

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Organisation

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Organisation of the national roundtable event was intended to provide scholars with another opportunity to develop leadership skills through the practice of leading. It required the scholars to work collaboratively and pool their individual expertise to produce a professional outcome. The scholars practiced a distributive perspective of leadership in their negotiation of the roundtable agenda and activities, and their roles and responsibilities in facilitating the event.

“The organisation of the roundtable has been a way of putting leadership theories into practice which has also enabled learning about them.” (2008 Scholar)

For many of the scholars their involvement in this activity was their first opportunity to organise an event with such far-reaching influence. Engagement in the organisation of this event provided scholars with an opportunity to:

- develop leadership skills in an authentic ‘real-world’ context.
- expand their awareness and understanding of the relevance, complexity and perspectives of leadership;
- engage in leadership activities that they might not otherwise have encountered; and
- create a professional product that was valued in its own right and not just as a component of the larger project.

Context

Scholars were introduced to the notion of organising the roundtable at the leadership retreat. Scholars assumed responsibility for and collaboratively negotiated the design, purpose and outcomes of the roundtable.

The scholars regularly communicated with each other and as a group in regard to their organisation of the roundtable through face to face meetings, email, telephone, teleconference and videoconference. The scholars also met the day prior to the roundtable to finalise administrative and organisational details for the event.

Program of Activities

An explanation of the purpose of the roundtable and the intention of this activity being to further develop scholars’ leadership capacity was communicated to scholars at the leadership retreat in stage 1. The design and explicit outcomes of the roundtable event were not elucidated, scholars were empowered to collaboratively construct and decide what these would be.

However, evaluations from stage 1 indicated that scholars were often not aware of what a roundtable was and that they found designing these constructs extremely difficult. Subsequently in the second stage of the project, scholars were provided more information about what a roundtable event might involve, the purpose of the event was made clearer and some models of possible roundtable activities were presented.

Three stage 1 scholars attended the 2008 leadership retreat and provided: a synopsis of the 2007 roundtable, an overview of challenges and considerations and suggestions based on their experience for organising the event.

In organising the roundtable scholars collaboratively:

1. Identified scholars in each institution to act as key liaisons. The primary duty of these individuals was to ensure ongoing communication between the institutions and scholars;
2. Ascertained the tasks and sub-tasks that were required to organise the roundtable and determined the associated timelines for achieving these; and
3. Negotiated individual responsibilities for the identified tasks and sub-tasks.

Scholars in stage 1 recognised the critical need for an additional face to face meeting to progress the organisation of the roundtable. So, in the second stage of the project an additional formal face to face meeting was introduced enabling the scholars to discuss and plan their organisation of the roundtable. This additional activity was referred to as the leadership workshop.

The scholars coordinated the roundtable at multiple levels ensuring there was ongoing monitoring, reflection and evaluation of the ensuing organisation. The institutional groups met regularly to plan and manage organisational tasks.

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The institutional liaisons regularly communicated the developments from institutional meetings to each other confirming that all the negotiated tasks were being addressed and that there were no overlaps in the various undertakings. There were regular teleconference and videoconference cross-institutional meetings arranged to discuss and progress organisation of the roundtable.

Success Factors of this Activity as Reported by Scholars

Negotiation and clarification at the retreat and workshop of:

- the focus and outcomes of the roundtable;
- a preliminary list of the tasks and sub-tasks and associated timeframes and deadlines for these; and
- roles and responsibilities in the organisation of the roundtable.

The opportunity to design the roundtable to meet the collective needs of the group.

“We had a bit of a pressure cooker happening in preparing for the roundtable but this brought us together and without too much difficulty we were able to pull together a cohesive and professional roundtable.” (2007 Scholar)

Key Challenges Experienced by Scholars

Understanding the purpose and benefits of this activity. It was only after the facilitation of the roundtable that scholars appreciated the leadership capacity development that they had achieved as a consequence of engaging in this activity.

The timing of this event. Many scholars felt the event was conducted before they had sufficient opportunity to progress their faculty-based project to a point where they had adequate information to report on and discuss with roundtable delegates.

