make a difference. Other leadership comments from the midpoint survey showed participants with a new emphasis on "active" versus "passive" participation using different influence styles, sharing ideas, being more assertive, and teamwork. The data suggest that participants have made the leadership mind-set an important part of the way they approach business and learning. Comments about leadership became more specific and self-prescriptive as each individual's ability to lead increased over time. For example, a typical end of term research comment described leadership qualities as including, "learn to take control to better my position and act professionally to achieve my goals." Many participants viewed leadership as something to continue to develop. One previously quoted comment in the end of

research survey sums it up this way: "I now know what kind of a leader I am and how I can improve myself to become an even better leader." Leadership has become a key part of many participants' approaches for business and school.

Leadership Teams

The leadership team proved to be a valuable window on each community of practice's leadership progress. The role of leadership teams for each of the two communities of practice provided for the facilitation of meetings and on-going feedback. This is in keeping with Doherty's (1998) framework, which emphasized the importance of the leadership team. Right from the beginning these two teams (one per community of practice) provided a focus group discussion after each class meeting. In addition to feedback, they provided inspiration, motivation (rewards), some team building, and focus. They also helped to set the tone for the importance of what we were all doing with respect to leadership. Their continuous leadership and input was a vote of confidence in the process. Of the 8 leaders (4 per class), some were more active than others. Part of this was a function of not having enough regular roles in each meeting. Unlike the study by Doherty (1998), where the leadership team defined their own roles, these

participants needed more structure and reinforcement in their roles. Overall, the leadership team roles could have been strengthened by having more defined roles, to build more leadership at all levels and among all participants. The Stop Start Continue survey (Appendix C, Form 2) data from participants called for greater involvement of each community of practice leadership team. This would have allowed the facilitator to assume a smaller role in facilitating meetings. For example, each leadership team member (4 per class/community) could have acted as a meeting chair on a rotating basis. Despite, this each leadership team provided invaluable feedback and comments.

Table 4 shows some leadership team recommendations from the first half of the research. These recommendations demonstrate the extent to which the leadership teams led the class by practicing their leadership skills. They presented their recommendations to the business learning community each week at the start of each meeting. This built a sense of democracy in each community of practice.

Table 4

Leadership Team Recommendations from the First Half of the

Research

Leadership Team Recommendations from the First Half of the

Research

"To have a goal for the organization to have everyone involved as a leader in the organization"

"Do more spontaneous presentations to help people get used to presenting and speaking out"

"To better define how the leadership concept/goal can be put into practice in our organization at weekly meetings"

"To create structure and rotating positions in mini-industry groups. For activities roles of chair, note taker and presenter should be rotated. A Group leadership sheet could set up a rotating schedule for each group"

"To add a reward system, which comes from the teacher and the weekly meeting industry groups. Rewards could include small prizes like Tim Bits. The Teacher could assign active participation marks (self scored by students on Value Added summaries)"

"Mix activities up with theory" and "Provide summaries of the power-point/wd documents so people can make notes"

"Have members of the sales team take on different roles to get them independently involved (i.e. Use Role Playing to demonstrate topics: each group could role play prospecting for a different industry then have some groups present) Keep track of presentations to give every person a regular chance"

In the second half of the research the leadership teams continued to provide feedback. However, it was not as detailed as the first half feedback that resulted in changes that would address leader concerns. Still, feedback from each leadership team provided a continuous way to adjust the learning approaches while being responsive to participants' needs.

Reflecting on these suggestions and the rest of the action research process, I wrote:

> The dialogue and feedback is incredible from these two classes. Feedback from in-class, the leadership teams, the meeting leaders and from the individual student's journals provides a lot of information to adjust and help encourage the participants to build a real individual leadership and a business learning community.

The results demonstrate how effective action research can be in collecting timely and practical data for research and for improving a learning environment.

As the research progressed, the frequency of suggestions slowed but suggestions became more specific and detailed by the leadership teams. For example, the teams recommended and presented a weekly award to the weekly

leader that demonstrated the most effective leadership.
This type of suggestion provided some important inspiration
and motivation for each community of practice and
demonstrated the practical leadership skills of the
leadership teams.

Individual Participant Profiles and Shifts

Specific unique leadership development has been
identified from 10 individual research participants over
the course of the research. There were clear differences
in each participant's views and actions towards leadership
and the community of practice. There was no obvious
difference in the way women and men showed leadership with
the exception of their ability to (in some cases) secure
the community's attention. However, there were both men
and women who had difficulty in this area. By comparing
data, a clear progression and development of leadership
views and practical skills emerges. I linked journal
comments, three leadership surveys, and two group peer
evaluations (Appendix C, Form 4) and made connections
between the data.

Sample participant 1. This participant's data were provided in chapter 3 as an example of data.

Sample participant 2. In contrast to Participant 1 (a female), Participant 2, who happens to be male, showed a reluctance to be more active and to assume leadership. He was very quiet and more passive than the women described under sample data in chapter 3. However, over the course of this research this male participant became more active and volunteered two or three times to present for his group. Peer group feedback went from, "has weak leadership skills" (mid-point) to "is a good leader"(end of research). Both group peer evaluations noted he should provide more "feedback" and be more "expressive." This student's end of research comment around leadership was "My leadership skills have developed. I'm not scared to go in front of anyone and do a presentation." Knowing this student from previous, more traditional classes, I can say he has made tremendous progress in developing his leadership and dealing with some self-confidence issues. He seemed very proud of his role in the class and community. The most important theme that emerged over time after leadership for this participant is self-confidence.

Sample participant 3. A third participant (male) had a similar development of leadership but went from being a somewhat active student to being very active student. From the start, the data indicated a desire to be more of a leader "who leads by example." Later data indicated the recognition of a need to take on a "much more assertive role." This participant won several sales awards during the second half of the research and made much stronger presentations. Peer comments confirmed he was more active. The most important theme after leadership for this participant was influence and motivation of people.

Sample participant 4. This male participant had fairly strong leadership qualities and skills from the start but actively worked on improving them. For example, he was very in tune with using different influencing skills for different people. At the end of the research he noted, after running the meeting, that "it was very difficult keeping the group's attention" and that you needed to "travel to each group to keep them on task." This participant had an eye on his future leadership, noting how success for him would require good people skills and strong presentation skills. The most prevalent theme after leadership for this participant was influence and

motivation of people. He used his quiet one-on-one personality to engage more people. This was a good example of how the framework of this research could support and contribute to leadership for a range of different personalities.

Sample participant 5. This male participant was very quiet but active in small groups. Initial survey comments noted that a good leader was someone who could take control. Comments from his peers included: "Quiet but his ideas are always good" and "should speak up." These comments are collaborated by his journal quote, in which he commits to be more assertive, "I will voice my opinions". This participant also identified the need for more confidence in presentations in his end of term research survey. Participant 5 is a good example of how someone who has identified as a personal goal the importance of getting more directly involved. This participant worked diligently towards that goal and was keen to achieve it. The most prevalent theme after leadership for this participant was self-confidence.

Sample participant 6 and 7. Participants 6 and 7, a female and a male, had similar backgrounds and subsequent

reactions to leadership. Participant 6 is representative of someone who has a different, less direct approach to leadership based upon spending the first half of her life in a different country. She identified her greatest obstacle to success was the adaptation needed for living in a new country. Her approach was direct, focused, but not loud and assertive. She contributed a lot to leadership activities. In many ways she demonstrated emotional leadership (Greenleaf's Servant Leadership, 1979). She defined leadership at the beginning as, "someone who is ready to serve others, ready to listen, cooperate, share opinions, and work together with people." She was always willing to help other group members and patiently directed groups when it was her time to run the meeting. At midpoint in the research she made a statement with regard to the community of practice's mission: "Yes the class did deliver on its mission. The class is a beginning of a way forward. I must say a very big thank-you. This class has really helped me improve positively and it has greatly contributed to my personality."

This participant was similar to a lot of others who wanted to know it was all right to lead in the way that was most comfortable for them. Another participant (Number 7) who maintained his personality and was a leader was a male

who summed his leadership experience in the end of research survey as, "The business world does not have to always be so formal and uptight." It was interesting to observe all the different ways in which participants led and how, when they were themselves and did not follow a prescribed formula, they seemed to have more impact. Peer reviews acknowledged that both these participants had a lot of ideas and contributed well to the group. The most important emerging themes for Participants 6 and 7 were self-confidence and personal growth.

Sample participant 8. Participant 8 was a quiet but nervous male who identified a need for confidence and more motivation in his initial survey. He identified a need to take more control over the situation at midpoint. By the end of research survey he stated, "I can take charge in a group, before I did not." He also noted that he learned that his group always depends on him. This shows an understanding that he has a role to play in leadership and a reason to be active. This participant noted his most liked aspect of the course was, learning to be a leader at the midpoint survey and "being able to show that he really was a leader" by the end of research survey. This is a great example of someone who defined his own leadership and

discovered how important it was to have some control and influence. Knowing this student for some time, I am surprised by this shift in attitude from being consistently passive to more active! Clearly the most prevalent theme after leadership for this participant was self-confidence.

Sample participant 9. Participant 9 was a self-assured male who almost always acted like a leader. He was an example of someone who did not need to learn new leadership skills but one who could benefit from honing his skills. He identified, for example, in the midpoint survey that "I should think about how the other person will react and use the correct method when negotiating and "make the presentation count (by making) a good impression." This participant approached leadership as a challenge for personal growth and continuous improvement. He noted in the end of research survey: "I enjoyed leading the class and I liked the applications of the material. They were all real life examples." This shows how much influence the focus of leadership can have even on the participant who starts with established leadership skills. There were other examples of male and female leadership participants who acted similarly and used the business leadership in the classroom as an opportunity to go further in their

leadership development.   The personal growth theme was predominant for this participant and similar ones.

Sample participant 10.   This female participant identified leadership as being the most important focus. At midpoint she said, "Leadership is the key to any aspect of your life." By the end of the research she said, "I have found a new approach in leadership management." This participant also felt comfortable with her leadership style. "I am assertive but not demanding." She goes on to say at the end of the research, "I learned that students (people) respect authoritative powers." This participant felt comfortable with being assertive, knowing that it did not have to be offensive to others and that it was acceptable as long as she did not get aggressive. The most prevalent theme after leadership for this participant was influence and motivation of people.

Data from the above participants showed consistent development of leadership and a growing conviction to be more active, including reasons for being more active. Some of the data from these and from other participants showed the development of the emerging themes of leadership style, communication, personal growth, self-confidence, and

motivation. To varying degrees, participants showed increased involvement and improved leadership skills.

Emerging Themes

The following is a summary of data and implications for emerging themes from all the participants in this research. Emerging themes as mentioned include leadership, leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth, communication, and real world. Data, including comments and actions, have been linked to determine if themes are consistent and to what extent they develop over time. Many of the emerging themes show similarity to Covey's (1991) "Internal Centers" and "Characteristics of Effective Leaders." For example, Covey's "Team Orientation" characteristic is similar to the Teamwork theme that emerged in this research.

The themes of leadership, leadership style, and communication emerged as expected but with differing degrees, as the data shows. Teamwork was not expected immediately but emerged over time from group activities and from a common community focus. The most surprising themes were influence and motivation, self-confidence, and personal growth. These themes and the resulting data showed specific development in individual participants.

