

# **Strategic Leadership and its Contribution to Improvements in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education**

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**with**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

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This paper aims to provide a strong conceptual underpinning for our project, 'Strategic Leadership for Institutional Teaching and Learning Centres: Developing a Model for the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. The project intends to:

1. investigate the forms of leadership that are present and emerging in organisational Centres for teaching and learning and whether or not they are responding to the 'organisational redesign' that Marginson (2000, p.28) argued that the sector required. This involves close consideration of the ways in which institutional structures and distinctive organisational cultures are being shaped by strategic leadership stakeholders to enhance teaching and learning quality.

And

2. develop a model of leadership that is anticipatory, innovative and creative, strategic and contingent and which directs particular professional development and approaches in support of central groups as they confront the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This involves the development of a Teaching and Learning Strategic Leadership Framework for professional development purposes for capacity building of leadership personnel of institutional Centres for teaching and learning.

This project arose in response to a number of external environmental developments across the higher education sector, in particular the DEST Learning and Teaching Performance Fund, the funding opportunities offered by the Carrick Institute for Teaching and Learning (the Carrick Institute), and the influence of the Australian University Quality Agency audits.

Concurrently, a number of Australian universities have restructured and are restructuring their central academic teaching and learning support operations. As the project has progressed, the rapidity of organisational restructuring/change in the sector now sees many Teaching and Learning Centres as falling in the category of 'newly' created. The project now has broader applicability in the sector than was even envisaged at its inception. The remit of such Centres appears to be to enhance teaching quality to take advantage of the dynamic changes confronting universities in regards to internal strengths and external opportunities. It is important to note that the related policy discourses are embedded in the recognition and nurturing of 'excellence' and 'quality'. While some institutions have re-engineered or re-structured their central support groups for teaching and learning, other institutions have not. What we see anecdotally, regardless of the Centre's 'newness' is the emergence of a growing interest in the constituents of 'leadership' in such Centres that might generate sustainable improvement in teaching and learning and a concomitant interest in developing an evidence-base in the area.

Hence we believe that it is timely to:

- identify common factors that need to be considered in the effective **strategic leadership** of central organisational structures to enhance long-term learning and teaching performance and
- illustrate how these factors are dealt with contextually in a selection of contemporary university settings in Australian higher education.

In focusing on 'strategic leadership' in this context, we borrow from Viljoen & Dann (2003) and Blackmore & Blackwell (2006), in that we are primarily concerned with parties operating in, or interacting with, central groups who have various degrees of formal authority and institutional influence and who are expected to enhance the long-term learning and teaching performance of an organisation. This includes responsibility to enhance the quality of student learning through building strong institutional teaching capabilities. In line with contemporary leadership theorising, we see effective strategic leadership as being situational and distributed. Leadership is therefore contingent on a particular university's history, ambition, geographical configuration and perceived strengths in the sector. 'Strategic leadership' suggests that strategic leaders have the capacity to set directions, identify, choose and implement activities which create compatibility between internal organisational strengths and the changing external environment within which the university operates. While we are interested in strategic forms of leadership, others may evolve. We also anticipate that sociological understandings of agency may be influential and that the diversity in the sector may also foreground contingent views of leadership.

As the paper explores, Centres are expected to contribute to improving accepted performance indicators in teaching and learning quality in the face of downsizing, staff volatility, dispersed operations, financial pressures (particularly on regional campuses), the pervasive influence of information technologies, a rapidly changing and heterogeneous student population and the globalisation of higher education. While such pressures are reflected across the sector, clearly organisational responses differ based on each university's own history, profile and desired directions. The Carrick Institute has supported various leadership projects, for example those related to online teaching and learning, those promoting diverse forms of learning and teaching communities, improvements in the learning and teaching quality cycle and the use of student feedback to enhance student learning and teaching practice (the two latter projects being granted to Monash University and RMIT University, respectively, partners to this project). However, none of those projects *specifically* presents a structural or systemic view of 'leadership'.

Our project is deliberately designed to fill that important gap, because it is being conducted with a number of sector collaborators, and because its key interest lies in investigating specifically, the way in which *institutional* organisational structures and distinctive organisational cultures are being shaped to lead the enhancement of staff capacity building for teaching and learning quality assurance and improvement. Marshall's (2006) recent occasional paper for the Carrick Institute provides a useful reference point for our interests in strategic leadership. He argues for a broad research and development agenda that captures the complexity of leadership in teaching and learning; in particular that the sector ought to concentrate on "developing the organisational environment within which leadership for learning and teaching is to occur" (2006, p.12). This encapsulates what this project is striving to achieve.