The opportunity to determine the design of the roundtable. While the benefits of this were appreciated it was also perceived as a challenge because many of the scholars had no point of reference or previous experience of a roundtable.

Ensuring balance and equity in the roles and responsibilities negotiated for the organisation of the roundtable.

Review and Improvement

It would have been beneficial to have had a collection of models for what a roundtable event could be and an explanation of the distinction between a roundtable and conference/symposium/workshop.

Have a face to face debrief on the day immediately after the roundtable to reflect on lessons learnt and document strategies for future use.

Facilitate the roundtable later in the year enabling more opportunity to progress the project sufficiently.

Links and Resources

A detailed overview of the roundtable event, associated resources and evaluation is available on the GREEN website www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Facilitation

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Facilitation of the national roundtable event was intended to continue the scholars' development of leadership capacity through the practice of leading that was initiated in the organisational phase of this event. It required the scholars to collaboratively facilitate the actual event and saw each of them undertaking varying roles and responsibilities in this facilitation.

For many of the scholars this was their first opportunity and experience in facilitating an event that transcended the faculty or institutional environment.

Context

In Stage 1 the *Assessing Student Learning: Using Interdisciplinary Synergies to Develop Good Teaching and Assessment Practice* roundtable was held at the Sydney Masonic Centre, Sydney New South Wales on Tuesday September 4, 2007.

Forty-three delegates including eleven of the twelve Scholars, project leaders from the two participating universities (University of Wollongong and University of Tasmania), the external evaluator, the project manager, representatives from the steering committees and stage 2 participating

institutions (Flinders University and La Trobe University), and key academics from universities across Australia and New Zealand attended the event.

In Stage 2 the *Culture of Assessment in Higher Education* roundtable was held at the Novotel, Brighton Le Sands, Sydney, New South Wales on Thursday September 18, 2008.

Forty-nine delegates including the thirteen scholars, project leaders from the participating universities (University of Wollongong, Flinders University and La Trobe University), the external evaluator, the project manager, representatives from the steering committees and potential stage 3 participating universities (University of Canberra and James Cook University), and key academics from universities across Australia and New Zealand attended the event.

Program of Activities

Roles and responsibilities in the facilitation of the roundtable event included:

1. Establishing and managing the budget and financial administration for the event.
2. Management of invitees including: preparation of the official invitation, identification and generation of a list of delegates to be invited; dissemination of invitations, collection and collation of replies and follow up on outstanding responses;

3. Organising event venue and catering;
4. Finalising the program agenda and related activities including negotiation of roles and responsibilities such as roundtable facilitator, chairing sessions, welcoming delegates;
5. Ascertaining and preparing the materials for the event and to be disseminated pre and post event (e.g. abstracts detailing the scholars' faculty-based projects, posters over-viewing the projects, handouts for the various sessions, PowerPoint presentations.)
6. Determining evaluation strategies and related responsibilities (e.g. prepare and produce required evaluation resources, collation of the evaluations after the event);
7. Clarifying follow up activities and responsibilities (e.g. collation and dissemination of notes/transcripts from the day, instigation of mechanisms to promote ongoing communication and collaborations).

Feedback from delegates attending the 2007 and 2008 roundtables indicated that scholars efficiently managed time and that the contributions of scholars were facilitated effectively. Qualitative data indicated the professionalism of the event and the high standard of organisation.

A more detailed evaluation report for each of the roundtable events is available on the GREEN website: www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Facilitation

Success Factors of this Activity as Reported by Scholars

Negotiation and distribution of roles and responsibilities.

A second face-to-face meeting mid-way through the project was an important component in the organisation as well as additional videoconferencing meetings.

“Good sharing of roles and responsibilities.” (2008 Scholar)

Key Challenges Experienced by Scholars

Ensuring that scholars’ roles in facilitating the roundtable and the associated responsibilities don’t diminish or negate opportunities for networking and engaging in dialogue that might be integral for establishing future connections and collaborations.

