

Exploring the challenges of network leadership in Australasian tertiary associations

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PhD, University of Calgary (1997); MEd University of Calgary (1989); BEd, University of Queensland (1985); BHMS (Ed), University of Queensland (1982). Professor Keppell has a long professional history in higher education in Australia, Canada and Hong Kong. Professor Mike Keppell is the Executive Director, Australian Digital Futures Institute (ADFI) at University of Southern Queensland. From 2007 to 2012 he was Professor of Higher Education and Director of the Flexible Learning Institute at Charles Sturt University, and prior to that was Head of the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Professor Keppell has also held positions at the University of Melbourne, Central Queensland University and private providers in Canada.

Gordon Suddaby

Associate Professor, Massey University

Gordon has a MEd (Hons) from Massey University as well as a BSc and a Postgraduate Diploma in Science from Otago University. He has a particular interest in the implementation of institutional staff development policies and programmes and the development of a "professional development culture" within an institution. He also has considerable experience in the development and support of tertiary teaching and learning and the development and implementation of E-Learning.

Helen Carter

Associate Professor
Macquarie University (ACODE representative)

Dr Gary Williams

University of Tasmania (ascilite representative)

Professor Denise Chalmers

University of Western Australia (CADAD representative)

Dr Trish Andrews

University of Queensland (ODLAA representative)

Professor Shelda Debowksi

University of Western Australia (HERDSA representative)

Marguerite de Sousa and/or Lindy Baker

Office for Learning and Teaching
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

James Sankar

AARNet

James Sankar is responsible for AARNet's (Australia's Academic and Research Network) Applications and Services division. He has extensive experience of managing a range of online service from middleware, voice and video over IP to mobile/wireless services. His passion is in mixing talent with new technology to deliver solutions and new services that benefit from access to high-speed research and education networks. James is an active member of the Open Visual Communications Consortium; a global industry led effort aimed making video conferencing work the same way the telephone works today. He has led the creation of AARNet's National Video Conferencing Service, AARNet's Unified Communications and Telepresence Exchange services.

Outline of focus area and summary of ideas to be explored

Social networks and communities of practice in Tertiary Education Associations (e.g. ACODE, ascilite, CADAD, HERDSA, ODLAA) provide value for members through the social learning experiences they provide in terms of “sharing information, tips and documents, learning from each other’s experience, helping each other with challenges, creating knowledge together, keeping up with the field, stimulating change, and offering new types of professional development opportunities” (Wenger, Trayner & Maarten de Laat, 2011, p. 7).

Networks and communities blend “individual and collective learning in the development of a shared practice” and are social spaces for learning (Wenger et.al, 2011, p. 10). Networks involve a “set of relationships, personal interactions, and connections among participants who have personal reasons to connect. It is viewed as a set of nodes and links with affordances for learning, such as information flows, helpful linkages, joint problem solving, and knowledge creation” whereas a community “refers to the development of a shared identity around a topic or set of challenges” (Wenger et.al. 2011, p. 9). Owen-Smith (2008) suggested that networks emphasise resource and information channels, status recognition and social influence for members.

Building upon this focus on networks, this symposium specifically examines network leadership. The NNI understands the term network leadership to include the development and maintenance of sustainable social networks and communities of practice; effective communication strategies and technologies; and leadership decisions which provide utility for the organisation, members and Australasian tertiary sector.

The symposium will discuss how the NNI seeks to address the following key foci:

1. Improving network leadership by gathering data on existing practices and perceptions related to member engagement and technologies and strategies that support best practice in network leadership.
2. Using findings and member expertise to better support leaders of established tertiary education associations to encourage collaboration and increase member engagement.
3. Fostering, encouraging and supporting network-based collaborative initiatives into the future.

The research is being conducted in two phases, beginning with a survey of the members of project partners and focus groups with the executives of project partner organisations. Stage 2 involves partner organisations conducting their own small research projects in related areas. This data will then be collected and analysed to assist in the development of a ‘tool kit’ to network leadership.

Range of views that panel members will represent

The panel members hold a range of views and perspectives due to the variety of organisations that they represent. ACODE, CADAD, ODLAA, HERDSA, OLT and ascilite represent key professional and scholarly bodies, whilst AARNet and NetSpot offer the perspectives of both not-for-profit and commercial technology providers. Additionally, representatives originate from a range of Australasian Universities, ensuring a broad diverse range of views and perspectives are held.

Describe the intended audience

The intended audience has an interest in the Australasian tertiary sector, specifically in the areas of good practice in educational technology and tertiary networks.

Outline of the symposium format, including strategies that will be used to engage the audience

Introduction and overview

Symposium will begin with an introduction to the NNI project by Professor Mike Keppell and Associate Professor Gordon Suddaby who are project co-leaders. This will include an overview of the phase 1 research into network leadership and the initial findings. This introduction will be supported through a demonstration of the project blog and multimedia snippets describing the thoughts of project members.

Partner research summaries by member representatives

Following on from the phase 1 research and its findings, each partner organisation will conduct their own small research project in an area of particular interest to their organisation and circumstances. Whilst these projects will be in their infancy at this stage, each partner representative will summarise the key objectives, foci and methodology of their projects in a 5 minute presentation.

Synthesis

Professor Keppell and Associate Professor Suddaby will provide a synthesis of these projects, how they relate to the objectives of the NNI and phase 1 research findings before examining how the project's findings will contribute to the sector.

Questions

The presenters will take questions from the audience.