The depth of development far exceeded what I had seen in previous approaches to learning. The last theme that emerged was real world, which was expected but not to the extent that it came through. Students reflected on what they were doing in the classroom as being representative of the real world.

The themes of values and sales professional were expected but did not emerge clearly. Participants did not readily express values as a theme. They came up with values for their community but did not express values explicitly in their journals or survey responses. The sales professional theme was not clearly identified in journals or surveys either. This may reflect that surveys (Appendix C) and journals focused on leadership and did not prompt discussion around the sales professional.

Leadership

Leadership was the predominant theme that emerged from the data in this research as expected, based on the focus of this research. However what is worth noting regarding leadership is the extent to which it became an important mind-set for participants. Initially participants were learning about what leadership is and how they could benefit from it. Appendix B shows initial survey comments

about leadership from the start of the research. Many had

not thought of themselves as leaders or that they could act

as leaders. In the midpoint survey (Appendix C, Form 1b,

Midpoint Survey), one participant revealed, for example, "I

learned there can be different kinds of leaders, not just

drivers." This shows recognition that leadership can be

seen in many different forms. During the first half of the

research, some participants that ran a weekly meeting or

were in groups, were surprised by the impact they could

have. Two comments from participant journals illustrate

their surprise. "I helped motivate people in the group to

complete the presentation" and

>I felt I was a leader today because half our group was
>
>not here and myself and another participant took it
>
>upon ourselves to organize our solutions and present
>
>them to class. In the end we were able to gain the
>
>opinions of fellow class members and take control of
>
>the situation.

These students did not expect to have an impact on

others, and were surprised by the degree of impact and

control they did have. Another student wrote about leading

the meeting: "leading the class helped me take charge of my

life and no longer be pushed around." There was a range of

results that practicing leadership had on different
individuals.

Another way to measure the impact of the leadership
theme was to watch the evolution of involvement in
activities and the demonstration of practical leadership
skills over the course of the research. The depth of
leadership was evident by the number of different
participants that were chosen by their peers as leadership
winners each week. Most students were chosen at least once
during the research.

Not all participants had strong results from their
leadership efforts. A couple of weekly leadership groups
(mini-industry teams) did not make as much effort and it
showed in the low energy level of the class. However
without fail these groups said they had learned the
importance of organization in delivering leadership and
wished they had been better organized. Each mini-industry
team had two opportunities in the research to lead a
meeting. There was a marked improvement in almost every
group and individual. For example, in my reflective
journal two thirds of the way through the action research I
noted, "Bob had a much improved presence in running the
class from last time. He seemed much more outgoing and
took such an active role that he was voted the weekly class

leader by the leadership team." Leadership was quite
individualized. My reflective journal for the same week
has many additional examples of this, including: "Fred was
strong at getting the class going. Cathy was very involved
and added energy to the class. Anne worked quietly to get
the group going." Also: "Some participants that showed
real leadership strength included Devon who is not afraid
to voice his opinions and Sally whose presentation skills
have improved. Janet and Josh continue to be strong!" All
the participants gained a new appreciation for ways to
contribute and practice leadership.

My journal observations of leadership participants in
action are corroborated by the participants' own journals.
For example, Devon commented the same week that he needed
to "have strong presentations to show confidence" and that
he would "try to be calm and take everything more lightly."
Students clearly incorporated specific strategies and
actions to better express their leadership. They also
became more and more passionate about leadership. For
example, second half journal comments on ways to improve
included, "Listen, understand, and be more persistent" and
"Make the presentation count and make a good impression."
The leadership and leadership skills practiced were seen as

extremely useful. Two students in their journal near the end of the research said, "It would help them get jobs."

Reflecting on participants' comments and actions from one of the last leadership meetings I wrote the following:

The above journal comments show a real commitment to leadership through involvement and new efforts. These students are expressing what really makes a true leader and with the support of personal passion and desire for success! It is refreshing to see a true energy amongst almost all participants. Leadership as a theme (mind-set) has proven to be fundamental in building strong business people. Business people who know what is important will succeed no matter what comes at them!

The individual nature of leadership was a positive outcome of practicing leadership within the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework and showed just how much growth and real learning could be delivered with a single learning focus or mind-set. Other themes beyond leadership emerged, some expected or anticipated, others not. Leadership style was one of those anticipated, but with surprising directions.

Leadership Style

Individual and collective leadership style are key outcomes of this action research. Participants expressed their leadership in their own personal way. They showed as time went on that they could be the leaders who expressed more of their own opinions and style (e.g., "direct and to the point"). The more comfortable they became the more effective their leadership style was.

Having each participant keep a folder with leadership development pieces prompted some of the focus on this theme. This included articles on leadership and a leadership profile sheet (Appendix C, Form 3a) to help chart leadership style and progress over the course of the research completed by the end of the term. In addition, there were some leadership skills activities at the start that helped participants identify their personality and nature. These activities also included opportunities to hear what styles others had and why they behaved the way they did. This helped create respect for different personalities and leadership styles. The business leadership literature discussed in chapter 2 provided most of the basis for leadership attributes, emotional leadership, and practical leadership skills exposure. The literature and connected activities were effective in

giving participants approaches and skills to practice. For example, Covey's (1991) internal centers provided a recipe to follow for building business leadership. The internal centers of: a sense of personal strength and confidence, a set of guiding standards or principles, a drive to make things happen, and a common sense perspective of the way things should be were practiced when students took on leadership roles in the classroom.

First half journal (first 14 weeks) comments on leadership styles from two quite different female participants showed recognition that one needs to develop one's own leadership style. The first said, "I found that through leading the class it gave me a chance to be expressive...(and)...learned how to take charge and be confident using my personality to help in business." The other said, "This (actually) helped me to know what others see as a fault. Some do not like people who take charge. I will be able to adapt myself to different situations." There were many journal comments that showed a range of leadership styles. Some more bold, others quiet, and both extremes were recorded amongst men and women alike.

The end of research survey (Appendix C, Form 1, End of Research Survey) captured an even greater range of leadership profiles with more participant comments than

earlier surveys or participant journals. It is interesting
to note that such a diverse range can exist within one
collective group of people. Some illustrative examples of
diverse leadership profiles are presented in Table 5.

The range of leadership styles, some traditional
business styles, others very nontraditional, shows that
participants recognize and believe they should go with a
style that fits with their personality. Some have chosen
to add to their style by trying to be assertive when
appropriate. These additions were accepted as ways to have
more influence and to be heard without changing one's
overall personal leadership style. Participants seem to
understand that when a business is a good fit for one's
personality it will support the individual and his or her
unique style.

Table 5

Leadership Style Profiles from the End of Research Survey

Leadership Style Profile Self-Assessments

"Teaching and pulling a group together"

"I am very relaxed, to the point, but still cool and calm (at least I come across that way)"

"Organized, task oriented, self-motivated"

"I prefer to have an aggressive/driver leadership style"

"Friendly, peace maker, organized, good listener and want to more assertive"

"Organized, responsible, independent, and a good team player"

"Confident and outspoken"

"Always say what is on your mind"

"Likeable and active and expressive"

"Being able to accept people's differences and being able to stand my own ground"

"Laid back, unassertive and open minded"

One student said to me, near the end of this research, that this was the first class where he felt that his style was acceptable to business. He said he had the impression that he had to be much more serious and could not have fun while doing business. This demonstrates the extreme importance of leadership style development and how it can build leadership that is meaningful and right for each participant.

Leadership style became an important measure of overall leadership development within the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework. It also contributed by encouraging participants to be themselves and to express their own opinions more openly and to be themselves in business. This experience reinforces the importance of emphasizing individual leadership skills in business education as outlined in the literature (Brown, 2002). There was also clear evidence of participants developing an awareness of where to apply these skills in future school and business endeavors. The literature on leadership skills (Levine & Crom, 1993; Zuker, 1983) provides more detail as a basis for leadership skills that students practiced. Many saw applications from their business leadership in the classroom experience apply to the real world. In some cases they recognized and valued a new path

where they began building a lifelong leadership mind-set that could bring potential success.

One of the last meetings of the two business learning communities was a discussion of business ethics. Students were uncharacteristically open in discussions. They were not afraid to express their own views on a number of ethical questions, including the accepting of gifts from suppliers. Some of this openness can be attributed to the comfortable nature of the groups, and the fact that participants felt comfortable expressing their opinions openly due to a mutual respect. Different opinions were accepted and encouraged by the community of practice. Respect and teamwork were outcomes of participants defining and getting comfortable with their own leadership style. The success of these results confirm the Benimadhu and Gibson (2001) Conference Board report (discussed in chapter 2), which calls for organizations to encourage a variety of leadership styles for building more leaders.

Teamwork

Teamwork was not directly expected as a theme even though it is a natural outcome of the leadership focus and activity-based learning. Prior to this research I was expecting each community of practice to move towards a

common focus but I did not expect participants to characterize this as teamwork. It was also one of the chosen values that each class adopted along with their mission statement at the start of the research. In addition, teamwork was one of Covey's (1991) "Characteristics of Effective Leaders," which were shared with the communities of practice when developing community values. Teamwork proved to be an essential element of leadership in the classroom as it is for business, according to Covey. Comments about teamwork were very general. However, teamwork and cooperation became an overall theme that was a part of every meeting of each community. Some initial data (Initial Survey) on teamwork included its mention as a skill among some of the participants. The midpoint survey included the comments shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Teamwork Comments from the Midpoint Survey

Teamwork Comments
"Teamwork creates leadership"
"Leading class and helping others"
"Teamwork is best working in a group where my participation is encouraged"
"Contribution of the whole team makes a stronger result"
"How hard it is to get the class's attention"

This last comment in Table 6 was quite common, especially in the first half among mini-leadership teams that ran weekly meetings. It was not common in the second half. A related comment from the midpoint survey referred to the relaxed nature of the atmosphere. "Yes there was a real group atmosphere, feedback was encouraged, the least stressful class to speak in front of. The atmosphere seemed always supportive and cooperative. There was always someone willing to help." One of the class leadership teams commented at the end of a class meeting (before the midpoint survey) "a comfortable environment for participation is being established." When presentations were on, there was never a need to ask people to watch-they did out of support for their fellow participants.

Teamwork comments from the end of research survey were not any more specific but more compelling and urgent. They included: "to incorporate a superior team attitude as a leadership approach" and "Teamwork is everything." Data from student journals near the end of the research also show the importance and urgency of teamwork. One participant referred to his group as a team and noted how important it was for "teammates" to do their best.

Teamwork was also one of the most popular aspects of every community of practice meeting meeting. Frequent survey comments on teamwork were further collaborated by data from two "Stop Start Continue" surveys (first half and second half). The "Stop Start Continue" surveys included several "continue teamwork" responses. However, there was a lack of specific comments about teamwork potentially due to its strong emphasis in the way the business community was designed and run.

Influence and Motivation

Influence and motivation is a theme that represents the participants' desire to have their leadership work in practice. It embodies the need for approaches that can make an impact on the organization and its people. Influence and Motivation became an important theme over time. One of Covey's (1991) "Internal Centers," Power and Wisdom parallels this theme and was shown to be essential to the leadership principles of many participants. It was included in comments about the way in which leadership had changed as well as comments about leadership style. Influence and motivation came up first in the initial survey under the characteristics of a leader with words such as "motivates, power, and takes charge." Some

midpoint comments around influence included, "Leading class and helping others" and "Led by example."

Influence and motivation comments and self-assessments were much more common in the end of research survey. These are included in Table 7.

