Making a Difference: Transforming Leadership for Learning

Jackie Rossa
Research Publication Notices

Research Reports

Many of the documents in this series are prepublication/preprint articles, which may subsequently appear (part or whole) in peer reviewed journals and books. In most cases they are draft documents, the purpose of which is to foster discussion and debate, prior to publication elsewhere, whilst ideas are still fresh. Further information about the research programme and other papers in this series can also be found at the following websites:

http://www.lsis.org.uk or http://www.lums.lancs.ac.uk/leadership/cel/

Citation Notice

Citation should conform to normal academic standards. Please use the reference provided or, where a paper has entered into print elsewhere, use normal journal/book citation conventions.

Copyright

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) owns the copyright for all publications it commissions. Permission should be sought before any materials are reproduced. Short sections of text, not to exceed two paragraphs, may be quoted without explicit permission, provided that full acknowledgement is given.

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service aims to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector’s own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change. LSIS is dedicated to developing excellent FE provision working in partnership with all parts of the sector to build and sustain self-improvement.

Disclaimer

This project has been commissioned by, but does not necessarily reflect the views of the Learning and Skills Improvement Service.

Contact Details

LSIS: Learning and Skills Improvement Service
Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Switchboard: 024 7662 7900 Enquiries: 024 7662 7953 or enquiries@lsis.org.uk  www.lsis.org.uk
Introduction

This project has investigated the key principles of effective leadership and management, and how these are perceived and recognised by leaders. The project has sought to identify the way that managers within the sector are supported and developed to achieve excellence, through enabling others. One key area of exploration was the concept of ‘excellence’; and how this may differ across organisations and individuals.

The project also sought to explore key relationships in terms of the extent to which the culture of an organisation impacts on the way that the skills and approaches of leaders develop and are developed, taking particular account of inclusion and diversity issues, and the extent to which this is embedded within management practice.

Pivotal to the research was the work and development of middle managers in a college that has achieved Outstanding status and that has been recognised for its excellence in equality and diversity, and this was compared and contrasted with that of the partner colleges who are aspiring to achieve excellence. Through this collaboration, all organisations involved will improve and develop their leadership practice and ways of supporting and developing leaders.

One of the key aims of this project was to identify and celebrate the very wide range of methods that colleges use to enable managers to succeed, looking at both organisational and individual factors that impact on this; however the most significant aspect of this project is the translation of that theoretical knowledge and understanding into practice.

The project worked towards achieving this through an adaptation of the work of Joyce and Showers ‘coaching in’ model, using peer coaching and action learning sets to enable staff within and across the five colleges to support each other’s development.

Research Aims

1. To determine the key factors that lead to successful leadership of learning in the learning and skills sector;

2. To find out how successful middle managers overcome key barriers and challenges to become effective leaders of learning;

3. To understand the impact of leadership development on the development and practice of effective leaders;

4. To understand to what extent leadership practice and approaches have impacted on the embedding and promotion of inclusion and diversity in the learning and skills sector.
Research methodology overview

To undertake this project, a range of research methods was utilised to triangulate findings. The project focused on the development of leaders and managers across five colleges who had all agreed to participate in the research.

In terms of external performance indicators, particularly their Leadership and Management grade, these colleges include one ‘Outstanding’ college, three ‘Good’ colleges and one ‘Satisfactory’ college, giving a good sample range to underpin the research findings.

The key research methodology is that of action research, and it was anticipated that both researchers and subjects would experience change as a direct result of the project intervention. The project conducted five case studies to identify perceptions of successful leadership, and this was compared and contrasted with currently available literature and evidence based findings.

Within the case studies, information was gathered from focus groups of first line managers and advanced practitioners, and managers at middle and senior levels. In addition to this, in-depth interviews were conducted with identified individuals at each level. Focus meetings with groups of teachers were also conducted to triangulate evidence presented.

