RESEARCH ONLINE

Journal of Peer Learning

Volume 3 | Issue 1 Article 4

11-30-2010

PASS Student Leader and Mentor Roles: A Tertiary Leadership Pathway

Jane Skalicky
University of Tasmania, Jane.Skalicky@utas.edu.au

Annaliese Caney
University of Tasmania, Annaliese.Caney@dhhs.tas.gov.au

Follow this and additional works at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/ajpl
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT This research was supported by a New Appointees Research Grant at the University of Tasmania. The authors would like to acknowledge the contributions of Jillian Smith who provided research assistance including coding data.

Recommended Citation
Skalicky, Jane and Caney, Annaliese, PASS Student Leader and Mentor Roles: A Tertiary Leadership Pathway, *Journal of Peer Learning*, 3(1), 2010, 24-37.
Available at:http://ro.uow.edu.au/ajpl/vol3/iss1/4

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au

RESEARCH ONLINE

Australasian Journal of Peer Learning (2010) 3: 24-37

PASS Student Leader and Mentor Roles: A tertiary leadership pathway

Jane L. Skalicky and Annaliese Caney

ABSTRACT

In relation to developing leadership skills during tertiary studies, this paper considers the leadership pathway afforded by a Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) program which includes the traditional PASS Leader role and a more senior PASS Mentor role. Data was collected using a structured survey with open-ended questions designed to capture the personal experiences and self-reported learning outcomes of students undertaking leadership roles within the PASS program. Twelve aspects of leadership are presented from twenty-three Leaders and Mentors: organisation, facilitation, support, attitude, relationships, role model, collaboration, communication, responsibility, decision making, pedagogy, and session management. The qualitative differences between the comments of the Leaders and the Mentors highlight the pathway of growth students undertaking the PASS roles may experience as they move from Leader to Mentor. The more senior PASS Mentor role provides an avenue for developing leadership capabilities beyond the traditional PASS Leader role. In contributing to peer learning in higher education, this study positions leadership within the PASS/SI context and potentially alongside tertiary leadership programs more generally.

PEER LEADERSHIP ROLES

The role of student peer leader appears to be one that has been evolving behind the scenes as peer learning programs in the tertiary sector (also called academic peer mentoring programs) have been strengthened not only through administrative structures that support their implementation in institutions, but also through transparent links with the teaching and learning theories that underpin peer learning. The gains for students who attend programs such as Supplemental Instruction (SI), Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) have been widely scrutinised, particularly in relation to the academic benefits that are commonly cited as evidence of the effectiveness, and therefore value, of peer learning programs to tertiary institutions (e.g. Congos and Schoeps, 1993; Martin and Arendale, 1994; McCarthy, Smuts, and Cosser, 1997). A range of other experiences has also been highlighted for students including transferable study/learning skills (Martin and Arendale, 1994) and a sense of campus connectedness and community (Skalicky, 2008). The benefits for Leaders, however, have not been considered as comprehensively (Couchman, 2009) even though student peer leaders have been described as 'the real winners' (Donelan, 1999) in terms of being able to develop and transfer skills and experience in the professional world. Generally, there are various lists of the potential skills peer leaders might expect to develop from their roles. For example, feedback from PAL leaders collected at conferences and through evaluations at Bournemouth University in the United Kingdom (2009) sites confidence as the most important skill gained. Other skills listed included: presentation skills, interpersonal communication skills, listening skills, time management and organisational skills, leadership and team working skills, learning and study skills along with employability and altruism. Congos and Stout (2003) report categories of benefits identified by student

© Australasian Journal of Peer Learning
Published by the University of Wollongong
ISSN 1835-856X (print)/1836-4306 (online)

leaders after graduation. These include (in the order of the most frequently reported): interpersonal relations skills, learning skills, leadership skills, work related skills, and content knowledge. Many of these skills and capabilities are familiar to and used commonly across the broad spectrum of education and industry. Within the context of the tertiary sector, such skills are often discussed as generic graduate attributes or capabilities (see Barrie, 2006).

Peer Leaders are uniquely positioned to facilitate the student-centred teaching and learning practices that peer learning programs are founded on and it is perhaps this involvement that acts as a springboard from which a rich campus experience can be gained. These practices evolve primarily from social constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1978) as well as collaborative learning (Johnston and Johnston, 1991). Jacobs, Hurley, and Unite (2008) emphasise the relevance of the theoretical frameworks for effective Leader training. The flow on effects from their involvement with such a rich learning environment, means peer leaders can expect benefits beyond those gained by students attending sessions (Biggs, 2003). Not surprisingly, academic improvement is one such benefit, extending an already strong academic performance which is a criterion for students becoming peer leaders. This includes discipline specific content knowledge (Ashwin, 1994) but also includes study techniques and strategies (Stone, Jacobs and Hayes, 2008), time management and planning in relation to developing the content for each study session.