Table 7

Influence and Motivation Comments from the End of Research Survey

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<div align="center">Influence and Motivation Comments</div>

"I view leadership as a chance to leave a mark in other's minds and make sure your voice is heard"

"I am comfortable in leading and guiding others"

"Yes I understand that all four influence styles (persuading, asserting, bridging and attracting) are key for delivering what people will need to hear so as to be a better leader"

"Leadership involves a lot of interactivity and involvement with other people"

"Everyone needs a little help, guidance and motivation"

"People are people and don't be nervous to approach those you don't know"

These comments demonstrate an understanding of the significance of leadership as impacting on a person's ability to get things done and make a difference to others. In addition to comments, actions also demonstrated the influence and motivation theme. The actions of each weekly leader clearly reflected their influence. Certain groups and certain individuals were able to motivate and influence the class more than others. The more they were involved with the class the more they had influence. By midpoint in the research, I asked each week's leaders (mini-industry team) to split up and cover each group to increase participation in activities. The more assertive mini-industry teams and individual leaders were able to have more influence. The more direct the instructions leaders gave, the more influence they had both as meeting leaders and within small groups. Leaders with clear concise directions and interaction with each group were able to influence participants to be more active.

Data from the peer group process review (Appendix C, Form 4) included many comments about peers' influence. The most common recommended improvements were around influence (almost half). For example, representative comments included, "Be more vocal and influence others" and "Should be more forceful and take charge." Most participants

wanted others to have more influence to improve the results of their community of practice.

Many smaller themes emerged as students focused on developing and practicing their leadership. Some were to be expected (e.g., communication), while others such as self-confidence and personal growth were not generally expected. The data from this action research showed students were able to express their concerns about their self-confidence even though they are normally hesitant to do so.

Self-Confidence

Self-confidence is a theme that represents participants' concerns about other participants' attitudes toward themselves. Many participants spoke of improved confidence and of being "less overwhelmed by presentations."

For some participants, self-confidence comments reflected a degree of uncertainty with respect to the whole process. For example, one student commented, "I am not comfortable being the center of attention." Even towards the end of the research in surveys there was still some evidence of self-confidence but the nature of the comments was different and in some cases it had become positive.

For example, comments from the same participants expressed more of a take-charge attitude. Participant journal comments were consistent with the surveys. One leadership team member journal comment showed progress on self-confidence: "I was a leader today by participating as much as I could. I gained more confidence by being able to speak more diligently." A typical participant said, "they voiced their opinion…and felt more comfortable presenting today." Another telling participant journal comment was, "I learned that the key to doing business is having a clear form and style of communication." These journal entries demonstrated that participants were reflecting on their progress and learning. Some of the midpoint and end of research survey self-confidence comments are listed in Table 8. The comments demonstrate the depth of development of self-confidence.

Table 8

Self-Confidence Comments from the Midpoint and End of

Research Surveys

Self-Confidence Comments

Midpoint Comments:

"Yes I am more confident when having to lead a group in a discussion and speaking aloud giving insight."

"I have become more outgoing."

"I have raised my thoughts more openly. In the past I have been more hesitant to do so."

"I am not comfortable being the center of attention. I prefer to create a friendly group atmosphere and guide the group."

End of Research Comments:

"My leadership skills have developed. I'm not scared to go in front of anyone and do a presentation."

"I need to be more assertive. I need to face my fears and try not to be afraid to speak my mind. I also need to be more positive and have self-confidence."

"Well my leadership has improved because it has made me more assertive. Presentations and group work have taught me that maintaining control is important but not always enough, you need to do things to get people to take action."

"More presentations to build confidence."

These are quite positive comments that demonstrated how important self-confidence is as a theme for participants within this type of research. Another comment from the end of the research indicated that more work and practice on developing self-confidence was needed. "I have to be more assertive with people. When I am put on the spot I tend to lose confidence." Another comment, "Standing my own ground, and being assertive yet keeping up a friendly attitude and personality," shows how participants have identified strategies to build confidence and be assertive at the right time. It also shows that participants are more aware of the importance of being assertive and that you can still be friendly at the same time. The leadership skills workshop on assertiveness in the second half of the research seems to have been put into practical use. This in conjunction with a first half workshop on influence skills provided hands-on leadership tools for students to use as needed. The literature on leadership skills (Levine $ Crom, 1993; Zuker, 1983) points out the importance of developing skills such as assertiveness and positive influence. The emergence of the self-confidence theme reinforces the need for this emphasis. A number of participants have identified areas that they need to work on notably self-confidence. This is

a start and recognition of a need that will get the process going. Some of the leadership tools from the class that include influence skills gave students a tool box of practical leadership skills to prepare them to take specific actions in tough, unfamiliar, and uncomfortable situations.

One student in particular picked up on building self-confidence and the need to be more direct. This developed over time from the way Mark interacted in groups. It was very clear in Mark's journal comments on a negotiation activity, entered two thirds of the way through the research. Mark spoke of how to be a better negotiator and how to be more assertive. He said:

> I will conduct more research so that I can be more
> direct when making a point to the buyer. As well I
> will be more confident with my facts, back them up
> with some reasoning (influence skill) and more
> aggressive presentations. I will try to come across
> in a more positive way by having knowledge of solid
> facts and presenting them in a (strong) manner.

This hands-on attitude as exhibited by Mark developed in a number of participants as time went on. This attitude was consistent with data from the end of term survey as

well. It showed that participants were developing personal

action plans for future school and business.

Personal Growth

Personal growth is a theme that represents the

participant's desire to improve who they are. It emerged

as one of the most important results of this action

research. Initially it was identified as a small benefit

to leadership and then became more obvious theme as more

participants commented on it in terms of their future

school and business. For me this was a significant

surprise because in my 10+ years of community college

business teaching, I have not seen signs of a common desire

for personal growth or a common "love of learning" attitude

that personal growth represents. This theme highlights the

importance of building leadership into business education

to fill the leadership gap described in the literature. In

addition it provides further evidence of Wenger's (1998)

finding, that the school and classroom is a place where

active "membership" in "communities of practice" (p. 7)

results in significant personal growth. The comments in

Table 9 demonstrate early signs of a personal growth theme

emerging from the midpoint survey and further development

in the end of research survey.

Table 9

Personal Growth Comments from the Midpoint Research Survey and End of Research Participant Journals

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Personal Growth Comments

Midpoint Comments:

"Leadership requires an effort and does not always come naturally."

"I have taught a class and done many more presentations!"

"It is harder than it looks and it takes a lot of patience."

"This class is a beginning of a way forward. This class has helped me improve positively and it has greatly contributed to my personality."

End of Research Comments From Participant Journals:

"I now know what kind of a leader I am and how I can improve myself to become an even better leader."

"I have grown from being an analytical leader to being a driver. I enjoy getting things done."

"I am a passive/responsive but trying to be quicker at responding."

These kinds of comments showed that by the mid-point of this action research study, personal growth was emerging as a key theme and benefit from the leadership focus. It showed how much of an impact the approaches could have. Personal growth was a lesser theme but showed the extent to which this research and its approaches impacted on participants.

By the end of the research there were more personal growth comments in participants' journals. Participants demonstrated a real grasp of how their leadership mind-set helps them grow. These data were consistent with participants, responding to the end of research survey, who had very strong future leadership plans for continued personal growth. It indicated enormous personal growth and shifts in attitude from more passive to active. Comments such as, "At work instead of waiting for a task to be given I will take charge!" and "Asserting needs practice. I think that we use these (influence) styles every day, they become more important when we deal with the business world." "I am hoping to become more expressive and assertive." "I hope to become a group leader (manager)" were representative of personal growth.

The above quotes at the end of the research not only show the extent of personal growth but also show how

participants knew their learning was linked to the real
world and had value for their future. Many end of research
survey comments supported this, including this more
specific comment: "Putting to use what I've learned about
negotiating. Fully utilizing my role in a group
situation." Also, "(I need to) start taking more risks to
realize opportunities." There is an excitement in these
comments that seems to hold promise for the future.
Participants demonstrate some sense of personal direction
and an ability to use practical leadership skills that may
be useful for the future.

Communication

Communication was one of those expected themes given
the diversity and scope of activities as well as the number
of presentation opportunities for leadership participants.
Survey comments included an abundance of communication
points. The initial survey at the start of this action
research indicated communication was important for
leadership, sales, and business. Some survey comments
illustrate progress on the development of communication
skills (Table 10). Communication comments were rather
general but demonstrated the importance of the theme at the
midpoint of the research. It also indicated from the last

quote that the environment was important in encouraging and supporting participants in their communication. This environment was explored further under teamwork. Term presentations demonstrated the strength of communication skills in the number of outstanding sales presentations. This was to be expected but was a summative outcome of many earlier in-class presentations and activities that pushed presentation and communication skills to high levels.

Table 10

Communication Comments from the Midpoint and End of Research Surveys

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Communication Comments

Midpoint Comments:

"I have been able to communicate better with people."

"I have learned to speak more effectively."

"(I am) ready to learn to listen and communicate in a positive way."

"The environment was supportive with open communication and enjoyable."

End of Research Comments:

"My attitude towards leadership has changed. I realized more and more this term that if you don't take charge you will have communication problems. People tend not to listen to you if you don't speak up."

"I view leadership as a chance to leave a mark in others' minds and make sure your voice is heard."

"I learned that people have different personalities and styles of doing work. I also found out that I can be a good leader."

"Being able to accept people's differences and being able to stand my own ground."

By the end of the research, survey comments and self-assessments around communication were much more specific and spoke not only to the past but the future. These comments and self-assessments were illustrative of the importance of emphasis of communication in each participant's minds. This data were further collaborated by data from the peer group review process (Appendix C, Form 4). They included many comments about peers needing to better communicate. For example, "Be more open" and "Let others contribute" were representative of many feedback comments on how to improve communication. Communication is a theme that participants considered about themselves and others.

The impact of focusing on a single mind-set, leadership, is significant as it affects so many aspects of a person's learning about business and helps them to improve at many business activities, particularly those that require interaction and communication.

Real World

Another theme that came up quite often was real world. The real world theme represented participants' need for their experience to be practical and useable in the business world. The presence of this theme among

participants reinforces the importance of Gardner (1991) and Wenger's (1998) call for real world education. Participants noted the connection between activities and leadership skill development with the real world. Typical comments by the end of the research in student's own journals included: "it will help when handling similar situations with real customers" and "As a sales rep I will be responsible for taking part in negotiations and bidding and what I learned today will help me prepare for that." The two Stop Start Continue surveys (Appendix C, Form 2) both had "continue with real life examples" as a comment from participants. These and other comments are to be expected around real world, however, the extent to which they were common in all data collection sources was not. This indicates that the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework has supported bringing the real world to the classroom. Participant awareness of this is a strong indicator of its importance to the research participants.

There have been consistent data (comments and demonstrated leadership skills) from the noted sources to support several important emerging themes: leadership, leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth, communication, and real world.

The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework data and results follow.

The Business Leadership in the Classroom Framework

Overall, the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework assessed in this research was effective in supporting individual and collective leadership. The basis of the framework was Wenger's (1998) *Communities of Practice* model and Doherty's (1998) "Learning Laboratory" experience, which provided the key structure in the framework and the design for the research.