## **2 STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AGENDAS AND AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **2.1 Overview**

As we have argued above, the organisational environment in which strategic leadership occurs is a critical and crucial consideration. Through the lens of quality, we examine national policy initiatives and other significant developments in Australian higher education which are setting common agendas of action for universities and their teaching and learning Centres across the sector.

Australian universities engage with a common set of quality assurance, quality excellence and quality enhancement agendas:

- Assuring quality as fostered through the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)
- Assessing excellence in quality through the DEST Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (TLPF)
- Recognising, promoting and enhancing quality through the Carrick Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
- Responding to the ongoing debate on the purposes and value of higher education, particularly as manifested in broad institutional commitment to the development of graduate attributes and enhanced employability of graduates.

It is reasonable to conclude that newly created Teaching and Learning Centres have been established to make a significant strategic contribution to engaging with these agendas at the institutional level, and in ways consistent with their own university's mission, vision, current commitments and future directions in teaching and learning.

The final section identifies the stakeholders that will be targeted for this study, with the section concluding with a diagrammatic summation of the strategic leadership contributions to higher education.

### **2.2 Assuring quality**

[Note: Key terms/ideas are defined and briefly discussed in Appendix 1: 8.1] To assure quality we need to appreciate its dimensions and acknowledge that, even within a specific context, notions of quality will remain a contested domain.

#### **2.2.1 The dimensions of 'quality'**

'Quality' is the term we use to describe and assess an array of characteristics of a diverse range of physical goods and intangible services. According to Garvin (1988) there are five common definitions of, or approaches to, quality:

- Transcendent – quality can't be precisely defined, but we know it when we see it, or are aware of its absence when it is missing. This is not a particularly useful approach to quality if we hope to make an objective assessment of quality.

- Product(or attribute)-based – differences in quality relate to differences in the quantity of some attribute.
- Manufacturing(or process)-based – quality is measured by the degree to which a product or service conforms to its intended design or specification; quality arises from the process(es) used.
- Value-based – quality is defined by price: a quality product or service is one that provides desired performance at an acceptable cost.
- User (or customer)-based – quality is the capacity to satisfy needs, wants and desires of the user(s). A product or service that doesn't fulfil user needs is unlikely to find any users. This is a context-dependent, contingent approach to quality.

In the context of tangible goods, it has been suggested that we assess quality in terms of the following eight factors/dimensions: performance; features; reliability; conformance; durability; serviceability; aesthetics; and perceived quality (Garvin, 1991). In the context of intangible services, some authors have attempted to apply Garvin's eight dimensions of product quality to service quality, but the analogy becomes tenuous in places. Others have attempted to identify how we assess the quality of services, including time, timeliness, completeness, courtesy, consistency, accessibility and convenience, accuracy, and responsiveness (Evans & Lindsay, 2005).

The contemporary view of quality places the user (often the 'customer') in a central role (Crosby, 1995) and we discuss this aspect more fully below: see 2.4.1. We need to understand the needs of the user if we are to successfully deliver services and/or products that will fulfil their needs as the ultimate measure of quality resides in their perceptions. This is a much more sophisticated view of quality than appealing to elegant designs or devising reliable systems for production and/or delivery. However, it forces the supplier to confront questions that are often difficult. Who is/are the customer(s)? What are their needs, wants and desires? These are difficult enough questions of themselves, but are further complicated by the fact that the user group is generally not homogeneous, and may have a wide range of potentially conflicting requirements and, over time, these needs are likely to change. Think of personal computers – what would have been seen as desirable processing speed, size, etc. five years ago would today be viewed as inadequate. Further, if, in the context of higher education, we take the 'user' to be the student, then we need to appreciate that the 'customer' is also the raw material as well as the product and, turning it around, the service provider (the university) is the 'customer' of the fee-paying student – a truly complex, iterative relationship.

Another important idea from the contemporary conceptualisation of product quality is that all areas of an organisation contribute to the final quality of the services and products produced (Juran, 1988). Poor market research may lead us to offer products/services that no one wants, regardless of how well we deliver them. A flawed design cannot be turned into quality regardless of how repeatable our delivery processes. An excellent design will appear highly variable in quality if our process tolerances are too wide, or our raw materials are of a low standard. A high quality product can be ruined during transport to the customer. There is a system-wide 'quality function' that exists and impacts on quality. In a manufacturing context, it is recognised that up to 85 percent of quality issues are the result of systemic factors beyond the control of individual workers (Deming, 2000). The general concept that arises here is that quality is primarily a management responsibility, and the operation of the entire organisation needs to be considered when seeking to improve quality. In a university context, this implies that the student perception of quality is likely to be influenced just as

much by the timetable clashes, late delivery of materials, the amount of network downtime, the temperature of the classroom and the size of the tutorial class, as it is to be influenced by currency of course material.

