

BLOGGING AS A REFLECTIVE TOOL FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF A LEADERSHIP PRACTICUM GROUNDED IN THE RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP MODEL

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this research is to examine blogging as an instructional technique to develop an understanding of relational leadership through the lens of a leadership practicum. This research contributes to the literature in leadership education, specifically to experiential learning and reflective thinking in an online environment. **Background:** It is grounded in Komives, Lucas, and McMahon's (1998) Relational Leadership Model (RLM) which is a framework for college students to understand leadership as a process of understanding self and others. **Method:** Blogs from 74 students enrolled in a leadership practicum at a large, comprehensive, southeastern university were analyzed using a holistic rubric to determine students' capacity to understand the elements of the RLM. **Results:** Results revealed that students were able to analyze all five elements on a competent level. **Conclusion:** Blogging was found to be a useful, reflective thinking tool. **Application:** Recommendations are made to enhance the self-reflection process in leadership education.

This exploratory study adds to the literature in leadership education as it relates to experiential learning and reflective thinking in an online environment. While leadership practicums, and especially more broadly experiential learning, and reflective exercises are common in the leadership literature, no studies exist that examine the intersection of these pedagogical approaches. Grounded in Komives, Lucas, and McMahon's (1998) Relational Leadership Model (RLM), the focus of this study is to evaluate blogging as an instructional technique to develop student leadership development through the lens of a leadership practicum experience. Specifically, it examines whether blogging is an effective tool to develop student understanding of relational leadership.

Reflection is an instructional tool that can be used to enhance self-awareness in the leadership development process. Meanwhile, practicum is a pedagogical approach that encourages the application of academic knowledge to a field experience. Practicum is an out-of-class learning experience that provides hands-on experience and research suggests such experiences positively impact student leadership development (Shertzer, & Doyle, 2006). Just as there are many

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