The key elements of the community design included the need for a mission statement, leadership team, shared learning, common focus, and a non-controlling environment where participants determine the direction, were implemented with success. The framework was extremely effective, as was the use of a variety of practical and emotional leadership approaches and leadership skills based upon the literature, including Covey (1991). These provided a foundation for participants to form their own leadership style and approaches. Specifically, the framework allowed participants to define their own leadership, manage their own business leadership community, and practice their own leadership and leadership skills

while learning the course curriculum. Many of the
framework principles used in this research were effective,
but required changes to meet the needs of the community
college business student. What was needed was a more
structured environment that included tools to assist
involvement and encourage independent learning. The
participants who had been used to a more traditional
passive learning environment required a few mechanisms to
organize their activities.

At the midpoint of this action research, a more
specific framework was established based on the research
experience and resulting data. This included more of the
mechanics appropriate to participants as learned through
the action research process. The adjusted framework is
illustrated in Figure 4.
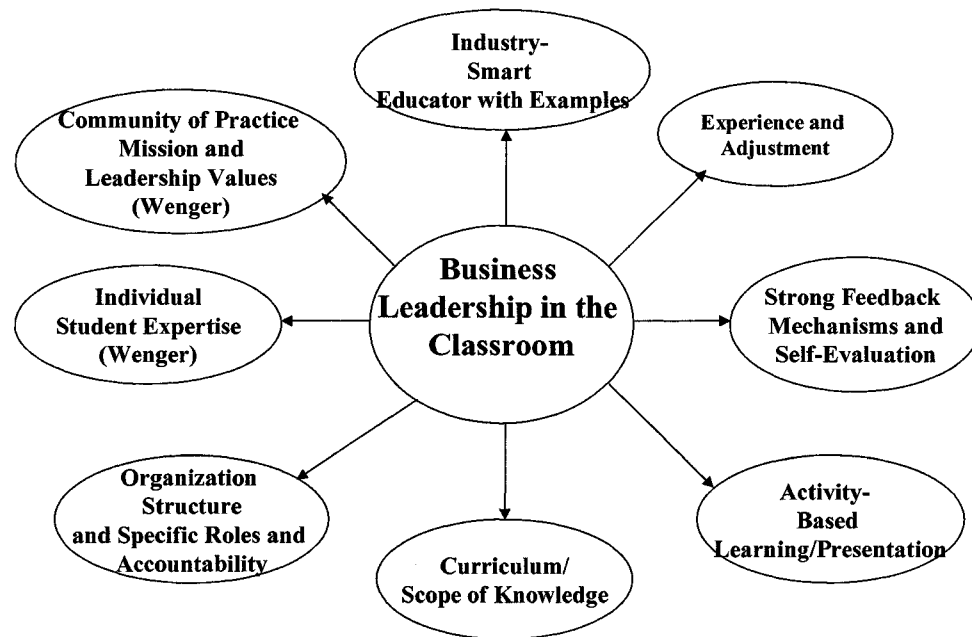
Figure 4. Adjusted business leadership in the classroom

framework.

This framework draws upon elements of a community of practice, a foundation from the facilitator and specific practices and structure. The framework became more specific to provide the structure required for the participants, based on feedback and reflection during the research. Additions include: more specific roles, more practical examples and detailed curriculum, and strengthened feedback and individual accountability. These changes reflect feedback from participants and my critical reflections as researcher.

Each class meeting used a "business meeting" structure to simulate a business environment. A different group of 3 or 4 students (mini-leadership team) acted as meeting leaders each week. They organized learning activities, worked with groups, and handed out sales awards for exceptional performances.

More structures and established practices were put in place to maximize active leadership and participation and leadership skill development. This included the use of a form for students to prepare a summary of their sales field experience before presenting. The use of such a form, which gave each of the week's meeting leaders some individual feedback on their leadership initiatives, provided more meaningful and timely feedback.

In addition a greater use of advance preparation was implemented to better prepare participants to take an active role in their community of practice. For example, on two occasions students did advance reading and developed summaries of some of the foundation learning in preparation for presenting to the class. This allowed students to gain more in-depth knowledge and to have more meaningful shared learning in class. This strengthened the leader's organization and influence and also heightened the level of participation during the classroom meeting.

Another key area where structure needed to be refined was the defining of what the community leadership team role was to be. The leadership team provided regular feedback on the meetings and ran occasional team-building exercises. A more active and consistent leadership team role that included providing regular motivation and direction to all participants could have been effective in building leadership.

Some aspects of the framework and the community of practice design did not fully reach their potential based on expectations outlined in the method. These included the use of mission statements and leadership team roles. Unlike the Doherty's (1998) "learning laboratory" study results, these participants were less independent and

required a more structured framework. This could reflect the fact that they were more used to a more structured community college learning environment than the university students in Doherty's research. In addition to structure, rewards and motivation became an increasingly important factor in the framework for supporting leadership as the action research progressed and evolved.

On a weekly basis, the use of a business meeting format was effective to some degree in representing the business world but needed more of a sales culture to truly reflect the real business world. The activity-based learning aspect of the framework was important and allowed different groups of participants to test their leadership at a higher level twice during the research. Feedback from other participants and myself provided opportunities to provide direction for individuals to pursue their leadership further. Some activity-based learning approaches proved to be more effective than others. For example, problem-based learning was at times too cumbersome and complex. Activity-based learning needed to be straightforward and easy to get involved in to encourage active participation including leadership.

The Mission Statement helped to focus the community of practice and give meaning to its work. An example of one

of the communities of practice's (M2) Mission Statement is as follows:

> M2's mission is to create a Sales Team that promotes sales leadership and professionalism. The team will strive to help each other, be competitive, leading edge, serve each other and learn from listening to each other. Together we will make sacrifices that will benefit the team by building every member up to be individual leaders and to develop a practical understanding of the key elements of selling.

M2's values included: respect, treating everyone as equal, to be understanding of others, to assist others when needed, trust, being prepared for compromise decisions and consideration for others, their morals and needs. The mission and values were not as powerful as expected for focusing the community. Some sort of an external purpose or cause as part of the mission may have helped to motivate students as was the experience in the 1998 Doherty study.

Elements of the mission statement were constant in the research data as outlined under the leadership and teamwork themes. Unfortunately, in practice the mission statements were not incorporated into each community of practice on a regular basis. They were not even reviewed to ensure they served their purpose and as a way to refocus and adjust the

community's activities. The mission statement should change over time to reflect the language of the community and to help better define its focus and purpose. For example, the importance and impact of the emphasis of leadership in the community became more and more specific over time and could be better described in the mission statement.

However, the mission statement helped set up the atmosphere that encouraged participation and pulled each community of practice together around a joint enterprise (professional sales leadership organization). There were positive comments about each community of practice achieving its mission statement. For example from the end of term survey, "I think that we did meet our mission statement. Our class worked as a successful group of co-workers. We all respected and learned from one and another." Another participant noted, "Yes, we acted professional (professional was never a developed theme) and worked professionally to prepare for the future." These comments were typical of both the midpoint and end of research surveys. Each survey also brought a couple of comments and questions about what constituted the mission statement. The mission statement seemed to set the tone

but its role was limited and always in the background. It was not up front and center on a weekly basis.

There were some adjustments made after the first half of the research to reflect the adjusted research framework. The action research process provided ongoing opportunities for reflecting on results and on data collected from journals, surveys, and the leadership team. Based on the feedback, for example, roles became more specific so that every group member assumed different roles to practice their leadership. A role chart (Appendix C, Form 3b) was added to encourage participants to take on different and specific roles in their groups each week.

Mini-industry teams running the class needed more coaching and tips on how to run an activity and motivate a group before attempting to run the class. This was accomplished in the second half of the research by providing a list of requirements, tips, and roles for each member. In addition, I tried, as facilitator, to provide time in advance of each meeting for each group to take the activity and modify it to their needs so they could take ownership.

Administrative structure/processes, such as a regular consistent agenda, roles for groups, leaders to work with each group, feedback forms and self-participation forms

(where participants evaluate their level of involvement), and weekly awards created opportunities for students to use to express their leadership and be active.

Subject content and constructive feedback and criticism needed to be driven by me, the educator, to ensure quality of the learning. Note summaries were provided in the second half of the research for a basis of knowledge for students to apply and draw upon. Students seem to need a base of learning to apply to their activities. This gave them more confidence to participate and encouraged them to add their own experience more often.

There also needed to be better ways to get students to share their pre-call/sales learning to the class. In the second half I gave students a form in which to fill out some of their specific findings from their sales representative before being called upon to present. This was tried on a couple of occasions with better results. Students heard more detail of their peers' experience and its importance.

Rewards/Motivation and Feedback

Rewards went over well as a form of individual recognition. These included weekly sales awards and small prizes like chocolate bars and Tim bits. They were either

provided by the weekly leadership group or by me, the facilitator/educator. Other motivation was provided by participation marks (self-evaluation), peer feedback, and the emerging teamwork theme within each business leadership community.

Each week the meeting leaders named and awarded four sales awards, the Surprise Sales Performer Award, the Wise Operator Award, the Digger Award, as well as the Outstanding Presentation Award. The winners received a certificate that recognized them along with previous winners. The leadership teams of both classes recommended we continue with these weekly rewards, since they help make the meeting more like a sales meeting. One of the community's leadership teams suggested we have incentive bucks for performance in class to try to simulate rewards for sales in class. The incentive bucks were to be used at an end of term sales awards meeting where prizes would be given out based on bucks collected. This was tried in the second half in one class but was judged to be too much and not really necessary. The weekly awards plus a new weekly leadership award (given by the leadership team) provided good recognition for almost every participant. This helped to build the beginning of a sales culture. However, more was needed.

Motivation towards active participation was heightened by a component of participation marks. Students received self-evaluated participation marks for being active in each class. In practice this was not measured as effectively as it could be. In the second half of the research, a new self-evaluation form (Appendix C, Form 3b) was added so students could measure their own activity in each class. The scale (1 -5) used included the following descriptions; low (1), average (2), showed initiative (3), key role (4), and driving force (5) to help participants make clear evaluations.

This approach of self-evaluation was effective but students needed to be reminded in each class to fill the form out. If it had been filled out each week and had been given a review by a peer or myself to encourage more impartial ratings, then it had potential for acting as a true motivating and rewarding tool.

The building of a portfolio of leadership work by each student provided some motivation and pride for each participant leader. Feedback, including awards, proved effective because students appreciated the recognition; consequently, personal growth seemed to be accelerated by this. However, there needed to be more opportunity for feedback from peers on some performance areas to increase

leadership development. The McMaster University (Peer) Group Process Feedback forms (Appendix C, Form 4) and more active promotion of a learning/sales portfolio were added in the second half of the research to allow for better feedback and self-reflection for each student/participant.

The peer group process feedback forms provided some candid and anonymous assessments and feedback for each group member from the other group members. It also provided some actionable steps for participants to improve their group contribution and leadership skills with groups. They got to see if others were interpreting their leadership the way that they had intended.

The forms were brought in to address the leadership teams' comments that some critical feedback should be provided regularly (2 or 3 times per term) from team members. There were assessments of a number of group roles and room for comments on leadership. One of the key areas of feedback was around recommended leadership improvements. Some examples of some actionable peer comments included, "should share more opinions," "listen to other's ideas," "be more assertive and maintain focus," "try not to stress too much about school," "let others contribute more," "be louder and take control more often," and "good as is." Some very practical and honest feedback was provided.