An additional methodology involved conducting an in-depth case study within the outstanding college to explore the impact of leadership development on middle managers. This college offers a development programme that is unique within the sector. The research process included initial assessments of managers entering the college's leadership programme, and followed the development journey of the managers as they move through the programme, assessing their development through focus meetings, discussions and conversations with mentors and 360 degree feedback from their managers and staff.

The initial research methodology will also lead to the development of an online survey that will be used to capture the views of a wider group of managers across the colleges.

Summary of Research Findings

Research methods

A range of research methods were used and these included:

1. **Survey questions for leaders and managers**: Managers and leaders of colleges involved in the project complete a questionnaire designed to identify what managers saw as the key principles of effective leadership and management. In total, 23 responses were received, 18 from the lead college and 5 from external partners. Whilst the response from partners was low, there was a 62% response rate from managers in the lead college.

2. **Survey questions for teachers**: Teachers in the lead college were asked to complete a questionnaire about the impact of management practice on teaching and learning. In total, 48 responses were received from a possible 180.
3. **Focus group meetings with new first line managers and advanced practitioners:** Semi structured focus meetings were conducted with 10 first line managers and advanced practitioners. These took place twice over a seven month period with participants on a leadership development programme specially adapted for the purposes of the project.

4. **Focus group meetings with managers in partner colleges:** This activity was originally designed to take place within all of the four partner colleges, however, unforeseen difficulties meant that this was only possible in one college. These focus group meetings were detailed and comprehensive, comprising of one half day and one full day event. The first meeting took place with Heads of Departments, and the second with the managers who work for them (Learning Area managers).

5. **Semi structured interviews were conducted with front line, middle and senior managers within the organisation and across the partner colleges:** These interviews included 8 participants from within the lead organisation and 8 from partner colleges.

6. **Feedback and review meetings with a group of experienced managers undertaking training in professional dialogue:** This study group comprised a group of experienced managers across three of the partner organisations who engaged in a series of development events based on the use of coaching and professional dialogue to enhance the performance of other managers and teams. This particular training was organised to explore the extent to which the use of coaching dialogue might be used to enhance the promotion and embedding of equality and diversity within an organisation. Whilst the training involved three colleges, the focused equality and diversity activity took place in the lead organisation only.

### Research Findings

#### Survey questions for managers and survey questions for teachers

Both teachers and managers were united on what they perceived to be the key behaviours and qualities that a good leader should be able to demonstrate, and there were no significant differences between those surveys conducted in other organisations (although the low response rate means that this is not necessarily significant). The original list of potential qualities in the table below was obtained through brainstorming sessions with early focus group meetings of teachers and managers. These groups were asked to amend and review the list before publication.

Participants were also invited to add any additions on to the list when completing the survey. The three additions that were added include ‘supporting, encouraging, and empathy’.

The behaviour/quality ratings as identified by participants can be seen in table 1 below: The numbers show how the particular behaviour/quality was ranked by participants after all results were aggregated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour/quality rating</th>
<th>Most important (top 10)</th>
<th>Top five ticked</th>
<th>Areas of development required (top 3)</th>
<th>Areas of development most wanted in managers (top 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Integrity &amp; Organizational skills.</td>
<td>Ability to prioritise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Confidence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Ability to prioritise.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Personal charisma &amp; compassion.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Wisdom.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table above shows that the participants rated the most important leadership quality as commitment, closely followed by planning, good communication, vision and positivity. It is interesting that the aggregated results show a slightly different picture to the one seen when participants are asked to identify the top five important quality – communication emerges as a clear leader followed by vision, honesty positivity and the ability to prioritise.

The top qualities that people would most like to develop in themselves included vision, organisational skills, planning and confidence. They would also like their managers to develop vision, the ability to prioritise and planning.

What is significant about these findings is that participants are identifying a need for development in areas that they consider important for effective leadership.

