



ANZSSA 2011

Rounding out the picture: a focus group discussion for senior and mid-level leaders in university student support and development services to explore and expand findings of an on-line survey about leadership styles, effectiveness and satisfaction in these roles.

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Session

- 1.5 hours
- follows on from presentation (will start with overview of study on ssds leadership (rationale, method)
- working session – active involvement & contribution
- acknowledge participants, and non-participants, and colleagues from o/s
- process of “workshopping” survey participants’ responses and combining wisdom from that with *your* experience of leadership
- structured format to maximise individual input and collective output
- involvement in session taken as “informed consent” (with information provided)

What you will take away:

- perspectives from other ssds leaders (survey & session)
- ideas about signifying, sustaining, strengthening & shaping your own leadership, and that of your team



Overview of Study

- Extensive literature about leadership generally – theoretical and empirical.
- Significant body of work around leadership in higher education, with focus on theoretical.
- In recent years more interest in empirical studies about impacts of leadership in this sector.
- Emerging research about leadership in student support and development services in higher education – in the main this comes out of the US and UK. Has tended to be normative and prescriptive rather than empirical, although this is changing.
- Very little empirical work done in Australia about leadership of such units – who does it, what it looks like, how leaders define their approach, what outcomes it has.

This study is exploring this terrain.

Survey of senior and mid-level leaders in ssds in Australian unis	(October 2011)
Participant checking	(December 2011)
Focus groups and individual interviews	(Jan – Sept 2012)



Participant Checking through Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI)* uses the concept of “dialogue between members” to:

- understand a construct (organisational development, change, leadership etc)
- identify what is “good practice” in that construct, for that setting, and
- plot signposts and strategies to keep moving in that direction from current practices

AI has been identified as an “agreeable fit” for higher education and involves how people **think about** constructs, as well as how what they **actually do**, behaviourally, day to day.

This process being adopted for this workshop:

- you, as participants, bring wealth of knowledge, understanding and experience of leadership
- as leaders in ssds, you come from backgrounds fully conversant with “strengths based” change – using the concepts of *successes* and *envisioning positive futures* – relating to working with clients as individuals and within learning organisations
- workshoping themes as a collective mirrors notion of leadership as being “co-created” in ssds

* Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987)



Overview of Appreciative Inquiry Process



Leadership in ssds – AI Process in Action





discovery

reflect on survey responses and identify themes (group & indiv)

1. Whole Group (15 mins)

Please read the participant responses and discuss as a group:

- What are *the themes arising about challenges* leaders face?
- What are the *themes around* how leaders define "success"?
- Is there anything from the successes that can *influence* how we understand and respond to challenges?
- What can we learn from these messages about leadership in student support and development services?

Outputs

- Group Response Sheet (learnings)
- Group Response Sheet (propositions)
- Individual Postits x 3

2. Individual (10 mins)

Please distil key messages from participant quotes around **one topic** (of the 4 possible topics) then write three **adjectives** on 3 separate postit notes that in your view reflect these concepts or messages. Share with group.

3. Whole Group (15 mins)

Please draft 3 "propositional statements" about what effective leadership in student support and development services means.

Adapted, with permission, from Caruana, V (Leeds Metropolitan University)

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dream

co-construct depiction of emerging leadership

Whole Group (15 mins)

Produce a poster picture of

"futureview of effective leadership in student support and development services in the coming years"

taking account of emerging trends in higher education in Australia, and internationally.

Output

- Group Poster

visual vs verbal



design

co-creating strategies for strengthening and developing ssds leadership

Whole Group (15 mins)

Please develop a set of statements about strengthening current practice and creating new ways of leading with impact at institution level* /across the sector using the "resources" already available.

- staff/team
- clients/stakeholders
- alliances within the organisation
- professional networks
- research/evidence
- systems/structures/policies
- values/culture

*generic not specific

Output

- Group Strategy Statement



destiny

identifying priorities for action

1. Individual (10 mins)

Please write down:

- Personal priorities (what *you* personally want to focus on) in your leadership – on GOLD postit
- Departmental/Uni Priorities (what *your unit* should focus on)
- Priorities at a different level (what might be done at your institution, or through professional networks or peak bodies, to support and sustain ssds leadership)

2. Whole Group (10 mins)

Share on points 2 and 3 and write key ideas on Group Response Sheet.

Output

- Individual Priorities (Gold)
- Group Response Sheet (priorities)



From here...

- send collated summaries of workshop activities
- write up findings of survey for JANZSSA
- report back to participants
- based on survey findings and today's feedback, develop questions for focus groups and individual interviews
- approach leaders to be involved (can tick participant sheet or email if interested)
- <http://www.wordle.net/>

Thank you for your contribution