Along with the academic benefits, Stout and McDaniel (2006) discuss improved communication and relationship-building skills together with enhanced personal and professional development as areas that leaders may benefit from as they participate in SI. The former places emphasis on skills for building personal and professional relationships through regular formal and informal interactions with students and members of faculty. The latter includes self confidence, self esteem, cultural competency (personal development) and leadership skills, teamwork strategies, administrative duties, and experience of evaluations/feedback (professional development). Stone, Jacobs and Hayes (2008) included SI Leaders in their survey research on the value students place on SI with data capturing the advantages student leaders had experienced as a result of their role. Themes regarding the perceived benefits for Leaders included: enhanced relationships, deeper content understanding, better study strategies, leadership skills, and teaching exposure.

Research concerning the benefits for Leaders has been identified as “an area of research that deserves a much closer look” (Stone, Jacobs and Hayes, 2008, p.139), particularly as “it was heartening to hear that SI makes a significant difference in the lives of SI leaders”. Certainly, the complexity of the Leaders’ experiences was captured in a recent study that employed a qualitative research paradigm (Couchman, 2009). The author describes Leaders’ experiences in relation to three themes: facilitation of communities of practice, reflective practice, and mutuality. The opportunities afforded to PASS Leaders in terms of personal and professional development is perhaps one of the more unique aspects of the PASS program, particularly in relation to leadership. Couchman (2009), however, describes the category of leadership skills as “ill-defined” (p. 88). From studies reporting leadership skills as an outcome of undertaking peer leader roles, loosely, this category includes reference to leadership style, for example, “how to be in charge among a group of my peers without taking over or dominating the group” (Stone, Jacobs and Hayes, 2008); and speaking in groups, public speaking and presentation skills (Congos and Stout, 2003). Similarly, strengthened leadership and communication skills are mentioned under the theme “enriching intrapersonal experiences” (Lockie and Van Lanen, 2008).

Undoubtedly, tertiary education has an anticipated and significant role in the development of prospective leaders for our society. With the American higher education system in

mind, Astin, Astin, and colleagues (2000) stress however, that leadership – including both the notion and the educational goals through which to develop leadership – has been poorly considered by tertiary institutions even though many advocate leadership as a graduate outcome. It is becoming more common for tertiary institutions to implement specific leadership programs and research considering the quality of such initiatives is only just starting to emerge. For example, using a grounded theory approach, Eich (2008) identified three aspects of high quality leadership programs. According to Eich leadership is potentiated and enhanced when: students are engaged in building and sustaining a learning community, programs involve student-centred experiential learning, and program development is on-going and research based.

Although the PASS program fundamentally has an academic support focus, and is not a leadership program per se, leadership roles are embedded in the fabric of the program. Research, however, regarding how PASS leadership roles might contribute to leadership development is limited. Furthermore, Lockie and Van Lanen (2008) contend that "there have been few investigative studies regarding the value of the SI experience from the perspective of the SI leader" (p. 2). The research question under consideration in this paper is: What aspects of the PASS leadership roles are identified by the Leaders and Mentors themselves as constituting leadership in a tertiary peer learning environment?

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY: PASS PROGRAM AT UTAS

At the University of Tasmania (UTAS), the PASS program is a non-remedial academic support initiative available to all students studying in selected units. PASS offers regular, out-of-class sessions, which focus on integrating course content (what to learn) with academic reasoning and study skills (how to learn). PASS sessions are facilitated by PASS Leaders - students who have previously and successfully completed the targeted unit. The sessions are informal seminars, in which students might review notes, discuss readings, practice problem solving, and develop study tools appropriate to their discipline. PASS Programs in Australia are an adaptation of the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model introduced in the United States of America at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in 1973 (Arendale, 1993).

PASS was introduced at UTAS in three units in Semester One, 2007 - Introduction to Cultural Practices (Arts), Cell Biology and Function (Health Science), and Torts (Law) - with the aim of increasing student achievement and subsequently enhancing retention in these units. An increase in interest in the PASS program from both staff and students across the University led to the development and implementation of a strategic plan for the growth of PASS across all faculties including the Australian Maritime College. This strategic approach has enabled PASS at UTAS to grow significantly to support 43 units and over 1500 students in 2010. PASS at UTAS is one of only two programs in Australia that is supporting subjects across all faculties. The only other university doing this is the University of Wollongong, the National Centre for PASS. The successful growth of PASS has been facilitated by embedding sound quality assurance processes and research-informed teaching and learning practices into the program, specifically in regard to:

- Criteria for recruitment of PASS Leaders;
- Formalised training schedules and ongoing support for PASS Leaders;
- Alignment with the strategic agenda or objectives of the organisation;
- Review and formal evaluation of the program each year; and
- Participation in the national peer learning agenda.