Any listing of quality dimensions that we might select as applicable in a particular context is dependent on the product and/or service in question and the purpose(s) for which we wish to assess quality. For us, that context is higher education.

## **2.2.2 Quality in the context of higher education**

To many, the idea of applying quality concepts (particularly some of the terminology rooted in the manufacture of commercial products) to education is anathema (Anderson, 2006). For some, in the context of education, it does not seem possible to move beyond transcendent conceptions of quality. Others (see, for example, Perry, 1981) are concerned with education as a developmental process and, for them, quality is neither a product nor a service. On the basis that development occurs from scaffolding critical thinking and transforming character and, as such, the task for both administrators and educators is to commit to developing students holistically (Thompson, 1999) it becomes increasingly difficult to move beyond transcendent conceptions of quality. Further, while there appears to be increasing academic acceptance of the vocational nature of much tertiary study and increased tolerance of quality interpreted as a commodity, there is also awareness that, throughout their histories, higher education institutions have been regarded not only as having educational and research responsibilities but also as being promoters of the ethical and moral values of modern society (Bucharest declaration, 2004).

There is also a propensity to confuse 'quality' with quality assurance and/or quality control (QA/QC) processes, discussed briefly at 2.3 below (see, also, Appendix 1: 8.1). However, these processes don't define or necessarily even improve quality; they only seek to ensure that a previously specified level of quality (however that is defined) is actually achieved. An inability to articulate and/or agree what constitutes quality in education does not, of itself, constitute a limitation of QA/QC processes as applied to education. This is not to say that the move from a transcendent to a more concrete definition of quality in education, or that reconciling the needs of the large education stakeholder group is necessarily straightforward or without conflict. Like all matters of educational policy and practice, the devil is in the detail, and no less so than in defining/agreeing what we mean by 'quality' in higher education, and then devising objective measures for it. As previously noted, quality is a system-wide function, and a comprehensive model of quality in higher education should encompass both teaching (organisation-related aspects) and learning (student-related aspects), and include input, process and output factors for both areas (Oliver, 2003).

Significantly, and very much aligned with this study, the major changes to Standard MB-007 were motivated by "a recognition that organisations are knowledge ecosystems – a complex set of relationships existing between people, process, technology and content". Hence a critical element of implementing a standard is the organisation's environment for "The implementation of knowledge management is context dependent and the field is continuing to evolve" (Standards Australia, 2005, p. ii).

Quality in higher education will remain a contested domain. Modern developments in the field of quality bring a semantic legacy that reveals their recent history in the production of tangible products (typically for commerce), and that automatically makes many of the

associated concepts unpalatable to some in higher education. In addition to this, the wide range of stakeholders in higher education leads naturally to a multiplicity of (often competing) interpretations of quality. Regardless of this, and even if only at a very pragmatic level, student learning outcomes must be a key measure of quality in higher education. Research indicates that student learning is related to their perceptions of their teaching and learning environment. This is why student evaluation (see 2.4.3 below) of their teaching and learning environment is one key measure that can be used as part of a continuous, action research-based approach to quality improvement in higher education.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres can develop teaching and learning visions, principles, plans and activities which can guide the process of continuous quality improvement in teaching and learning at various levels and in various areas of the institution.

### 2.3 Quality control, quality assurance and quality improvement

There are a number of standard quality management systems [QMSs], the most widely used of which is the International Organization for Standardization standard ISO 9001:2000 Quality management systems – Requirements. Many national standards bodies (including Standards Australia) have adopted ISO 9001 as their equivalent national standard. ISO 9001 specifies the requirements for a QMS under five main categories:

- quality management system – what it must contain and how it must be documented;
- management responsibility – confirming that quality is a management issue;
- resource management – to achieve quality we must have appropriately trained people, appropriate processes, equipment capable of producing quality, and raw materials of an appropriate level of quality;
- product realisation – how all the steps from design through to manufacturing and/or service delivery contribute to quality; and
- measurement, analysis and improvement – how quality will be measured, how products/services that do not meet quality standards will be rectified, and what quality improvement processes will be used.

The question is often asked, "How can a single standard specify the requirements of a quality system for all types of organisations?" The answer is that ISO 9001 is not concerned with the details of what is done by an organisation, but only how it is managed. It identifies those generic processes in an organisation that must be controlled to achieve quality, without prescribing the details of the controls. The details of the quality system actually implemented need to be determined by each organisation, taking into account the expectations of their users, their range of products and/or services, their processes, their quality goals, and their own unique circumstances. The use of terms such as 'product' and 'customer' reveal the development of approaches to quality that are rooted in the manufacturing of physical goods. However, there is an extensive literature on the application of these same quality principles to the development and delivery of services. ISO 9001 employs the term 'product' to mean both service and product.