“My role [in the facilitation of the event] was actually a constraint to networking opportunities – the only time I had for this was the poster session.” (2008 Scholar)

Space issues – the room was a little cramped and the small group activities were noisy at times because they were all conducted in the one room.

“Small group discussions needed to be in separate space. Difficult to maintain the discussion over general room noise for the full hour.” (2007 Roundtable Delegate)

Management of small groups and ensuring the gathered small groups in the breakout sessions aren’t too large to achieve the intended outcomes and purpose of the session.

“The thematic groups were a little large for good discussion.” (2008 Roundtable Delegate)

Ensuring the event program met the intended purpose and outcomes of the roundtable but didn’t compress too much into the available time.

Allowing adequate opportunity for discussion and feedback on the authentic projects.

Fully accessing the expertise and knowledge that the attending delegates offer.

Evaluating the impact of the event.

“Perhaps more information given in advance of what would be the expectations of invitees and what would be the anticipated outcomes from the event.” (2008 Roundtable Delegate)

Review, Improvement, Follow Up

The question was raised about how the most impact from the roundtable could be achieved. To this end the suggestion was made that perhaps the roundtable could have some tangible

outcomes established that relate to dissemination into the wider higher education community.

“Could the roundtable have some strategic outcome. For example we might have agreed that from the day there would be some specific statement that was made that would be sent to the Minister for Education.” (2008 Scholar)

Each of the scholars identified key delegates in the context of their faculty-based projects to invite to the roundtable. A suggestion was made that there should be some formal mechanism during the course of the roundtable for each of the scholars to get input and feedback from the invitees they had specifically targeted.

The poster session was facilitated to enable this but a number of the scholars felt that this still did not achieve this crucial outcome. An alternate strategy proposed was for the provision to be made in the agenda for each scholar to sit down with the specific people they invited and get targeted feedback around their faculty-based project.

Another suggestion proposed to facilitate the feedback of targeted invitees was to email the delegates prior to the roundtable with details of the faculty-based project and the desire for their feedback.

Links and Resources

A more detailed overview of the Roundtable event, associated resources and an evaluation of the event is presented on the GREEN website:

www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Presentation

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The intention of this activity was to provide the opportunity for scholars to:

- establish and foster an identity as a leader in learning and teaching outside their institution;
- engage in leadership practice; and
- explore potential cross-institutional collaborations and networks.

Context

There were a number of ways in which scholars were able to participate at the roundtable including:

- Roundtable facilitator;
- Session chair; and
- Formal presentation

“Presenting at the roundtable was a bit of a confidence boost.” (2008 Scholar)

Program of Activities

In stage 1, roundtable delegates were sent an agenda and overview of each of the scholar’s projects, which was the basis for their roundtable presentations, prior to attending the event.

The *Assessing Student Learning: Using Interdisciplinary Synergies to Develop Good Teaching and Assessment Practice* roundtable agenda included:

1. A keynote presentation: Great designs: What should assessment do? By Professor David Boud, Professor of Adult Education at the University of Technology, Sydney;
2. Presentations by each of the Scholars on their faculty-based projects;
3. The opportunity over morning tea and lunch for delegates to discuss poster presentations with scholars;
4. Identification and synthesis of key challenges, identified in the scholars’ faculty-based projects and for assessment in the future;
5. Identification and discussion of key issues and challenges for assessment in higher education and possible strategies for addressing these; and
6. Opportunities for further research and investigation of the challenges and issues for assessment in higher education.

Feedback from delegates attending the 2007 roundtable reported that:

- The roundtable met their expectations;
- The roundtable sessions were useful in facilitating discussion on a range of issues to do with assessment of learning within universities;
- They would consider collaborating with scholars on future projects and initiatives; and
- There were too many individual faculty-based project presentations and that these presentations were too rushed.

A more detailed evaluation report of this roundtable is available on the GREEN website:

www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership/index.htm

In stage 2 the scholars’ faculty-based projects were organised into thematic groups. These groups were:

1. Strategies for dealing with factors affecting the implementation of improved assessment practices;
2. Sustainable assessment: Designing assessment that meets the needs of the present and also prepare students to meet their own future learning needs; and
3. Assessment and outcome alignment: How do we know it when we see it?

