Lessons learnt: identifying synergies in distributed leadership

Bringing together four previous projects on distributed leadership

RMIT University

Multi-level leadership and student feedback

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Aim of the project

The aim of this project is to identify a common understanding of how distributed leadership (DL) is conceptualised and practised.

Distributed leadership is described in this project as action taken by many people working collectively across an institution to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching. This differs from other, more traditional, approaches to building leadership capacity in which the traits, skills and behaviours in individuals, identified as leaders, is emphasised.

The Action Self Enabling Reflective Tool (ASERT)

The ASERT has been designed by the project team, from research into the common elements of the four initial projects that used a DL approach, to build leadership capacity in learning and teaching. The ASERT consists of an Action Self Evaluating Taxonomy and an Action Research approach.

The Action Self Evaluating Taxonomy

Criteria for Distributed Leadership	Dimensions and Values to enable development of Distributed Leadership			
	CONTEXT Trust	**CULTURE** Respect	**CHANGE** Recognition	**RELATIONSHIPS** Collaboration
People are involved	Expertise of individuals is used to inform decisions	Individuals participate in decision making	All levels and functions have input into policy development	Expertise of individuals contributes to collective decision making
Processes are supportive	Shared leadership is demonstrated	Decentralised groups engage in decision making	All levels and functions have input into policy implementation	Communities of Practice are modelled
Professional development is provided	DL is a component of leadership PD	Mentoring for DL is available	Leaders at all levels proactively encourage DL	Collaboration is facilitated
Resources are available	Space, time & finance for collaboration are available	Leadership contribution is recognised and rewarded	Flexibility is built into infrastructure and systems	Opportunities for regular networking are supported

Action Research: A reflective collaborative approach

Step one: Identify the institutional level being targeted for a DL approach.

Step two: Identify a Criteria from the ASET on which to focus.

Step three: Identify a Dimension (value) related to the chosen Criteria from the ASET.

Step four: Reflect on the extent to which the identified Action, proposed in the cell that intersects the chosen Criteria and Dimension, occurs currently in your institution.

Step five: Reflect on future activity that could be taken to achieve this Action outcome using reflective prompts.

Step six : Reflect on how to ensure that activity proposed from steps four and five is consistent with the achievement of the other desired Actions identified in the ASET .

Step seven: Identify a plan of activity to achieve the desired Action outcome.

Step eight: Repeat steps two to six for each Criteria and related Dimension.

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