However there was not sufficient time given for participants to review the feedback, develop action plans, and practice addressing comments.

Learning Approaches

In the first half of the research students shared their own individual learning from their pre-call reports (Sales Research Reports on a company and a selling situation) and from meetings with their sales representative. This provided some independent learning that students could share and brought current real business experience into the classroom. Other independent assignments were used twice to have students prepare presentations on some of the material in the text. These were then shared in groups and presented to the entire community of practice. The result was a livelier atmosphere which many participants said added excitement to the community of practice.

The approach of groups running the class was effective in fostering leadership opportunities, especially when participants managed activities. Early feedback in the first half of the research prompted the theory and tools for each week's meeting to be provided by the educator. This allowed each group to focus on activities and skills

development and be more prepared and more professional. A variety of activities were used making each meeting different, with shorter activities proving more effective. Data from Stop Start Continue surveys indicated a strong preference for shorter activities. There were many positive survey comments about the use of activities as learning approaches. They contributed more to foster a team and sales meeting atmosphere. From a group leadership point of view, activities included me giving more timely feedback in the second half of the research to offer weekly meeting leaders an analysis of their leadership, immediately after the meeting.

The overall agenda for weekly class meetings included: an introduction, leadership, leadership team feedback, a sales story/meeting objective, sales tools and theory, activities, and wrap up and worked well to involve more people in running and contributing to the meeting and the building of leadership. However, there needed to be more of a sales meeting "feel." This could be accomplished by continuing to work at bringing the independent sales learning from each participant into the meeting. In addition, mixing up the theory with the activities and other subtle changes in the agenda would help to make things interesting and more energizing.

The problem-based learning activities based on Rideout (2001) proved to be too complex and cumbersome in practice. Stop Start Continue surveys collaborated this. The problem-based learning process is more suited for technical learning such as medical training. A simpler, more straightforward approach with some advance preparation on the part of the participants would be more effective. The use of roles in solving business problems would also help to quickly engage all the students.

The final area of findings follows under the heading Action Research Process.

Action Research Process

The action research process with reflective practice has allowed me, as the researcher, to effectively address my question of how to build leadership in the classroom by constantly assessing the research framework and specific plans and actions for building leadership. Kemmis and McTaggart's (1982) "Model for Reflection" provided a very effective approach to conduct action research. The reflective nature and built-in feedback processes have allowed me to adjust the research framework and to improve approaches to facilitating collective and individual leadership. It has also allowed participants to receive a

range of ongoing feedback to reflect and adjust their approaches to leadership. The result of this has been a dynamic learning environment that supported leadership on many different levels. It also supported the engagement of individual participants and the promotion of their leadership and leadership style.

My Role and Intervention

My role as both researcher and educator required that I not let one affect the other. For example, participants that did not take part in the research were treated as equal to others and I went out of my way to ensure marks were not affected by the extent of participant's involvement or non-involvement. Self-evaluation of participation allowed each participant to judge his or her own participation. As far as the research framework went, I acted as a facilitator. Initially I let participants have more control, but based on the action research results, I assumed more control to ensure the participants were better equipped with leadership tools and sales curriculum. In doing so, I took too much control and should have deferred some control to each community of practice's leadership team. A better balance was needed between my role and participants. Less intervention would

be possible by having each leadership team assume more specific roles on a weekly basis.

The dual role of researcher and educator resulted in a heavy investment of time to ensure that the action research and learning were always kept on track and that resulting momentum was maintained. Action research results (reflective journals, surveys, leadership team focus groups, etc.) generated a lot new approaches and actions that required time to implement between weekly community meetings. The involvement of two classes and communities of practice doubled the work. Results were worthwhile but hard to manage.

Curriculum

The curriculum was easier to deliver with the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework and action research processes in place. The leadership focus complemented sales and worked in tandem. Sales curriculum became the subtheme of leadership at each meeting and provided a focus of knowledge and skills to be learned under the practical approach of business leadership. The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* approach to learning was a refreshing change for participants as shown by the data. Typical representative comments at the end of the research about

the course included "The course reflects real life business environment," "What we are learning will actually help in the future," and "I liked (the opportunity) to lead the class." This approach to learning curriculum gave much more control to participants-more like in the business world where you have some control over the way in which you learn (or solve problems). Students connected specific curriculum and learning by demonstrating and practicing leadership skills. This could be clearly seen by the strength of the end of term sales presentations.

Validation Group Feedback

The validation group provided some very practical input at the design stage of this research and encouragement throughout. Their perspective was particularly helpful for the leadership theme and the practical applications for the classroom environment. In reviewing the findings in this chapter they asked about the use of journals and the students' response to them. They were also interested in knowing what specific insights the leadership roles in the community of practice gave participants into how the real business world would be for them?

The validation group also noted future research opportunities, which are included within the recommendations in chapter 5.

Comparison of Data

As shown by all the data from this action research, there was a consistent development of leadership, its resulting themes, and in general the delivery of each community's mission statement. When comments were linked for individual participants and under each emerging theme, it was clear that participants experienced some similar and some divergent outcomes from the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research experience. Over time, participants exhibited improved leadership skills and commented about leadership in more specific terms, showing a progression. Data from different collection points were consistent. For example, as shown in the individual profiles, student's own journal comments were consistent with their survey comments and comments from the peer surveys. These were further supported by observations in my own journal.

Data with specific themes and for specific participants were linked and showed some similarities and differences, but almost always a progression over time. The comments also became more specific over time.

The mission of each community of practice was assessed in conjunction with the research framework to ensure that it was serving the participants well. Collection tools including Stop Start Continue surveys and frequent leadership team focus group meetings after each community of practice meeting provided strong data from a variety of sources for adjusting the framework and approaches on a weekly basis.

The nature of the action research process and the frequency of data collection ensured that there was an abundance and variety of quality data that allowed for continuous assessment of leadership results and the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework. This allowed for leadership to continue its evolution.

Summary of Findings

The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* action research findings have shown just how individual and collective business leadership can be fostered within a simulated business community in the classroom. The extent and the direction were in turn surprising and expected. Participants have really progressed in developing their leadership as shown by the nature of how their comments and leadership skills evolved from ideas to actions and finally

to planned actions. The depth and development of some emerging themes of leadership such as personal growth is a real measure of the success that this action research has brought. There are areas for improvement such as greater roles and independence for participants, and a better use of mission statements and more of a real world "feel."

Overall, the use of leadership as a single mind-set both in research and in business learning offers enormous potential for facilitating the growth of business students to better prepare them for the real business world. The research framework provided a good approach to simulating the real business world.

In practice, the research brought as many adjustments as successes. As is the nature of action research, the approach had to be adjusted as feedback was collected. Feedback was effective due to its depth and many sources, including student journals, the leadership teams, meeting leadership groups, my own reflective journal, and individual student survey comments.

The action research process was quite helpful in identifying where more tools, structure, and regular practices were needed to help participants with a framework for building their leadership in the "communities of practice."

The most telling specific results were students'
comments in the end of term survey. They commented on how
their view of leadership and leadership skills had changed.
Many noted that cooperation and communication with other
members was essential in developing strong leadership.
Participants clearly saw that leadership is defined by what
happens in practice and how one interacts with others.
They developed their own leadership style that suited their
personality. They identified how they could use their own
style to have influence on a group and a situation to get
things done.

Also noted was the importance of teamwork in defining
leadership and that there really are different types of
leaders. Students learned that they get a lot out of
working with others even if it is time-consuming. One
quote highlights this: "Team work is best, working in a
group has encouraged my improvement in participation."
Another student commented, "It takes cooperation to get the
job done." These participants discovered first-hand that
being active helps define who you are and provides a
framework and skills for being your own type of leader.

Another outcome of the action research was the power
of participant feedback. The feedback from participants
brought new approaches almost every meeting. Feedback was

collected weekly from the leadership team and every couple
of weeks from all participants. Students got a sense that
the community of practice was evolving based on their
needs. It really did develop an energy and momentum of its
own at times. The *Business Leadership in the Classroom*
research framework and results show a very viable and
practical approach for building leadership among
individuals preparing to enter the business world. The
research findings outlined in this chapter have shown the
leadership focus to be both an essential and practical
approach for developing students for business.
Participants responded well as was shown by the data.
Chapter 5 will tie together conclusions and implications,
identify future research, and recommend new directions or
applications for business students at Sheridan College.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research identifies how a business educator can facilitate and enhance individual and collective business leadership among students within the classroom through action research. The research framework includes the community of practice (Wenger, 1998), the community design (e.g., Mission Statement), leadership values (attributes, a variety of practical and emotional leadership approaches and leadership skills), and activity-based learning techniques. Findings reveal significant leadership development on an individual and collective basis. Themes that have emerged and developed throughout the research include: leadership, leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth communication, and real world. The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework has worked well to provide an environment conducive to facilitating leadership despite some required adjustments. The intent was to create a real business world environment to the extent that it can be created within a classroom. Given the experience of this research, more research is

required to further achieve a "real-world feel." Specific conclusions and recommendations follow.

Conclusions

This research and its findings demonstrate an effective framework for addressing the leadership gap. There is a need to develop individual business leaders (students) to prepare them to handle the challenges of the business world. This study addresses the question of how a business educator can facilitate or enhance individual and collective business leadership within a classroom. It illustrates the value of "real world" practical education in business schools. Practical education simulates the real world by allowing students to experience leadership roles and responsibilities before assuming paid business management positions.

Furthermore, this research supports the need for an education that reinforces practical skills and experiences in the classroom within a business school. This study has pointed to an effective way to accomplish this with a specific group of 2nd-year community college marketing students. The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework and corresponding results, demonstrate that active participants with control over their learning

process can make education representative of the real business world. Many of Canada's most respected graduate business schools (e.g., Queen's) are now adjusting their curriculum and teaching approaches to emphasize the development of practical business skills that include leadership (Brown, 2002). To make learning more practical and representative of the business world, postsecondary business schools at the undergraduate and postgraduate level need to rethink how they bring learning into the classroom.

The *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research provides insight as to how one can foster leadership development and real-life practical business experience in the classroom. Participants act as real business people managing their own learning. The framework creates a learning environment where participants and the educator bring business experience through activities in the classroom. For example, different weekly leadership groups have the opportunity to run a simulated sales meeting each week. In addition, the real-life content includes individual learning from sales projects, activities, leadership roles, and sales awards. These were effective in building part of the atmosphere sought, but more real-life content was required to create a complete business

feel. Each meeting provided opportunities to develop individual leadership style as well as leadership skills. The findings outlined in chapter 4 suggest how focusing on a single mind-set such as business leadership, can create practical and powerful learning. The progressive development of individual leadership and other themes demonstrates the varying degrees of the depth and impact of learning. It is hoped that the practical learning will influence a participant's ability to be successful in business for the long term.

The emerging themes of: leadership, leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth, communication, and real world represented common outcomes for individual research participants. Participants not only demonstrated a progression of leadership but also developed one or more of the other themes. The themes represented practical skills that participants felt required strengthening to build their effective leadership in the classroom and in business. The skills of leadership represented a foundation that many of the other themes were built upon and supported. Leadership style was the skill of practicing and feeling comfortable with one's self and particular personality. Teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, and

communication were practical coping skills for working effectively within an organization. Personal growth and real world represented preparation for something new and more businesslike. Together these themes represented a collective mind-set of leadership that would ostensibly better prepare participants for the business world.

