

Executive Summary

This project investigated the development and trial of a Leadership Capacity Development Framework (LCDF) for teaching and learning in higher education. The primary aim of the project was to assess the relevance and validity of a LCDF in developing leadership capacity.

Four Australian universities were involved in the project. In the first stage the LCDF was trialed in two universities that were similar in size, regional positioning, and current mission (i.e. developing a teaching and learning-intensive culture within a research-intensive culture). In the second stage, two additional universities trialed a refined LCDF using a 'cascade approach', whereby the facilitators and participants from the first stage universities mentored and supported the second stage universities.

The LCDF was assessed and reviewed through an iterative evaluation process. Participants in Stage 1 of the project informed the evaluation and subsequent modification of the LCDF. The LCDF was then trialed, evaluated and validated by Stage 2 participants.

Participant evaluations indicate that the factors critical to the success of the LCDF include engagement in:

- Formal leadership training and professional development activities;
- Authentic learning activities that are situated in real contexts;
- Reflective practice;
- Opportunities for dialogue about leadership practice and experiences; and
- Activities that expand current professional networks.

Leadership Capacity Development

Participants perceived that the LCDF and its associated activities were beneficial in developing leadership capacity.

Key to the success of the LCDF was a desire and willingness on the part of the emergent leader to develop leadership capacity. For this reason, self-nomination rather than delegation for involvement in the program is crucial.

Scholars reported that the overall benefits of engagement in the program included the opportunity to:

- See themselves as leaders and appreciate their leadership potential;
- Establish an awareness of what is involved in being a leader;
- Broaden their understanding of what leadership can be and how it can be developed; and
- Address the questions of what is leadership and how this notion of leadership relates to them.

Distributive Leadership

In the context of this project distributive leadership was defined as *the distribution of power through a collegial sharing of knowledge, of practice, and reflection within the socio-cultural context of the university.*

A distributive perspective of leadership underpinned the implementation of the LCDF. In the context of this project this manifested in the strategic development of potential leaders across multiple levels of the university. Project participants (scholars) were at various stages of their career and assumed a range of leadership roles and responsibilities in their faculty, the institution and nationally.

The Project found that:

- Distributive leadership is most successful if the leadership roles and responsibilities are negotiated rather than delegated;
- Distributive leadership harnesses individual strengths and abilities appropriate for the required leadership, irrespective of formal position.
- A distributive approach provides an opportunity to take a leadership role, ascertain leadership capability, and further develop aptitudes before acquiring a formal leadership position.

GREEN

A Framework to Support Leadership Capacity Development in Higher Education

The LCDF has been organised into five domains:

1. **Growing,**
2. **Reflecting,**
3. **Enabling,**
4. **Engaging, and**
5. **Networking.**

In reviewing and evaluating the LCDF and its associated activities, scholars reported that:

- Authentic learning activities, i.e. a faculty-based project, was the key to enabling development of leadership capacity;
- Strategic mentoring and coaching assisted in the consolidation of understanding and development of leadership capacity in higher education; and
- Professional development activities were crucial for leadership knowledge, understanding and skill development.

Further details of these domains and the associated practical activities facilitated throughout the project have been assembled here in the GREEN Resource.

Implications for the Sector

In order for a new generation to lead universities, potential leaders need to be prepared to take on leadership roles for an ever changing and dynamic higher education system (Knight & Trowler, 2001).

Distributive models of leadership capacity development, such as the LCDF, provide a scaffold for preparing potential leaders for formal leadership positions (Spillane, Halverson & Diamond, 2004). The feedback and evaluations of participants in the project suggest that the LCDF is a sound model for developing leadership capacity in higher education.

However, the successful implementation of the LCDF relies on an investment and commitment in the implementation of the program from universities, institutional policy makers and senior leaders. Without the support of senior executive distributive models of leadership capacity development will not be successful (MacBeath, 2005). The creation of learning and changed practice across institutions needs adequate financial funding support to ensure the findings for success, as reported in this resource, are appropriately implemented.

Initiatives designed to enhance and promote leadership capacity at all levels of the university are required. Senior institutional leaders should actively support and encourage the development of leadership capacity in potential university leaders through the negotiated allocation of complex tasks. This enables the developing leader to engage and practice relevant leadership knowledge, skills and competencies (Elmore, 2000).