When teachers were asked about the things that managers do that have a positive impact on teaching and learning, they cited the following:

- Encouragement (of teachers), treating us as individuals;
- Support for teaching;
- Freedom to manage courses (although several said that they do not always feel supported if things go wrong);
- Passion and motivation to achieve;
- Taking an interest in what I do;
- Vision to move – implement changes;
- Enthusiasm for college;
- Encourages ownership;
- Constant encouragement.

In addition to the above that focused on the personal and emotional aspect of leadership, teachers also valued practical actions such as:

- Funding for specific courses to keep them going;
- Providing support for learners;
- Considering learners needs when timetabling.

Conversely, when asked what managers did that had a detrimental impact on learning and learners, teachers mainly cited practical issues such as:

- Too much paperwork;
- Inconsistent approach to disciplinary process with learners;
- Lack of rooms;
- Last minute decisions;
- Decisions made without consultation;
- Poor timetabling and resources;
- Too much change – timetabling and rooms;
- Classrooms not suitable for learners;
- Inappropriate recruitment of learners.
And a few aspects in the personal and emotional domains:

- Failure to support staff in the leadership element of their role;
- Failure to communicate and inform;
- Lack of team meetings;
- No praise or acknowledgement of success;
- Lack of 1-1 support – left to get on with it.

Leaders and teaching staff were asked to comment on their experience of leadership and management in the context of equality and diversity. Most respondents were not clear on this question with many of them failing to answer at all. Answers provided tended to focus on directives to attend staff development. Teaching staff in particular tended to focus on their own classroom strategies and did not make links to leadership and management. It was decided to explore and develop this aspect further through the use of coaching dialogue with an additional focus group.

Focus group meetings with new first line managers and advanced practitioners

Two meetings were held with this group of people who also undertook the bespoke leadership development programme directly linked to this project.

At the first meeting, participants were asked to outline the skills that they felt that would be required of an effective leader, and what they would like to develop in themselves. The top priorities for the group included:

- Understanding what being a manager really mean;
- Confidence in working with staff;
- How to deal with conflict situations;
- Getting people to do things that they don’t want to do.

Midway through the programme, a second focus interview was held when the group reviewed progress and identified what they had gained from the programme and what they would need to progress further.

Benefits of the programme included:

- Increased confidence in job role;
- Improved ‘manager’ skills and behaviour;
- Better able to motivate team;
- Enjoying work more;
- Able to apply ‘differentiated leadership’ – according to person, task and context;
- Able to sit in the other seat and view things from the perspective of others;
- Able to use a wide range of different approaches to leadership;
- Recognises own strengths and areas for improvement – better able to evaluate own Performance;
- Gives people more time to reflect (managing change);
- Listening more;
- Accepting criticism;
- Less confrontational;
Know more about what works;
Manage meetings better;
Affirmation – no magic answers;
Knowing I am allowed to be firm;
Know I am not alone.

When they were asked how they had been helped to develop these skills, the range of reasons given included:

- Learning by using real work situations;
- Role play to work through situations;
- Overcoming problems together;
- Sharing ideas and practice;
- Learning within a peer group;
- Openness and honesty;
- Time out to review and reflect;
- Supported by others;
- Learning from others;
- Team based peer coaching and support;
- Time and discussion with colleagues;
- Training materials;
- Reflecting honestly on my behaviour.

From the responses, it would appear that one of the key drivers of the development of this group was the construction of a learning community where they could work with peers.

In terms of future development to enable them to progress further, the group responded with the following:

- Putting into practice what I have learnt (4);
- Using more motivational factors;
- Would like a mentor (8);
- Constructive feedback (3);
- Future opportunities to develop skills (6);
- Having power/autonomy to do things;
- Work with a manager/mentor;
- Time to develop strands and take learning further (2);
- Noting how I have changed;
- Continue to work/meet together – annual meetings (5).