In general, the action research process in this research provided the continuous fuel for building leadership in conjunction with the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework. The action research process provided a focus on the classroom activity and its participants. It allowed for constant adjustments and improvements in the learning experience. It also allowed for a greater attention to individual student needs. The use of a reflective journal along with other data collection tools allowed me as researcher and educator, to assess its impact on learning. It allowed me to provide individual attention to develop each student, and to make continuous adjustments to the research framework and approaches for improved learning.

To further gauge the ongoing usefulness and impact of this research on participants, a small follow-up survey (Appendix D) was conducted with 5 participants. In the follow-up survey, I posed three questions to students about

the importance of leadership, their use of leadership, and
the leadership style and skills developed during this
research. All 5 responded independently and positively
about their learning, its continued use, and future value.
One participant said:

> I have continued to practice leadership approaches and
> skills developed during the course of last year.
> These approaches and skills were a great asset to my
> education. It helped me not only in my education but
> in my leadership used for my part-time work.

The comments suggest an overall commitment on the part
of each participant to continue to strive to be leaders.
This indicates that the impact of this research and the
resulting experiences has had a lasting and useful effect
on participants. This further supports the results
reported in chapter 4. Specific conclusions follow under
the subheadings, Leadership Development Results (leadership
progression and leadership themes), *Business Leadership in
the Classroom* Framework and Design, Leadership Development,
Impact on the Educator/Researcher, Leadership Roles, and
Participant Motivation and the Effectiveness of Rewards.

Specific Leadership Development Results

The interest of participants in leadership as a mind-set or main focus, was overwhelming and in some cases quite passionate. Most participants thought it was very worthwhile and valuable. There was a clear progression of leadership development over time based on data from different sources in the research. One self-assessment as reported in chapter 4 illustrates this passion: "I now know what kind of a leader I am and how I can improve myself to become an even better leader." Participants demonstrated a genuine interest in developing their leadership now and into the future, and clearly identified the importance of building leadership influence. The emergence of personal growth as a theme demonstrated that for some, leadership is a mind-set to continue to develop.

The emergence of leadership styles and teamwork as two of the strongest themes shows how important it is for the community of practice to support and encourage the development of each participant's individual leadership style while practicing leadership. There was a high level of enthusiasm in understanding and using individual leadership styles in demonstrating leadership attributes. There was also a marked development of individual leadership skills such as assertiveness and influence.

Individual roles in the community of practice provided opportunities to develop leadership skills.

The emerging themes demonstrated the different directions (or learning skills) that participants focused on in this research. They concentrated on one or two themes to build their leadership in areas that they perceived to be weak. For example, self-confidence was a theme that less assertive participants focused on and although they expressed initial concern for confidence, showed much more self-assuredness in comments near the end of the research. This is an example of the development of Emotional Leadership.

Emotional Leadership was quite common in the participant comments around leadership style, influence and motivation, self-confidence, and personal growth. Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1998) was an important factor in participant's ability to achieve success in leadership. For example, comments such as "Leadership requires an effort and does not always come naturally," and "It is harder than it looks and takes a lot of patience" show "self-awareness" and "self-regulation" components from Goleman's (1998) Emotional Intelligence. Participants not only developed leadership skills but comments suggest they developed emotional leadership. Other comments around

being able to be oneself when leading, show self-awareness. Influence and motivation comments are consistent with the other emotional intelligence components of motivation, empathy, and social skill. Participants demonstrated use of leadership attributes, emotional leadership, and practical leadership skills in this study.

Business Leadership in the Classroom Framework and Design

The community of practice design based on Wenger (1998) and Doherty's (1998) model and experience was very effective in building a dynamic learning environment managed by the participants with only the assistance of myself as the facilitator/educator. It provided a responsive learning environment that encouraged participants to respect each other's unique personality and approach to leadership. As well, it provided many opportunities to take on leadership roles that were representative of the real world.

Participant feedback during the research prompted an adjustment to the framework that would provide the structure required for the participants. As noted in chapter 4, additions included more specific roles, more practical examples, a detailed background, and strengthened feedback with individual accountability. These changes are

an example of how the action research process supports
meaningful adjustments based on feedback from the
participants as well as the reflection of the researcher.
Further adjustments are needed to help participants develop
a clear plan for building their leadership and for more
ways to bring the real business world into the classroom.

At the end of the research there were three areas that
had not been fully developed, including the mission
statement, the community values, and the use of a "joint
venture." These need to evolve and become more specific
over time and more essential to the life of the community
of practice. They were developed within the first 2 weeks
but received very little attention as the research
unfolded.

Leadership Development

A key finding of leadership development was that
participants discovered the importance of putting
themselves into their leadership role. They realized that
their personality was a key part of the leadership style.
Moreover they realized that they could be themselves and a
leader at the same time. This shows the importance of
including leadership skills and activities related to
discovering your personality in this research to help

participants focus on building upon their uniqueness. In
addition, participants discovered the importance of
building on their personal strengths and personality to
maximize their contribution to the collective leadership of
a community of practice. Participants became aware of each
other's strengths and uniqueness and an overall
understanding and appreciation of each participant's
contribution to the community. No matter how self-assured
participants were, they still honed both emotional
leadership and leadership skills by taking on roles in the
community of practice. The range of participant results
shown amongst the 10 reported sample participants
demonstrates this clearly.

Participants' interest in leadership as demonstrated
through this research, indicates that it is important not
to try to focus on too many pieces of learning but rather
to have a single focus and apply it to activities where
specific learning is practiced by doing. Participants gain
a better understanding of a total area of learning such as
sales, by seeing how the specifics practiced fit together.

Impact on the Educator/Researcher

The development of my own leadership skills and
capabilities was an important result of the *Business*

Leadership in the Classroom research. My ability to manage a class of students on a more individualized basis improved over time through the use of action research. This was aided by the framework's use of roles and responsibilities as well as feedback mechanisms (i.e., Peer Group) for participants. I experienced an increased ability to delegate responsibility and was better equipped to provide individual feedback.

In addition, I also developed practical experience in using action research in education. I learned first hand that action research can improve a teacher's practice. The data (i.e., Stop Start Continue surveys) showed that the action research approaches effectively increased input and feedback. From a personal point of view I gained a heightened awareness of individual needs and an understanding of the importance of addressing each student as well as the total class. This research experience made for a more personally satisfying teaching and learning experience.

Leadership Roles

The role of the leadership facilitator in fostering business leadership. The facilitator plays a pivotal role

in focusing the entire community on leadership. The
leadership facilitator does this both directly with
constructive feedback to all members and indirectly by
influencing the leadership team. To support this, there
needs to be a more effective delegation of responsibility
to the leadership team and in turn they need support in
delegating to the entire community through the mini-
industry teams.

The role of leadership teams in fostering leadership.
The leadership teams were effective in each community by
providing feedback and helping set new directions but
lacked the strong leadership role of management of the
community. The role of the leadership teams in providing a
meaningful student-based direction and ownership of the
business community needs to be developed. For example, a
process is required to expand roles for the community of
practice's leadership team in order to give more full
control and responsibility for leadership to the community
members away from the facilitator/educator. The leadership
team positions could be changed two times in a semester to
provide more opportunity for individuals to build their
leadership.

The role of peers in building and nurturing

leadership. Peers can have a great influence on individual

participant's leadership development as shown by their

feedback in the Group Peer Feedback forms (Appendix C, Form

4). This influence could have been more frequent and might

have included more follow-up to build an ongoing dialogue

on leadership development.

The role of curriculum in building leadership.

Leadership experience was hampered by the nature of the

students' major independent learning assignment.

Participants had to set up their own sales contact to

complete the assignment. In some cases it was straight-

forward (e.g., based on family contacts) but for some it

proved difficult to find a helpful business contact.

Therefore the experience varied by student. A stronger

real business contact and context for each participant

would provide a source for ongoing learning through a

series of outside meetings instead of one.

Participant Motivation and the Effectiveness of Rewards

The use of timely feedback after individuals assumed

leadership roles was effective in helping participants

adjust their leadership actions. The weekly sales awards

supported the need for recognition and, for some of the more competitive participants, the need for achievement.

The value-added participation marks worked especially well in getting all participants to establish the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* as the key focus of their learning. Students will always want to be rewarded marks for their time and effort, especially with all the demands of other courses, part-time work (full-time in many cases), and family responsibilities. Once into the research, participants demonstrated personal satisfaction that provided intrinsic motivation to participate actively.

Implications

The following are the key implications and questions from this research. Implications are outlined from the participants' and the business educator's point of view. It should be reiterated at this time that this study has limitations in that it is an action research study that was conducted with two classes of community college marketing students at one college at a specific given time. Therefore, any findings cannot be extrapolated beyond this group. However, results can be used for the basis of further action research.

Participants

1) All participants need both defined roles and enough responsibility to manage their own community and leadership. They need to be allowed to make mistakes. A question for future research is: How can we balance defined roles and responsibilities so participants can experiment and learn from their own mistakes while developing leadership?

2) There needs to be a change in the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research framework to not only encourage and begin developing individual and collective leadership mind-sets, but to sustain them for further development. A question which arises is: How can the research framework leave participants with a clear course for ongoing leadership development?

3) The success of the community of practice depends on the framework and community design being implemented effectively by participants. So then how can more meaningful missions statements, collective values, and individual values help participants to manage their communities of practice more effectively?

Business Educator/Facilitator

1) There is still a need to make the classroom feel more like the real world. One potential approach would be through the promotion of individual student expertise for example. So what other approaches should be adopted to increase the real-world feel in the classroom?

2) Course curriculum and content does not always work effectively to promote real-world learning. So how does it need to change to be more effective with the adjusted _Business Leadership in the Classroom_ framework for learning?

3) There is a need to create a balance of leadership development through emphasizing leadership attributes, emotional leadership, and leadership skills. A question for future research is: What is needed to ensure each receives enough emphasis?

4) The educator needs to be more aware of every individual participant's needs. So then how best to use action research methods such as journals and one's emotional intelligence to pick up on more needs?

5) There are six key future research opportunities arising from this action research. These include: i) Assessing the _Business Leadership in the Classroom_

research question further but with the above implications addressed and with another group of 2nd-year marketing students, ii) Assessing the development of Business Leadership with a broader emphasis in other 2nd and 3rd-year courses beyond the sales courses in this research, iii) Assessing the long-term impact of the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* research on participants with a follow-up survey 1 year after students graduate and other follow-up surveys throughout each participant's career, iv) Researching Team-Building as a single mind-set for business readiness in a community of practice, v) Assessing the differences in leadership development of women versus men and of different cultural backgrounds, and vi) The importance of practical versus emotional leadership.

Recommendations

The following are my recommendations in response to the results and implications of the research.

Develop a Set of Specific Participant Roles and Responsibilities

Greater responsibility should be given to the leadership team members to give them power in the management of their community of practice. For example, each leadership team member could act on a rotating basis as the chair of the meeting, facilitating the overall agenda and building leadership into each meeting, while the weekly leadership teams continue to run the activities. Activities should continue to be designed to promote leadership within the content of the course being covered. The research facilitator should stay in the background as more of a consultant-covering some key theories, making observations of the leadership, and providing feedback to participants. This will allow enough space for participants to experiment and learn from their own mistakes.

