

Academic leaders' views of the key factors enablers of the development of graduate attributes – issues of context and interdependence

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What are the key factors that enable engagement with graduate attributes in our tertiary institutions? This question was one of several addressed in a larger study of graduate attributes. Telephone interviews were conducted with ten academic leaders of teaching and learning in four universities and five polytechnics in New Zealand. Interviews focused on the leaders' views of graduate attributes and the policies and practices that enabled or constrained the development of curricula to support graduate outcomes in their institutions. Five main categories of factors that enable the development of graduate attributes in curricula were identified: external drivers, structural and procedural enablers, developmental enablers, achievement enablers, and contextual enablers. The results showed the crucial interdependence of external, institutional and department/programme based factors. We describe the enablers, discuss their interdependency, and compare the results with current literature. Little attention has been paid to the academic leaders' views of graduate attributes yet such leaders play a crucial role in their institutions. Moreover, information about how the

internal and external contexts of the institution influence how graduate attributes are treated is limited. So this study addresses a gap in current knowledge and extends current theorising about graduate attributes and engagement with them in the tertiary sector and particularly New Zealand.