A key element of the PASS organisational structure at UTAS is its design to encourage cross disciplinary collaboration between PASS Leaders. Additionally, selected experienced

PASS Leaders are given the opportunity to further develop their leadership skills by taking on a senior mentoring role in the program. PASS Mentors work closely with the program coordinator to facilitate and support the ongoing training of the Leaders throughout the year; act as a liaison between the Leaders, unit co-ordinators and the PASS Program Co-ordinator; and assist the Leaders in addressing any problems or challenges they may face throughout the year. Each PASS Mentor cares for a group of approximately 8 to 12 Leaders from different disciplines, and these groups meet fortnightly throughout the year for ongoing professional learning and sharing of ideas. The PASS Leader role at UTAS is based upon the traditional SI/PASS model, with Leaders contracted for each semester to attend lectures for their supported unit, plan and facilitate study sessions, and attend fortnightly meetings. PASS Mentors are contracted for one day a week over a full twelve month period.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The data collected for this paper forms part of a larger research project concerned with developing the notion of leadership in relation to PASS. In the broader project, both pre and post survey data was collected to enable examination of Leaders' expectations before commencing their role and to capture their learning experiences after having undertaken the role for a minimum of one semester. As the experience of the PASS Leaders and Mentors is the focus for this paper, data from the post survey is presented in the results.

Participation

All PASS Leaders (in 2008) and Mentors (in 2008 and 2009) at UTAS were invited to participate in the project. Involvement was voluntary as the project was outside the routine evaluation of the program. In total, 23 PASS Leaders and Mentors participated representing approximately two thirds of the Leaders and including all of the Mentors.

The PASS Leaders (n=17) were generally in their second or third year of study and supported a unit in which they had received a distinction or above in the first year of their degree. Participants represented five of the six UTAS faculties that participated in PASS in 2008: Arts; Science, Engineering and Technology; Health Science; Education; and Law. Approximately a third of the PASS Leaders had attended PASS sessions during their first year of study, although for some Leaders the program had not been available in units they were studying at that time.

The PASS Mentors (n=6) were in at least their third year of study or further through their degrees. The Mentors were called upon to mentor PASS Leaders and administrate subjects within their own discipline as well as units outside their chosen discipline, with groups comprising up to 11 Leaders. An overview of the PASS Mentors' status and responsibilities is presented in Table 1. Data was derived from Questions 1 -3 (PASS Mentor pre and post survey).

Table 1

ID	Year of study	No. of PASS Leaders	Supporting Units
PM1	3rd	11	Psychology; Calculus and Applications; and Art Theory.
PM2	3rd	9	Psychology; Cell Biology and Function; Anatomy and Physiology; Human Biology; and Cultural Practices.
PM3	5th	11	Torts; Contract Law; Zoology; and Chemistry.
PM4	3rd	11	Human Biology; Zoology; Calculus; Torts; Contract Law; and Economics.
PM5	3rd	11	Art Theory; Chemistry; Engineering; Sociology; Psychology; Computer Programming.
PM6	4th	8	Economics; Anatomy and Physiology; Sociology; Psychology; Engineering and Mathematics; Chemistry; Human Biology; and Cultural Practices.

Characteristics of PASS Mentors (PM)

Survey

A structured survey with open-ended questions was the main instrument used to collect data. The survey was designed to capture the personal experiences and self-reported learning of students undertaking leadership roles within the PASS program. Data from questions 6 and 8 (post semester survey) are presented in this paper:

- What are the three biggest things you have learnt by being a PASS Mentor/Leader?
- What aspects of the PASS Mentor/Leader role do you see as leadership?
- The survey is presented in full in the Appendix.

Procedure

The survey was administered to the PASS Leader/Mentor participants at the end of first semester in the 2008 academic year. The instrument was sent and returned using email. The project received ethical approval from the Southern Tasmanian Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at UTAS.

Data Analysis

Survey data for each participant was entered and organised in a database by response. A response comprised an entire individual's answer to each survey question. Descriptors (or codes) were then assigned to each aspect of a response. In this respect long responses, for example, may have included several descriptors assigned to individual comments. This method of analysis was based on a clustering procedure to extrapolate the main themes in relation to each question (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Descriptors were checked by at least two members of the research team. Participant quotes are used to illustrate the themes where appropriate.