More information about these themes and the abstracts of the related projects are available on the GREEN website:

www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership/index.htm

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Presentation

The Culture of Assessment in Higher Education roundtable agenda included:

1. A World Café forum to explore issues and challenges for assessment in higher education;
2. A poster session whereby delegates moved around the posters and discussed with scholars their project, its status and outcomes;
3. The facilitation of activities designed to promote discussion and explore the thematic foci of the projects; and
4. Discussion of the challenges and opportunities for assessment in higher education.

Feedback from delegates attending the 2008 roundtable reported that:

- The roundtable met their expectations;
- The roundtable sessions were useful in facilitating discussion on a range of issues to do with assessment of learning within universities;
- There were adequate opportunities for them to contribute, network and exchange ideas;
- There were a ranges of ideas, themes and issues covered;
- The sessions were highly interactive;
- They would consider collaborating with scholars on future projects and initiatives; and
- Occasionally groups were too large and noise levels made it difficult to hear clearly.

A more detailed evaluation report of this roundtable is available on the GREEN website:
www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership

Success Factors of this Activity as Reported by Scholars and Roundtable delegates

Opportunity to discuss issues with the 'experts' and those with significantly more experience.

"I really appreciated the words of wisdom from senior academics and policy makers. I really need some of the political and experiential nous that is available from people who understand how higher education and the schools and disciplines really work." (2007 Scholar)

The roundtable enabled the facilitation of discussion on a range of issues to do with assessment of learning within universities.

The opportunity to meet and engage with like-minded academics from other institutions.

"The discussion on the range of assessment related perspectives was revitalising. The opportunity for such involvement is the type of professional development that underscores change." (2007 Roundtable Delegate)

The opportunity to get feedback on individual faculty-based projects.

The profile in teaching and learning presenting at the roundtable initiated for scholars.

The potential liaisons, networks and collaborations that were initiated.

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“The opportunity to invite and meet important people from higher education and to be able to target people we wanted to invite in a sense the bigwigs in assessment and higher education to the roundtable was great.” (2008 Scholar)

Gleaning ideas for the future development or progression of faculty-based projects.

The program of activities enabled valuable discussions to transpire, the possibility of future collaborations to emerge and identification of potential projects to commence.

“Clever planning, which avoided a common trap with such days of descriptive presentations AND also avoided the equally common ‘talk-fest’ of forums.” (2008 Roundtable Delegate)

Presenting at the roundtable increased confidence of scholars in the context of the higher education community.

“Confidence in my ability to actually stand up in front of a group of people that probably know a hell of a lot more than me about teaching and assessment, and make sense and have them receive it positively.” (2007 Scholar)

Sharing good practice and diverse innovative strategies for change in assessment in higher education.

“The roundtable was a very good exercise for building confidence in my ability to lead change.” (2008 Scholar)

Key Challenges Experienced by Scholars

Presenting to a group of peers and leaders in assessment in higher education.

Review and Improvement

The suggestion was made to disseminate a list of the roundtable participants' names and institutions to enable follow up.

Records of discussions and decisions during the roundtable be made available to attendees after the event.

Links and Resources

A more detailed overview of the roundtable events, associated resources and evaluations is available on the GREEN website: www.uow.edu.au/cedir/DistributiveLeadership

Activity 4 National Roundtable: Presentation



*"[The World Café] was a great way for setting the scene for the rest of the day. The discussion was lively and active. I was a little intimidated by the knowledge expertise at the table."
(Roundtable evaluation 2008)*

"[The World Café created] really good engagement. Great ideas. I will use this technique with staff in departments. Excellent!" (Roundtable evaluation 2008)

*"[The World Café] was brilliant! Interactive, refreshing!"
(Roundtable evaluation 2008)*

*"[The World Café] was a great way of generating discussion and sharing ideas. It also 'exposed' the scholars to a wide audience and allowed them to develop and display their skills in group facilitation."
(Roundtable evaluation 2008)*