It would appear that in terms of moving forward, the group wanted the opportunity to further develop their skills in practice, and in particular wanted to share this aspect of their development with a mentor and other peers.
Focus group meetings took place with two groups of managers in one of the partner colleges

Two focus group meetings took place at one of the partner colleges. The first meeting was with the senior management team (around 20 staff) who were introduced to the notion of the project and were asked to identify their key strengths and areas for improvement in terms of their management practice. This meeting took place over two half days and the next meeting was with the middle management team (around 33 staff) who were asked to identify the biggest challenges facing them, and, how they felt that these might be addressed or overcome.

The meeting with the senior managers provided the following feedback – each person identified at least two strengths and areas for improvement in terms of their management practice. These are displayed in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of work/quality</th>
<th>Area for improvement (numbers of people identifying this)</th>
<th>Strength (numbers of people identifying this)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good listener</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leads by example</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manages conflict well</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completes paperwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works well with team</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organisation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-solving</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts on assumptions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understands role</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the results indicated that this team considers themselves to be effective in terms of problem solving and team working, it also identifies potential areas for improvement around communication, planning and leadership. Further exploration of the concept of leadership as articulated here clarified it as ‘the setting of clear directions’ – something akin to the ‘vision’ identified in Table 1. This feedback tells us little about the areas that were not identified, or where there are only one or two respondents. It may be that further information would be needed to identify further areas of strength, but time did not permit this to be followed up in detail.
The meeting with the second team was, by necessity different as the college decided to have a large number of staff were working together in one room, and it is interesting to compare their challenges and opportunities with the chart above:

**Responses from Learning Area Managers**

Biggest challenges:

- Staff too busy to delegate to;
- Staff who won’t do what you want them to;
- Not allowed to use initiative;
- Staff don’t use initiative;
- Lack of consistency of expectations;
- New systems and policies introduced with no consultation or explanation;
- Managing change;
- Not sure of job role.

Hopes/opportunities:

- Improved communication;
- Cross college approach to improvement;
- Transparency and clarity;
- Understanding from SMT (this was specifically identified as NOT being the first group but a management tier above them);
- Good support from managers already in place but they are sometimes too busy;
- More upwards communication;
- Actions to resolve problems;
- Clear vision;
- Retain excitement of job;
- Managers to be aware of impact of actions on staff;
- Solutions focused dialogues.

It would appear that the feedback from the second team does chime with the self-assessment of the first team in that the second team feel supported by managers but would appear to agree that improvements around communication, planning and leadership would be useful. At first glance, it also appears as if the second team are experiencing similar problems to the first team in terms of management approaches. It is interesting to note that the second team feel that not only are they not allowed to take initiative, but that they feel that their staff do not do this. This suggested ‘modelling’ of practice – both positive and negative is a theme that emerges in some of the other cases studies.

**Semi structured interviews – face to face and via telephone were conducted with front-line, middle and senior managers within the organisation and across the partner colleges**

These interviews set out to ascertain the key drivers that enable managers to be successful. All of the managers interviewed are considered successful in their job roles and work within highly successful organisations.
Drivers for Success:

- Good apprenticeship at every level;
- Good role models;
- My own attitude and approach – roll sleeves up;
- Don’t ask people to do unreasonable things;
- Support from other managers;
- Supportive environment – allowed to make mistakes (this occurred most frequently);
- Assistance and guidance to learn from mistakes;
- Freedom, openness, being allowed to ask for resources;
- Good relationships with line manager;
- Given recognition for success;
- Clear guidance;
- Being respected;
- Empowered;
- Praise and acknowledgement;
- Supported to make decisions on my own;
- Trusted to do the job (a frequent response).

Throughout the interviews, a key theme emerged around being trusted and allowed to make mistakes in a supportive environment.

These managers were also asked about the most significant development activities that they had engaged in:

- Being allowed to get on with things;
- Ofsted training;
- Being trusted with a big project;
- Being allowed to get on and invent;
- My own managers style with me (coaching);
- Learning from other brilliant leaders/managers.