RESULTS

Aspects of Leadership

Ten aspects of leadership resulted from asking PASS Leaders and Mentors what they themselves identified as being the leadership aspects of their roles, and these are summarised in Table 2. Eight aspects concerned both PASS Leaders and Mentors. For each aspect, qualitative differences between the responses of the Leaders and Mentors are described. In Table 2 the aspects of leadership are presented by the total number of comments (Leaders and Mentors combined) starting with the most common aspect. In total, PASS Leaders generated 32 comments and PASS Mentors generated 19 comments.

Table 2

Aspect	Focus for the Leaders	No.	Focus for the Mentors	No.	Total no. of comments
Organisation	Preparation and planning (session focussed)	7	Managerial (event orientated)	4	11
Support	Providing advice (study skills and activities)	3	Providing guidance (feedback and concerns)	4	7
Facilitation	Guiding discussion	6	Working towards team outcomes	1	7
Role model	Program representative	4	Modelling standards and practices	2	6
Session management	Monitoring and observation skills	6	NA	-	6
Responsibility	Reliability (task orientated)	2	Accountability (independence and contribution to PASS program)	2	4
Collaboration	Working with others	2	Guiding the outcomes of a team	2	4
Decision making	Activities and learning outcomes	1	Topics and initiation	1	2
Relationships	Creating an atmosphere	1	Developing relationships	1	2
Attitude	NA	-	Inspiration and encouragement	2	2

Leadership aspects identified by PASS Leaders and Mentors

The most common aspect of a PASS leadership role was in relation to *organisation*. The Leaders emphasised the importance of preparation as well as skills to support planning, the groundwork undertaken in the lead up to study sessions particularly in 'setting the agenda' or the focus of each session. For example:

> "The preparation that goes in beforehand is a part of leadership that most people don't consider, but it's just as integral as standing up in front of a group of students and talking about bonding. It's also setting a good example to the students: you can't just rock up and expect everything to work".

For the Mentors, the organisational aspect concerned the management of events and included overseeing, for example, Leader training days, social events and forum presentations and 'making sure systems were in place.' Comments included reference to planning, capacity to delegate and demonstrating initiative.

The *support* and *facilitation* aspects of both roles were the second most common aspects of leadership. In relation to support, the comments from the Leaders concerned providing advice to their student participants regarding study techniques and activities. For the Mentors however, the support aspect concerned providing guidance to the Leaders. Feedback and helping Leaders with their concerns and also to learn more about their roles were specifically mentioned.

In relation to facilitation as a key aspect of leadership, Leaders described being able to facilitate learning through discussion and encouraging 'every student' to participate during study sessions:

> "Also helping students to create their own learning experience, and for them to help the other students along the way by asking and answering questions".

> "I think the leadership is to get the students discussing and playing an active role so they can learn from each other".

Only one comment from a Mentor reflected facilitation within the context of working towards a desired outcome: "Often this involved skills such as facilitating group discussions and ensuring that all are able to have an equal opportunity to share their ideas".

Being a *role model* was a fourth aspect of leadership identified by both Leaders and Mentors. Leaders commented on the role PASS Leaders undertake in promoting and marketing the PASS program around campus and also in terms of being an example of a successful student for the students participating in PASS. For Mentors, being a role model was identified in relation to "modelling of high standards and good practices". Leading by example was emphasised by one Mentor:

> "A second important aspect of the role, and it was something I tried to do in all communications (be it face-to-face or at a distance) with the leaders, is to 'lead by example'. If you are asking your leaders to commit to their position as a leader in a way that they are continually striving to be better, it is important to do that as a mentor also, and allow them to see that self reflection and development is a continual process and there is always room for improvement".

For Leaders only, the skills involved in *session management* concerned the ongoing monitoring and observation that Leaders undertake during sessions to ensure students are "on track" and that sessions are "interesting and useful". Time management as well as leadership 'style' were also specifically commented on. For example:

> "Being seen as a Leader, the type of leadership involved in PASS is (or should generally be) a very subtle style. This makes it difficult to identify specific aspects. Being willing to take responsibility for how the session is going and being willing to interrupt when it is getting side tracked or bogged down, but also willing to sit back and just let it happen. The choice is the leadership".

As an aspect of leadership, *responsibility* reflected a sense of reliability for the Leaders, specifically in terms of offering time and undertaking tasks such as taking notes or typing. The level of independence was emphasised in relation to the Mentor role, for example, "the responsibility of independently monitoring the standards of PASS sessions across the University". In addition reference to the Mentors' capacity to be involved in program improvement and advocating the program were also noted.

Collaboration for Leaders involved working collaboratively with each other, particularly if there was more than one Leader supporting a unit. Leaders also referred to their interaction with lecturers, as well as being able to balance being a Leader and a member of the team.