Responsibilities could be in the form of a job description that would be proposed to the community and modified to meet their needs. A job description would set some ongoing responsibilities and allow participants to adjust their actions. To accommodate some space for students to experiment, there would have to be some choice in the agenda especially the activities of each meeting so

participants would have the freedom to choose. One responsibility outlined in a job description could be that participants be required to provide constructive feedback to their immediate peers (at their table) to support leadership development on a rotating basis (every fourth meeting for 4-member mini-industry teams).

Sustainable Leadership Development

In addressing the question of how to make leadership development more sustainable, there is a need for participants to articulate their specific goals in conjunction with their leadership style and the community of practice's collective goals. Students/members should have an individual plan for leadership that meets both their needs and the community of practice needs. Ulrich, Zenger, and Smallwood (1999) emphasize the need for measurable results in a good leader. Taking on leadership requires "focusing on desired results and linking specific attributes (and actions) to those results" (p. 17). Not only is there a need to exhibit practical leadership attributes but it is essential to have specific results in mind.

From a business point of view Ulrich, Zenger, and Smallwood's (1999) *Results Based Leadership* emphasizes the

need for balancing the results of employees, organizations,

customers, and investors. It begins with employees and

their need to have goals for achieving results. This

should be done in the classroom by having all participants

develop a leadership plan with goals. Some of these goals

should directly tie into the community of practice mission

statement, roles, and responsibilities, while others would

be part of each individual's specific leadership

development plan. This can be accomplished by adjusting

the community design (see Figure 2, earlier in the

document) to incorporate goals to sustain leadership

development. In addition, specific goals and action plans

should be added to the Leadership Profile (Appendix C, Form

3a) completed by each participant. For example, goals for

a typical participant could be "to focus on explaining my

opinions more clearly by adding rationale" or "to delegate

responsibilities to other group members and hold them

accountable." Specific goals provide a tangible way for

participants to build their leadership and for other's

(i.e., peers) to support them. The goals can be adjusted

and added to over time based on regular feedback.

Some goals should relate to common values from the

community, while others should be unique. Peers should

support the process by rating each individual's performance

against goals along the lines of the Group Process Review
Form (Appendix C, Form 4).

Develop Meaningful Areas of Focus for all Participants

Use of the communities of practice design for
implementation (see Figure 2) has been effective in
establishing community values. However, as part of the
development of leadership values there needs to be
community values as well as the identification of each
individual participant's areas of focus at the mini-
industry team level. Individual areas of focus would also
set the tone for establishing goals. The themes that
emerged from this research are a good source for what areas
of focus to expect. Figure 5 shows the addition of "Areas
of Focus" and "Goals" to the Mini-Industry team level of
the community of practice design.