This list is short and none of the managers referred to a leadership programme (they were asked for the most significant development experience). A consistent theme emerging was around the benefits and significance of, ‘learning by doing’, particularly making mistakes and learning from others around them. The one manager who identified the Ofsted training as significant said that it, “was brilliant in terms of helping me to understand quality and to be rigorous, thorough and meticulous”.

When this group were asked to identify the qualities of a good leader the list was once again very short:

- Lead by example;
- Be good in procedures;
- Roll your own sleeves up;
- Leave your ego at the door;
- Listen.
Finally, this group were asked how they overcame barriers and challenges:

- Discuss it with my manager and explore options;
- Discuss the problem with a colleague;
- Ask for advice;
- Put the problem to the team and work on a solution together so it is ‘owned’;
- Phone a friend;
- Reflect on where I have encountered a similar problem before and try to work out how I solved it;
- Sound out ideas with other managers – see if they have come across this before.

It is noticeable that few of these strategies include working in isolation. All of the managers we spoke to identified the support of others as key to problem solving.

Observations, feedback and reviews from the group of experienced managers undertaking a series of development events based on the use of coaching and professional dialogue to enhance the performance of other managers and teams, specifically in the context of equality and diversity

This particular strand of the research methodology involved taking a group of experienced managers through a two-day training in the use of professional coaching dialogue. The focus of the training was on the use of powerful questions and coaching dialogue to encourage people to find their own solutions to problems.

The training was delivered to a group of 12 managers from the three partner colleges, and they were all asked to practise the techniques within their own organisations and to report back on changes and developments. All the managers identified for this training programme were highly experienced managers who were deemed to be successful by senior managers in their own organisation.

Following the initial training, a series of four workshop sessions provided participants with time and space to practise their skills, feedback on success and difficulties and plan for future improvement and developments.

One key aim of this strand of the project was to explore the possibility of using professional dialogue as a leadership tool to promote and embed equality and diversity. This aim evolved following feedback from earlier surveys that seemed to indicate a lack of awareness of the role of leadership and management in the promotion and embedding of equality and diversity.

The findings from this particular action research intervention are twofold: the identification of the benefits of the training generally across all partners; and an exploration of the impact of the dialogue in terms of the equality and diversity aspect.

Feedback from participants:

- One of the most useful courses that I have ever done – I use this on everybody now;
- This has really added a new dimension to my work, and I have found it particularly useful when working with a difficult member of staff – it really helps me to see things from their perspective;
Although it appears to be time consuming, it is often very quick and saves me a lot of time in the long run;

This had really made me reconsider my management style and approach. Although you can’t use this in every situation, I feel that I have become much more effective through using it when I do.

All feedback was very positive, and further requests came from partner colleges asking us to run this in their organisation. Feedback from senior managers in the partner organisations was also very positive, describing one of the participants as ‘completely changed’, and the department (which was previously struggling) has, according to the manager, also changed beyond recognition, “staff are motivated and happy now, and so are the learners”.

In terms of the development and promotion of equality and diversity, the lead college decided that all the project participants (known as facilitators) would meet with all middle managers within their college and use the process of professional dialogue to encourage them to consider how they could promote and embed equality and diversity within their areas. The managers facilitating the professional dialogue activities were, initially, a little anxious about how this would be received, and expressed concerns about their own awareness of equality and diversity.

To provide support and reassurance, the team of facilitators practised the activity with peers and then undertook each initial session in pairs to build confidence.

What quickly emerged from this was the confidence that the facilitators developed, not only in their skills and abilities to use coaching dialogue, but also their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity in different departments. The reciprocal learning from this activity was identified by participants as significant in terms of their own development.

To support the evaluation of the effectiveness of the process, the facilitators undertook a ‘confidence rating’, asking the manager that they were working with to identify the extent to which they were confident in terms of developing equality and diversity within their area. These managers were asked to rate their confidence on a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being high. With only a few exceptions where people who felt confident did not move their rating at all, most managers moved between 2 and 6 points on the scale in terms of increasing their confidence.