> "I think there is an important balance in all things between being a leader and being a team member. I believe the chemistry Leaders developed a good sense of this balance by sharing materials and alternating taking the initiative to find something out or get something done. There was no designated Leader as such, but we were all willing to step up when needed".

In relation to collaboration, Mentors noted a number of skills such as: taking and giving instructions, listening to opinions and suggestions, and sharing responsibilities. One

Mentor emphasised that "leadership isn't so much about being singularly 'in charge' as it is understanding how best to guide and contribute to the outcomes of a team."

Decision making for both Leaders and Mentors emphasised having to make decisions regarding activities and topics and also learning outcomes. For one Leader, *relationships* concerned creating a "familiar and comfortable atmosphere" with the students and for one Mentor, developing relationships was highlighted.

Two Mentors emphasised *attitude* as an aspect of leadership, particularly in terms of providing encouragement and enthusiasm.

> "The inspirational aspect, trying to encourage Leaders to remain enthused about the program and helping students is vital and it encourages them to think of new ideas and put extra energy into their sessions".

Learning in a Leadership Role

PASS Mentors and Leaders were also asked to identify the most important things they had learned in their respective PASS leadership roles. In total, PASS Leaders generated 40 comments and PASS Mentors generated 17 comments; results are presented across two tables. In Table 3, comments have been mapped against the aspects of leadership (presented in Table 2) and are summarised in a similar manner.

Table 3

Aspect	Leaders	No.	Mentors	No.	Total no. of comments
Organisation	Preparation & planning (session focussed)	7	Managerial (event orientated)	4	11
Attitude	Managing expectations, respect and enthusiasm	3	Control and being enthusiastic and positive.	3	6
Facilitation	Questioning techniques, value of self directed learning	6	NA	-	6
Relationships	Setting boundaries with students	1	Developing professional relationships with and between Leaders	4	5
Communication	Clarity and confidence	5	Importance of being clear and direct	1	6
Collaboration	Work with other Leaders	1	Interacting with diverse range of people	1	2
Session Management	Flexibility	2	NA	-	2
Support	NA	-	Program overview/taking action	2	2
Decision making	NA	-	Independence	1	1
Responsibility	NA	-	Expectation	1	1

Learning associated with PASS leadership roles

Overall learning associated with a leadership role aligned closely with nine of the ten leadership aspects, with no comments representing the *role model* aspect. An additional aspect of learning, *communication*, was borne out of the data for both Leaders and Mentors. In Table 4 additional themes specific to the role of PASS Leader are summarised,

and collectively these additional themes form some of the *pedagogical* aspects of the Leader role.

Organisation was the most common response for both the PASS Leaders and Mentors in considering the learning outcomes associated more generally with the two leadership roles. Leaders, in particular, commented on the balance between being under prepared and over prepared while Mentors noted various aspects of 'self-management' including managing time and logistical demands, and planning.

Although in relation to leadership, a*ttitude* was only highlighted by Mentors (see Table 2), when considering the learning outcomes more generally, both Leaders and Mentors emphasised attitude in terms of the manner in which they conduct themselves. This aspect for Leaders involved for example, "accepting and learning from mistakes" how to manage their own expectations of running sessions, ideas of perfection, and being able to control the direction of a session. For example:

> "People respond to mutual respect and enthusiasm. I was surprised and delighted to discover that some of my sessions developed (as noted above) a real sense of camaraderie. No matter how tired, apathetic or stressed you may be feeling, your present disposition should not impact on your session. I learnt that the dynamic of your session begins and ends with you personally. If you show respect, enthusiasm and good humour, then you are more likely to see respect, energy and laughter reflected back".

Comments from the Mentors were similar; enthusiasm in particular was again highlighted.

Facilitation was again prominent for the Leaders. In particular, techniques for dealing with questions were highlighted, for example, "deflect questions back to them [the students]" and in terms of "not providing answers".

Relationships featured primarily for Mentors with the emphasis being on people management and developing professional relationships specifically: "resolving conflict and encouraging empathy", "assertiveness,' and not to judge on first impressions". For example:

> "My Mentor role also helped develop my understanding of the nature of professional relationships. In PASS your relationships with Leaders are informal and egalitarian. In general this leads to a fun, collaborative environment where everyone feels comfortable to work together. However, there are occasions that call for a greater degree of assertiveness, such as when one Leader overstepped the boundaries of his role and another was performing poorly in his sessions and administrative responsibilities. After my Mentor experience I feel more confident to be assertive, understanding that professional relationships require you to be when necessary".

