

Identifying the place of distributed leadership for learning and teaching in higher education

Sandra Jones

RMIT, Melbourne, Australia

sandra.jones@rmit.edu.au

Marina Harvey

Macquarie University, North Ryde Australia

marina.harvey@mq.edu.au

Geraldine Lefoe

University of Wollongong, Wollongong, Australia

glefoe@uow.edu.au

Roger Hadgraft

RMIT, Melbourne, Australia

roger.hadgraft@rmit.edu.au

Kevin Ryland

RMIT, Melbourne, Australia

kevin.ryland@edupm.com.au

Given the many challenges facing the higher education sector there is increased recognition of the need to develop new approaches to leadership that are more inclusive of the knowledge base of all staff. Distributed leadership is being discussed globally as a leadership approach that provides opportunities for a broad range of employees to contribute towards effective leadership. This paper reports on the interim findings of an initial desk audit of nationally funded projects and an accompanying national survey designed to provide information on the adoption of distributed leadership across the Australian higher education sector. The aim was confirm the validity of a tool designed to assist institutions to enable distributed leadership. It was posited that the information collected from the survey could then be used to develop an evidence-based benchmarking framework. This framework would have the function of supporting learning and teaching project participants to self, or collaboratively, assess the development and practice of distributed leadership approaches. While data from the audit and the accompanying survey was rich in relations to the implementation of distributed leadership where it does occur in order for more conclusive information to be collected there is need for greater clarity in what is meant by the conceptualisation, meanings and processes of distributed leadership. Once more clearly explicated, the impact of distributed leadership can then be subject to further discussion with a broader community of learning and teaching leaders and experts in order to identify possible good practice examples that may inform benchmarking.