This was felt to be a dramatic result, and a clear demonstration of the possibilities that this type of dialogue has to unlock potential and bring about change. All managers undergoing the process have been asked to produce a revised development plan for equality and diversity based on the discussions, and these will be reviewed further.
Conclusions

Key factors that lead to successful leadership of learning in the learning and skills sector:

- Leaders and managers who communicate effectively and demonstrate commitment, positivity, vision, honesty, and an ability to prioritise;
- A culture of risk taking and innovation: Leaders and managers empower others to achieve through trusting their staff and giving them the (appropriate) freedom to manage themselves and make mistakes in a supportive environment;
- Leaders and managers who enable others to achieve by listening, (sitting in the other seat), supporting, praising and acknowledging success, and who provide honest and constructive feedback.

From this research project, some of the key factors that are perceived by teachers and managers to lead to successful leadership of learning are not difficult to identify. As might be expected, teachers require managers to have a range of personal qualities and skills that enables them to provide teachers with appropriate guidance, support and leadership. However, it is clear that teachers also expect managers to address their very basic requirements such as rooms, appropriate timetabling, sufficient funding and resources.

How do successful middle managers overcome barriers and challenges to become effective leaders of learning?

- Identifying appropriate support from peers/managers/colleagues to overcome barriers and challenges;
- The use of ‘bridging’ - identifying strategies that they have used to solve similar problems in the past.

All the managers interviewed and surveyed overcame challenges by working through them systematically with others, and building on previous experience of similar challenges. None of the managers interviewed worked at solving significant problems in isolation - they all had key people that they would turn to for support, advice and consultation. It would appear that one key strength of highly effective managers is the ability to identify resources to enable them to overcome barriers.

One key element of this would appear to be that many managers are able to use ‘bridging techniques’ to help them to overcome barriers – in other words, identifying where they might have solved a similar problem in the past and using those experiences to help them to solve the current problem.

What is the impact of leadership development on the development and practice of effective leaders?

Principles of effective leadership development:

- Leadership development programmes that use ‘real work’ situations, linked to the participants organization and work. These should provide opportunities for significant peer interaction, discussion and sharing of practice to allow participants to develop the skills of working with others to overcome problems etc.;
- Having a mentor to work with to discuss problems and ideas with;
Using professional dialogue to develop problem solving skills and to widen horizons and extend ways of thinking;
Developing the use of ‘bridging’ synthesis skills to apply prior experience to current problems;
Good ‘apprenticeships’ – working with good role models;
Being able to try things out – learning from doing in a supported, blame free environment;
Development of skills to access resources such as peers, colleagues, staff and managers;
Being treated with respect by managers and trusted to undertake tasks and activities without direct supervision (where appropriate);
Managers who provide constructive feedback, and who praise and acknowledge success.

The key findings emerging from the research suggests that there are some key principles linked to the effective development of successful leaders. This includes both formal and informal training and clear principles of effective development traverse both aspects.

Participants on both strands of the leadership development programmes provided within the context of this project reported that their leadership skills and confidence had improved. This perception was confirmed by feedback from their colleagues, staff and managers.

In addition to this, the experienced, successful managers interviewed identified a range of additional development routes such as ‘learning by doing’, working with good role models and the use of peers and coaching.

**Leadership training and development programmes:**

Whilst all of the participants on the training courses linked to this project (and those who had previously attended other courses) found their programmes to be highly beneficial in terms of content, skill development and approaches to learning, they also identified that they found the collaborative working/sharing aspect of the programme at least as valuable as the formal learning experiences. Whilst this is not at all unexpected, it is important to note down some factors that participants found particularly useful about the way that they learnt and the impact that this had on practice.

Most participants particularly valued learning through what they termed ‘real work situations’. The pilot course was run jointly by internal and external consultants and all of the learning activities were based on ‘real’ college problems, issues and policies such as changes to self-assessment, managing the change to lesson observations and dealing with current conflict situations.