Communication was the only new aspect reported in relation to the PASS leadership learning outcomes, and primarily by Leaders. Communication was largely about clarity, for example, 'to slow things down and explain them in a way everyone can understand' and also confidence in communication such as public speaking skills. A similar message from a Mentor emphasised miscommunication: "It is extremely easy to miscommunicate or give people the wrong idea; communication must be clear and direct!" Working with the other PASS Leaders was an aspect of *collaboration* highlighted by a Leader while successfully interacting with a diverse range of people was emphasised by a Mentor.

As with aspects of leadership (Table 2), s*ession management* was identified only in relation to Leaders' experience, being relevant for two Leaders with an emphasis on flexibility, for example:

> "Being flexible and being able to think on your feet. Often you will have a session planned but something comes up, or students have particular wishes for certain focuses. I think being a PASS leader has enabled me to be able to be adaptive to people's needs and incorporate last minute changes into laid plans".

The three final aspects related only to the experiences of the Mentors. On a practical level, 'seeking guidance before taking action' was noted by a Mentor in relation to *support*. A second comment focussed on "being able to view the program as a whole" particularly.

> "The way that everyone fits in to make the program the success that it is, and then using that knowledge to facilitate the development of the leaders and assist them to become the best they can be".

One Mentor focussed on the aspect of *decision-making* emphasising "confidence" and "making independent decisions".

Finally, *responsibility*, for one Mentor concerned the expectation to "provide something useful" to Leaders and not just interact with a wide range of personalities.

The areas of learning that were reflected only by the Leaders are summarised in Table 4. Although all of these areas are pedagogical aspects of the teaching and learning context in which PASS Leaders are situated, four sub-themes are noted within the overarching aspect of *pedagogy*. The first – *knowledge of students* – reflects some of the attitudes Leaders associated with their students, for example:

> "Many students prefer to remain completely confused within a lecture rather than asking a question - in fear of appearing 'stupid' (even though most of the other students are probably in the same boat)".

This aspect also included appreciating the diversity of the students that attend PASS in terms of their backgrounds:

> "The variety of backgrounds first-year students come from (including all manner of things - age, work experience, life experience, ethnicity, educational background, academic capabilities)".

Table 4

Pedagogical aspects	Description	No. of comments
Knowledge of students	Attitudes and diversity	5
Learning styles	Recognising how people learn differently	4
Tools to support learning	Activities, variety and real life example	3
Value of independent learning	Developing independence	3

Pedagogical aspects identified by PASS Leaders

In relation to *learning styles*, Leaders highlighted that accommodating how people learn differently had been an important learning aspect of the PASS program. Example comments included, "some are more visual learners while others are not", and "people have different ways in which to learn and lectures do not always target all of these". Three

comments provided by Leaders' concerned *tools to support learning* for students in their study sessions, for example, "giving real life examples".

Finally, comments from the Leaders acknowledged the *value of independent learning* and emphasised students relying on themselves and each other rather than the Leader, for example:

> "How to lead students into finding the knowledge for themselves better than simply telling them the answer or method".

DISCUSSION

In combining the PASS Leaders' and Mentors' perspectives on leadership and their learning in a leadership role, twelve aspects relating to leadership were identified. Ten of these aspects concerned both Leaders and Mentors: *organisation, facilitation, support, attitude, relationships, role model, collaboration, communication, responsibility*, and *decision making* (ordered by total number of comments). Two aspects, *pedagogy* and *session management*, were related only to the Leaders' experience. Collectively, all of the leadership aspects explored in this study were constructed through self report data bringing the PASS leadership experience to life. This study contributes broadly to the literature concerning the benefits of SI/PASS leadership by considering the notion of leadership specifically and by looking more closely at the experiences and perspectives of both Leaders and Mentors.

During the data analysis process, it became clear that both PASS Leaders and Mentors identify similar aspects when both unpacking leadership as well as when thinking more broadly about the things they have learnt from undertaking their roles. It is conceivable that these two questions could have drawn out quite different aspects. Leadership skills have been identified in several studies concerning the benefits of PASS/SI leadership roles (Congos and Stout, 2003; Stone, Jacobs, and Hayes, 2008) but have been generally poorly defined (Couchman, 2009). From the findings of this study it is apparent that some of the leadership aspects overlap with benefits previously identified separately but not necessarily branded as leadership, for example, organisation and communication.

The qualitative differences between the comments of the Leaders and the Mentors highlight the pathway of growth that students undertaking the PASS roles may experience as they move from Leader to Mentor. For the Leaders, five aspects featured: *organisation*, *session management*, *facilitation*, *communication*, and *pedagogy*. Not surprisingly, all five aspects relate to the planning and facilitating emphasis of the role in which the Leader undertakes. Although the Leaders are part of a broader PASS team, the aspects that they emphasise tend to be task orientated towards delivering study sessions. The pedagogical aspect, which comprised knowledge of students, learning styles, tools to support learning, and the value of independent learning bring to the fore the teaching and learning context within which the PASS Leader role is situated and some of the specific theoretical perspectives underpinning peer learning.