Communities of Practice Design For Implementation

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  Mission Statement  │
                    │   - Joint Ventures  │
                    └─────────────────────┘
               ┌──────────────────────┬──────────────────┐
     ┌─────────────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────┐
     │ Practical Leadership Skills │  │  Community Values   │
     │  - Facilitator/ Educator  │  └─────────────────────┘
     └─────────────────────────┘
```

| Membership Roles | Leadership Team | Activities
- Team Building
- Cooperative Learning Approaches |

| Mini-Industry Team
- Individual Participant Areas of Focus
- Individual Participant Goals | Mini-Industry Team | Mini-Industry Team | Mini-Industry Team | Mini-Industry Team |
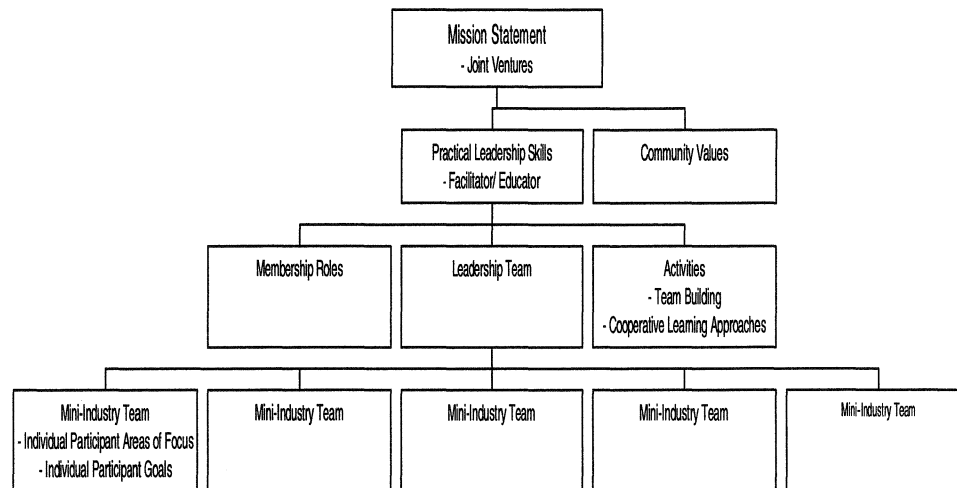
Figure 5. Revised overview of the communities of practice

design.

The emerging themes of leadership style, teamwork, influence and motivation, self-confidence, personal growth, communication, and real world represent core leadership values that are important to marketing students based on this research. They provide a focus for building meaningful individual and collective leadership. These should be used as part of the framework and design for future research on *Business Leadership in the Classroom*. For example, as part of the initial survey, participants would identify which of the values are meaningful to them but also individual areas of focus? The communication theme could be measured as "Being able to put my ideas across so that they play a significant part in decisions and directions that groups in class and business take." By describing "areas of focus" in detail, participants would be better able to select those that have personal meaning. Students' responses will help them identify specific goals for building and developing their leadership.

Promotion of a Real-World Feel and an Improved Research Framework

To make the research framework more effective for future applications, two adjustments in addition to the ones made in chapter 4, are recommended. The Revised

Framework (Figure 6) shows individual student leadership expertise with added objectives for students to develop and practice an implementation plan that will sustain leadership development. An additional recommendation would be to include outside business resource people. These resource people would serve as contacts for participants to shadow and learn from. One resource person for every two participants is recommended so that the participants have a business source for independent learning that can be shared with the entire business learning community throughout its life. Some of the same resource people could be used as guest leaders to run special sales or leadership training or as guest speakers to share their business experience.

Another change recommended to bring the real-world feel into the classroom is to have former participants who have graduated, come back as resource people, guest speakers, and resources for future leadership participants. This should provide a continuous flow of real-world content and contacts. It should also provide networking opportunities for the employment of graduates.
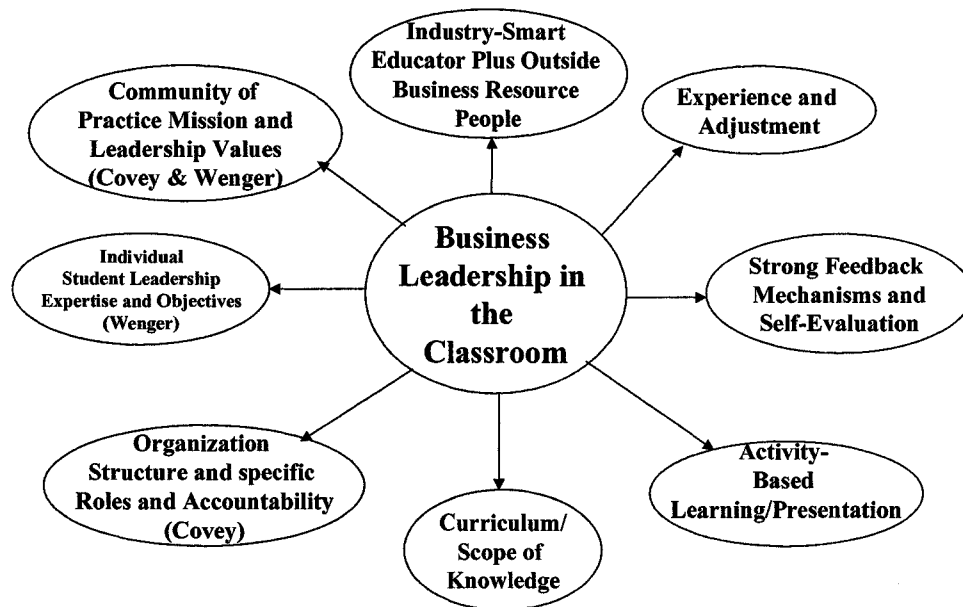
Figure 6. Revised business leadership in the classroom framework.

Changes in the Curriculum to Support Business Leadership in the Classroom

The achievement of the community's mission, values, and some meaningful joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998) should be part of the course curriculum and become a regular part of every business learning community meeting. For the sales course this joint enterprise could be tied into a cause that they would agree upon and sell or promote on campus. For example, the United Way or the Student Opportunity Fund (fund for financially challenged students) could be the joint enterprise to focus on throughout the term. The use of a joint enterprise such as a sales drive for United Way could result in other important unanticipated real-world results, which could be shared in class. Another enterprise could be an on-campus business such as "Used Textbooks" that donates its profits to a charity. The community of practice would agree on their own joint enterprise. The use of a team approach that promotes sales leadership and professionalism should still be a key part of a community's mission but it could include one of the joint enterprises that is both tangible, and incorporates a set of selling goals for each person. Each participant would have goals that are part of their individual participant goals.

Provide a Balance Basis For Leadership Development

The business educator needs to provide leadership material in a balanced way to first define leadership attributes as a starting point, and then to develop participants' emotional leadership and practical leadership skills. The leadership attributes could be covered early as an introduction to leadership before participants begin to develop their own leadership. Emotional leadership based on Goleman's (1998) Emotional Intelligence components (e.g., self-awareness) and practical leadership skills (e.g., assertiveness) could be part of workshops throughout the research study's life to help participants set individual areas of focus and participant goals around their leadership development. The goals and progress could be monitored through action research methods including the educator's journal, by focusing on smaller mini-industry teams (one or two each week) to provide detailed feedback. Peer feedback could also be used to monitor goals and participant progress in achieving them.

The Business Educator's Increased Awareness

The educator needs to exercise his/her emotional intelligence (e.g., self-awareness, etc.) to be more in tune with each student. This could be done with checks

throughout each community meeting where the facilitator notes the emotions of certain respondents. Each week, two mini-industry teams could again be focused on. In addition, participants who express strong emotions should be noted, reflected on, and responded to. To make this more achievable, each mini-industry team could be responsible to do an emotional intelligence check on a regular basis (once every 3 weeks) to note any weaknesses of emotional intelligence components amongst group members.

Considerations for the Future

At this point it is recommended that further action research be conducted to assess an adjusted research framework in 2 terms of one 2nd-year sales course. Given the ongoing nature of action research, there needs to be more of a follow-up to maximize the effectiveness of the framework. It will not only provide further research but also support the development of leadership among a new group of Sheridan's 2nd-year business students. Further to this, it is recommended that there be an integration of leadership as a core mind-set in Sheridan College's marketing program with the support of action research and team teaching to assess results and adjust approaches.

The success of focusing on one core mind-set in this research shows the importance and potential for Sheridan business graduates. The single focus allows participants to achieve more through active involvement. Developing each individual's unique leadership and associated skills within a number of business courses will make graduates better prepared for success in the business world. The leadership theme could be integrated into all 2nd-year sales courses as assessed in this research and into 3rd-year courses, including marketing management and entrepreneurship. This would give participants more time and opportunity to solidify their leadership development. It will go a long way to prepare business graduates to fill the leadership gap by practicing being successful and effective business leaders. It would also make Sheridan College's business graduates unique.

From my perspective as a business educator this research and its results have demonstrated a viable approach, the *Business Leadership in the Classroom* framework, which helps meet the leadership gap. It has been shown as an effective method to simulate the real business world, providing a training ground for developing future leaders. It provides a framework that, based on

results, should be further refined and assessed with action

research.

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Appendix A: Research Letter of Consent Form:

John MacRae
Professor, School of Business
Sheridan College
Davis Campus

Re: **Classroom Business Leadership Research**

Dear Student:

This is a letter to outline the research that I am conducting as part of my Brock University Master of Education program. I am assessing the theme of "Business Leadership in the Classroom". Your Sales class is being managed to represent a sales team and is being facilitated by yourself and your fellow students. The purpose is to make the classroom as close as possible to a real life business environment where all involved (students and teacher) take the opportunity to be sales leaders and learn as much about their leadership style and practice as they do about sales.

To assess our success I will be keeping a journal on our collective activities and results. Individual roles and results will be kept confidential. Any reporting to others about our results and findings will be anonymous. The purpose of the research is to assess what aspects worked and what approaches need to be changed. The research will allow for adjustments to our teaching and learning approaches as we go. The overall approach to our class and the research is designed to make for better learning and ultimately better-prepared graduates.

This research study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the Brock University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions about participants' rights please contact the Brock Research Ethics officer, Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550, ext. 3035.

Please sign your name at the bottom of the following **Letter of Consent** to show your acceptance of this research. The results will be put into a summary report that will be available for participants at the end of the term and to Brock University as part of my Master of Education research work.

Thank-you.

Sincerely,

John D. MacRae
Professor, School of Business

"Business Leadership in the Classroom" Research Letter of Consent Form:

The following are conditions and details of participation in the Business Leadership in the Classroom research for your consideration:

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary (as explained in class) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty. There will be no effect on my grade whether or not I participate. Students who are not involved in the study will not have their input specifically recorded as part of this study. All data will be collected as text not on video or audiotape.

I understand that there will be no payment for my participation.

I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question/participate in any aspect of this project that I consider invasive, offensive or inappropriate.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that all information will be coded so that my name is not associated with my Answers. I understand that only the researcher named above will have access to the data. All data will be disposed of within three years of its collection.

Your signature below indicates that you have (1) read and understood the relevant information; (2) understand that you may ask questions in the future; (3) indicates free consent to research participation.

I _____ grant permission to John MacRae to include me as outlined above in his Brock University Master of Education research study. I have been promised as outlined above that my name will not be included in any research reports.

_____(Student Participant)

If you any questions or concerns about your participation in the study, you may contact John MacRae at 905 459-7533 ext. 5092 or Dean Michael Manley-Casimir at 1-905 688-5550 ext 3712.

Please take a copy of this form with you for further reference.

I have fully explained the procedures of this study to the above volunteer.

Researcher Signature: _____Date: _____

Appendix B: Initial Action Research Survey

Results Summary

Making a Sales Leader

Class Responses Before the Start of the Action Research:
(Survey is in Appendix B, Form 1a)

1.   Leader Definition and how to demonstrate leadership

A person who has/is:

- Confident
- Takes charge
- Speaks their mind
- Takes initiative
- Strong voices
- Motivates
- Listens
- An entrepreneur
- Shares and listens
- Strength, power and confidence
- Enjoys teaching others

A person who demonstrates by:

- Giving people something to believe in
- Being organized
- Speaking up
- Taking on roles and responsibilities
- Take the lead
- Puts a plan of action to work
- Holds strong on ideas
- Strong positive attitude
- Shows honesty trust and dependability
- Believing in ones self
- Organizes the group
- Setting goals and focusing the group (small or big)

2.   Skills in Sales and Business:

- Charisma
- Enthusiastic
- Lively
- Knowledgeable
- Polite
- Self starter
- Organization
- Communication skills
- Educated
- Independent
- Outgoing
- Friendly
- Good listener
- Research
- Customer focus
- Present self well
- Team player

3.   Sales and Leadership Experiences

- Outdoor Education leadership Course, confidence, teamwork, group survival
- Sales Associate, Computer Store
- Organization from warehouse work, Trade Show set up and involvement
- Indoor Playground organization and customer Service, Selling and Sales contests
- Marketing courses prior to Sheridan
- Customer service (lumber) and Selling (concrete)
- Customer service (Cash, Teller), Volunteer Treasurer, Organized Event
- Sales, Assistant Manager
- Customer service, communication and selling)
- Sales Associate, Customer Service
- Business Management, Camp counselor, leadership project in H.S.
- Customer Service, lifeguard Instructor,

- Customer Service, Problem Solving
- Retail, customer relationship building
- Worked with people
- Training, Retail customer service and selling
- Leadership skills from sports, Retail Sales
- Assistant Manager Retail, Selling and Managing Store and people
- Marketing Department, Dealing with major contracts
- Retail sales, Leadership Camp
- Retail Sales and customer service and some store management
- Selling Musical Equipment, and air Conditioners
- Customer service, Acting Department Manager
- Sales Associate, Customer service, Supervisor and trainer
- Managed others and used creative approaches to leadership
- Organized Groups
- None
- Customer service
- Store Manager (TH), Managed 60, life Guard, camp counselor and leadership training courses
- Retail selling, Customer Service and Role Model for new staff

4. Learning Styles
- Visual, teamwork
- Visual
- Visual Teamwork
- Visual, teamwork, logic
- Visual, Independent, learn from others
- Logic, visual, demonstration and independent
- Visual, Logic, group work,
- Visual, Verbal, group work, case studies

5. Types of Work upon Graduation

- Advertising/Creative work
- Start Own Business
- Start own business or Sales
- Run Family Business/Sales

- Start own Retail business (animals)
- Marketing management for a magazine

6. Obstacles to Success:

- Effort and Maturity
- Procrastination, Time Management
- Going to school and having a job at the same time, fear of failure
- Boredom

7. What is needed for Success?

- Goals, Confidence and determination
- Set Goals that are achievable
- Understanding of what to do and how to apply it
- Focus and good direction
- Focus on goals, one step at a time

Appendix C: Research Surveys and Forms

Form 1a: Initial Action Research Survey

Name_____

Making a Sales Leader!

Please fill out the following to help us define what our community leadership skills, experiences and perceptions are.

1. How would you define a leader? How do you like to show leadership?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What are your skills and as an sales/business person (qualities such as organized or leadership, communication etc.)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What experiences (business volunteer or other) have had that could be applied to selling, managing sales, or leadership?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.   What types of learning styles do you prefer (visual, verbal, musical, logic, role playing, group/team work, independent learning)? Describe with an example.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.   What types of work will you be seeking upon graduation?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.   What is the single biggest obstacle to your personal success as a student and as a leader? Name and describe.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7.   What do you need to maximize your success in school and in business?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Form 1b: Mid Point and End of Research Follow-up Survey

Name_____

<u>Making a Sales Leader (Follow-up)</u>

Please fill out the following to help us define what our community leadership skills, experiences and perceptions are.

1. Has your view of leadership changed since the beginning of the term? If so how do you view it now?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2. What have you done this term in Sales and other courses to demonstrate your leadership?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3. How would you describe your leadership style?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What did you learn when you and your group ran the class?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What have you liked about this course?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What have you disliked about this course?

_____
_____
_____
_____

7. What can we add to the class meetings to make them more like the real business world?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. What did you learn from your major assignment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. What did you learn from your presentation?

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. What do you need to maximize your success in school and business?

_____
_____
_____

11. Did the class deliver on its mission statement? If so how?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Form 2: Stop Start Continue In-Class Survey

Stop:

Students put down what approaches to learning should be stopped.

Start:

Students put down which approaches to learning should be started.

Continue:

Students put down which approaches to learning should be continued.

Form 3a: Leadership Profile and Self Participation Evaluation Form

Leadership Profile Completed By the End of Term

1.   Personality Type (Driver, etc.):

_____
_____
_____
_____

2.   Personality Profile/style:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.   Key Strengths (i.e., Organization):

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.   Preferred Leadership Style:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5.   Influence Styles that require practice (Persuading, Bridging, Asserting, Attracting) and when you will use them:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6.   Leadership Actions and Responses:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Form 3b: Self Evaluation Form

Completed each week and handed in regularly through out the term:

Leader: _____

Leadership in Action

Self Evaluation of Participation and Leadership Activity Sheet (Rate your level of involvement. For each item as the course proceeds.) and note your specific activities. Be a leader whenever you can and watch your power and influence grow!

Item	1	2	3	4	5	
Level of Involvement	Low	Ave.	Showed Initiative	Key Role	Driving Force	Mark
Bus to Bus Supplier/Buyer Sharing						
Bus to Bus Supplier/Buyer Sharing						
Bus to Bus Supplier/Buyer Sharing						
Wk 1 Activities						
Wk 2 Activities						
Wk 3 Activities						
Wk 4 Activities						
Wk 5 Activities						
WK 6 Activities						
WK 7 Activities						
WK 8 Activates						
Wk 9 Activates						
Wk 10						
Wk 11						
Wk 12						
Sales Negotiations						

Leadership Roles in Your Mini-Industry

Week	Chair	Note Taker	Presenter	Time/ keeper	Other Actions
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

Form 4: Peer Group Process Review

Completed two times during the term (mid-point and end of research) by the same peers based upon one point in time:

Peer Group Process Review Form**: Please rate your peer on each of the following and provide some comments at the bottom. Your name will not be on the copy your peer receives. This will not affect marks.

Leader:_____

Peer Reviewer:_____

Process	Never	Almost	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always	Always
1. Contributes to the development of the group objectives.						
2. Helps to keep the group task-oriented.						
3. Completes tasks as						

negotiated within the group.					
4. Communicates ideas and information effectively.					
5. Listens and responds to others.					
6. Encourages participation by others.					
7. Assists other group members in their learning.					
8. Respects the rights of group members to express					

their values and opinions.						
9. Gives constructive feedback						
10. Takes constructive actions to deal with group conflict.						

<u>Comments About Your Peers' Leadership Style and Initiatives:</u>

1.　Style:
How would you describe your peer's leadership style?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.　Leadership Initiatives:
Describe any initiatives you have observed in your peer today?
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.   Leadership Improvements:
Recommend any improvements that your peer could make in better influencing the group or individuals.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**Source: Criteria for Evaluation of Individual Performance

in Tutorial-Group Process (Source: McMaster University

(Rideout, 2001).

Appendix D: Follow-up Research Survey Form

Business Leadership In the Classroom
Follow-up Survey

Please answer the following questions:

1. Have you continued to practice the leadership
    approaches and skills you developed last year?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

2. How important has your leadership style been in
    school and outside?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

3. Will you continue to use the leadership, leadership
    style and skills in the future, specifically in
    business? How?

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

Appendix E: Ethics Approval Documentation

	Brock University	
Senate Research Ethics Board		**Extensions 3205/3035, Room C31!**

DATE: **April 19, 2002**

FROM: David Butz, Chair
       Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Michael Manley-Casimir, Education
       John MacRae

FILE: **01-248, MacRae**

TITLE: **Business Leadership in the Classroom**

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as clarified.

This project has been approved for the period of **April 19, 2002** to **December 01, 2002,** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request. *The study may now proceed.*

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html to complete the appropriate form *REB-03 (2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.*

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure

that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council. Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form ***REB-02 (2001) Continuing Review/Final Report*** is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.