Participants valued sharing and peer working, and if we link this to the way that highly effective managers overcome barriers and challenges, then, through this process, new managers are developing a set of key skills that will enhance their future work. Most participants wanted access to a mentor and to sustain learning gained through their programme through feedback and coaching. If this is linked with the development of coaching skills, it is likely that a model of continuous development can be formed that supports the development of both new and
experienced managers as the experienced managers develop through their coaching and mentoring activities.

Interviews with successful managers repeatedly identified ‘learning from excellent role models’ and those who led by example as having the most significant impact on their development. These managers identified the real benefits of learning by being ‘apprenticed’ to a good leader who supports staff to develop their own approaches to problem solving and allows mistakes to occur in a safe and supportive culture. Leaders who respect their staff, praise and acknowledge success and trust staff to ‘do the job’ were seen as critical elements in the development of the successful leaders that we spoke to.

It is perhaps useful at this point to acknowledge that not every new/emerging manager will have the opportunity to work with such a role model, and to recognise that it may not be appropriate to assume that the act of working with a good role model will automatically lead to desirable development.

It is suggested that a range of approaches, including the use of mentoring by a skilled individual, good ‘apprenticeships’, and high quality programmes that support the sustainable development of critical management skills are provided.

How have leadership practices impacted on the embedding and promotion of inclusion and diversity?

- There is little evidence to suggest that current leadership practice as defined by the project is not seen to have a significant impact on the embedding and promotion of equality and diversity.

The feedback from participants suggests quite clearly that equality and diversity tends to be viewed as something that is accessed through staff development, and not something that is developed or necessarily promoted through approaches to leadership and management. The reasons for this are not clear, and it may be that this is implicit rather than explicit. This is identified as a key area for future development.

Recommendations:

- The embedding of equality and diversity should be a key component of all approaches to the development of managers and leaders in the sector. This should be embedded within all aspects of formal and informal development, and this aspect of leadership development and practice needs to be made explicit as well as implicit.

- To achieve the above, a supportive, blame free environment needs to be engendered where staff are respected, allowed to achieve through:
  - Having (appropriate) freedom to develop by undertaking challenging tasks that allow them to learn through experience;
  - Taking calculated risks and make mistakes in a supportive environment
  - Being valued and trusted;
  - Being given genuine, sincere praise for and acknowledgement of successes and achievements;
o Being given clear, constructive, evidence based feedback on performance – this needs to focus on how leaders work as well as what they achieve (process as well as outcome based);

o Strong management that recognizes and responds effectively to problems, difficulties and issues at strategic and operational levels;

o Clarity of role, purpose and vision.

- Leadership development programmes should be directly work-related and enable participants to link learning directly to their organization and practice. These programmes need to contain elements of peer learning, coaching and develop the skills of managers to use ‘bridging’ skills to build on past achievements.

- Leadership development should enable participants to accurately self-assess their own skills, behaviours and knowledge, particularly in key areas identified such as:
  o Commitment;
  o Communication;
  o Positivity;
  o Vision;
  o Prioritisation;
  o Passion;
  o Honesty;
  o Ensuring that the basic needs of teachers/learners are met.

- A range of approaches need to be utilised to develop effective leaders, including the use of professional dialogue (coaching and mentoring) by skilled individuals, well planned ‘apprenticeships’, high quality programmes that support the sustainable development of effective leadership, and robust, accessible processes to ensure leaders are required to reflect critically on their performance and progress and move forward in terms of their development.

- The effectiveness of all aspects of the support and development provided to managers at all levels should be regularly reviewed, emerging issues responded to and areas of good practice identified and exploited. This should be considered in the context of all the areas identified above.

### Dissemination of research

1. Sharing with Peer Review and other collaborative partners through partnership meetings and presentation to college executive teams;
2. College Conference for the sector to take place in late June as a showcase for attendees;
3. Presentation of findings at LSIS and LSC events;
4. Working with other interested organisations to support their development of leadership practice;
5. Publication of project summary paper outlining key findings etc.
References