The more senior PASS Mentor role provides an avenue for developing leadership capabilities beyond the traditional PASS Leader role. For the Mentors, the aspects of *organisation, relationships, support, attitude, role model,* and *collaboration* were emphasised. These aspects are more orientated towards building relationships and team outcomes and reflect the broader program perspective within which the Mentors work. The contribution of the recently developed Mentor role to the PASS program at UTAS has become an important feature of its capacity to maintain the standards and quality of the program within the context of a now large institution-wide peer learning program. Beyond

initial training, the ongoing support, training, and monitoring of PASS Leaders has been able to be maintained by building further the leadership capacities of outstanding experienced Leaders as PASS Mentors to work together with the Program Coordinator to fulfil these supervisory functions. Although not referring to a PASS Mentor role as described in this study, Stone, Jacobs, and Hayes (2008) also argue that "the critical components that help to ensure the success of an SI leader are excellent initial and ongoing training and intense supervision" (p. 130).

Leadership is a complex construct, with no universal definition or theory of leadership being universally accepted (Gamage and Pang, 2003). This study has sought to unpack the notion of leadership as developed through PASS Leader and Mentor roles, and in doing so, provide the beginnings of articulating leadership for tertiary peer learning programs that is evidence-based and research-informed. Although beyond the scope of this paper, it is noted that the findings of the study allude to some theoretical perspectives of leadership more broadly. First, the notion of task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership (Fielder, 1967), with some distinctions along these lines borne out between the leadership aspects emphasised by PASS Leaders and Mentors. Second, a transformational view of leadership (Burns, 1978), where "leaders and staff work together for a common cause encouraged by shared values and aspirations" (Gamage and Pang, 2003, p. 217) would seem to align well with the overall goals of PASS/SI programs, where Leaders and their supervisors, be they Mentors or members of staff, are working together to enhance student learning through active and collaborative peer learning environments.

CONCLUSION

By considering the notion of leadership and the perspectives of undergraduate students undertaking leadership roles, this study has drawn out twelve aspects of leadership that reflect the PASS/SI experience. The findings of the study have implications for not only peer learning communities, but also for the tertiary sector more broadly as there is increasing pressure on universities to link student experiences to graduate outcomes against a backdrop of rapidly changing global, economic, and technological challenges.

In the context of tertiary education, the concept of peer learning, although widely successful, has been described as underutilised (Biggs, 2003). Although Biggs was referring to the use of peer learning strategies and programs to enhance student learning and academic outcomes, it could also be said that more formalised peer learning programs, such as PASS/SI, have been underutilised in evidencing the skills and capabilities that they provide to the students who take on peer leader roles. The value of these roles to high-achieving students cannot be overstated in their contribution to the development of graduate capabilities that are highly sought after in the workplace.

This study provides both the leaders themselves and tertiary institutions in general with an evidence-base to the specific nature of the leadership skills developed by peer leaders outside of their usual course structures. The organisational aspect of leadership, for example, is a core element of PASS leadership roles involving planning and preparation processes, and activities that are routinely undertaken throughout the whole academic year. In contrast, undergraduate students in courses of study may have isolated experiences of planning and preparing a workshop or seminar. For the Mentors in particular, this aspect moved to quite a complex skill set involved in managing and overseeing events such as meetings, training, presentations, and developing systems to support the organisational aspects of the role. Extending this research by using future cohorts of Leaders and Mentors, particularly in regards to increasing the Mentor sample size, in addition to expanding the data collection methods should enable the aspects of leadership as presented in this paper to be considered further particularly in relation to

positioning leadership within the PASS/SI context and alongside tertiary leadership programs more generally.

AUTHORS

Jane L. Skalicky and Annaliese Caney,
Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning, University of Tasmania.

REFERENCES

Arendale, D. (1993). Understanding the Supplemental Instruction model. In D. C. Martin and D. Arendale (Eds.). *Supplemental Instruction: Improving first year student success in high-risk courses* (2nd ed.). Columbia, SC: National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and Students in Transition, University of South Carolina.

Ashwin, P. (1994). The Supplemental Instruction leader experience, why Supplemental Instruction is not teaching: A student's perspective. In C. R. Rust and J. Wallace (Eds.). *Helping students to learn from each other: Supplemental Instruction* (pp. 87-90). Birmingham, UK: Staff and Educational Development Association.

Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S. and associates. (2000). *Leadership reconsidered: Engaging higher education in social change*. Battle Creek, MI: W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

Barrie, S. (2006). Understanding what we mean by the generic attributes of graduates. *Higher Education*, *51*(2), 215-241.

Biggs, J. (2003). *Teaching for quality learning at university: What the student does* (2nd ed.). Berkshire, UK: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Bournemouth University. (2009). *Benefits to student PAL leaders*. Available at: http://pal.bournemouth.ac.uk/benefits_student.html.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper and Row.

Congos, D. H. and Schoeps, N. (1993). Does Supplemental Instruction really work and what is it anyway? *Studies in Higher Education*, *18*(2), 165-176.

Congos, D. H. and Stout, B. (2003). The benefits of SI leadership after graduation. *Research and Teaching in Developmental Education, 20*(1), 29-41.

Couchman, J. A. (2009). An exploration of the 'lived experience' of one cohort of academic peer mentors at a small Australian University. *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning, 2*(1), 87-110.

Donelan, M. (1999). *SI Leaders: The Real Winners*. Paper presented at the National Conference on Supplemental Instruction, Kansas City, Mo.

Eich, D. (2008). A grounded theory of high-quality leadership programs. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 15*(2), 176-178.

Fielder, F. E. (1967). *A theory of leadership effectiveness*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Gamage, D. T. and Pang, N. S. (2003). *Leadership and management in education: Developing essential skills and competencies*. Sha Tin N. T., Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press.

Jacobs, G., Hurley, M. and Unite, C. (2008). How learning theory creates a foundation for SI Leader Training. *Australasian Journal of Peer Learning*, *1*(1), 6-12.

Johnston, D. W. and Johnston, R. T. (1991). *Active Learning: Cooperation in the college classroom.* Minnesota: Interaction Book Company.

Lockie, N. M. and Van Lanen, R. J. (2008). Impact of the Supplemental Instruction experience on science SI leaders. *Journal of Developmental Education,* Vol 31(3): 2-9.

Martin, D. C. and Arendale, D. (1994). *Supplemental Instruction: Increasing achievement and retention*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McCarthy, A., Smuts, B. and Cosser, M. (1997). Assessing the effectiveness of Supplemental Instruction: A critique and a case study. *Studies in Higher Education*, *22*(2), 221-231.

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Skalicky, J. (2008). *PASS Program Evaluation Reports: Semesters 1 and 2*. Centre for Advancement of Leaning and Teaching (CALT), University of Tasmania.

Stone, M. E., Jacobs, G. and Hayes, H. (2008). Supplemental Instruction: Student Perspectives in the 21st Century. In D. B. Lundell, J. L. Higbee, I. M. Duranczyk, and E. Goff (Eds.). *Student standpoints about access programs in higher education* (pp. 129-141). Minneapolis, MN: The Centre for Research on Developmental Education and Urban Literacy, University of Minnesota.

Stout, M. L. and McDaniel, A. J. (2006). Benefits to Supplemental Instruction leaders. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* Issue 106: 55-62.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of the higher psychological processes.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

APPENDIX

PASS Leader – Post survey	**PASS Mentor – Post survey**
How many PASS sessions did you take this Semester?	How many PASS Leaders did you support this Semester and across which subjects?
How have you managed the PASS Leader role with your own studies?	How have you managed the PASS Mentor role with your own studies?
What did you most enjoy about being a PASS Leader?	What did you most enjoy about being a PASS Mentor?
What challenges did you face as a PASS Leader and how did you overcome them?	What challenges did you face as a PASS Mentor and how did you overcome them?
Were your hopes for the role realised?	Were your hopes for the role realised? Why, why not?
What are the three biggest things you have learnt by being a PASS Leader?	**What are the three biggest things you have learnt by being a PASS Mentor?**
Please give specific examples of how the PASS Leadership role has helped you improve: Your own knowledge Your communication skills Your problem-solving skills Your own sense of social responsibility Your own global perspective	Please give specific examples of how the PASS Mentor role has helped you improve: Your own knowledge Your communication skills Your problem-solving skills Your own sense of social responsibility Your own global perspective
What aspects of the PASS Leader role do you see as leadership?	**What aspects of the PASS Mentor role do you see as leadership?**
What would you like to work on, to improve as a PASS Leader?	What would you like to work on, to improve as a PASS Mentor?
How do you feel the PASS sessions made an impact upon the students in your sessions? (i.e., what was it about PASS that was great for student learning? Or maybe even things beyond learning the subject itself?)	How do you feel the PASS Mentor role made an impact upon the Leaders in your group?
	In fulfilling your role, how important do you think it has been that you had a PASS Leader yourself? And why?