A QMS can be viewed as an unwanted administrative burden but the basic requirements for even an ISO 9001 QMS do not have to be onerous. It requires an organisation to

articulate a quality philosophy that defines quality and identifies what aspects of the operation will be covered by the QMS, formalise existing operating procedures, implement a small number of mandatory procedures, provide any necessary staff training and keep records to demonstrate the operation of the QMS. Of course, like other management functions, such as planning and budgeting, quality management can appear to take on a life of its own, creating busywork for its own sake, but this is not an inevitable by-product of having a QMS. A QMS system can be viewed as a barrier to innovation that will lead to homogeneity, the lowest common denominator and stagnation. However there are a range of well known innovative organisations (including Apple, 3M and Hewlett-Packard) that have ISO 9001 QMSs in operation. An organisation with a QMS that is suffering from an inability to innovate would do better to look for policies that penalise, neglect or do not provide the resources required to innovate. A QMS, itself, is no barrier to innovation.

An idea arising from the existence of QMSs is 'certification'. If we have a QMS and believe that it is functioning well, we can declare this fact – this is referred to as first-party certification. If we have an important customer, they may wish to audit our QMS – a successful audit of this type is referred to as second-party certification. If we wish to demonstrate to a wider audience that we have an effective QMS, we may seek an appropriately qualified/accredited independent organisation to conduct the audit of our QMS – this is referred to as third-party certification.

A range of universities have adopted ISO 9001 as the basis for their QMS, with many being certified by external accrediting bodies. In Australia, it is common to see separate academic and administrative units and/or commercial subsidiaries with a certified QMS, rather than entire universities (Baird, 2006).

### **2.3.1 The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA)**

In Australia, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) plays an important role in quality in higher education. AUQA is a national body that audits and reports on QA in Australian higher education. Audits are conducted on a five-yearly cycle, and require institutions to prepare a self-report around a series of structured criterion, which is then followed up by an on-site audit of the institution. Audits are primarily norm-referenced, taking into consideration the individual aims of the institution, as well as commonly accepted practice in the sector. AUQA's principal function is in the assurance of quality, though it does incorporate elements of quality improvement/enhancement through:

- the inclusion of recommendations for improvement in its audit reports;
- the hosting of a 'good practice database' to disseminate good practice; and
- hosting the Australian Universities Quality Forum to facilitate sharing of good practice in higher education in Australia.

AUQA's audit process evaluates the institution's QA processes on four dimensions: approach, deployment, results and improvement (ADRI) (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2007a). While not performing a third-party QA certification role *per se*, AUQA's audit reports, including 'Commendations, Affirmations and Recommendations', are publicly available.

In higher education, just as in industry, QA processes can be seen as resource sapping busy work or an administrative tool to micro-manage the affairs of staff (Marginson & Considine, 2000), but this has more to do with the implementation of the QA system, rather than any inherent feature of QA. These perceptions are perhaps amplified in higher education due to the wide range of 'customers', the intangible nature of the 'product' and the bureaucratic nature of higher education institutions and accounting for the use of public funds.

The primary role of a quality management system (QMS) in general, and the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) in higher education is the assurance of quality. But, for both its own sake and in response to a competitive environment, we should also be concerned with the improvement of quality. The higher education literature notes that quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI) (or quality enhancement) are not the same thing (Avdjieva & Wilson, 2002; Knight, 2006). A short-term 'tactical' response to quality in higher education may be adequate to satisfy external QA auditing bodies, but a 'strategic' approach to quality is needed for the development of an organisation-wide culture of QA and QI (Gordon, 2002). While there is no specific international standard to provide a framework for QI that is analogous to that provided by ISO 9001 for QA/QMS, there is no shortage of available QI techniques.

***Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:*** Strategic leadership of Centres can help implement approaches which systematically provide opportunities for different categories of academic teaching staff to develop their teaching capabilities and to take action on various forms of evidence on the quality of their teaching.

## 2.4 Assessing excellence in quality

### 2.4.1 A user-centred view of quality

The starting point for quality is the user, or, to use the unfortunately more 'charged' quality terminology, the 'customer'. It is worth noting that the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 9001:2000 Quality Management Systems (QMS) standard simply defines 'customer' as any person or organisation that receives a product or service; there is no inherent implication of a purchase being involved. Then, who are the 'customers' in higher education? Who receives the outputs/benefits of the higher education system? The Standards Australia handbook HB 90.7-2000 Education and Training Guide to ISO 9001:2000 suggests that it can be any or all of the following as appropriate to the particular context:

- a student
- a student's parents or employer
- a company or organization with whom a research contract, a consultancy agreement or a training contract is entered into
- an industry
- an internal customer (i.e. within the education and training provider's own organisation)
- a government, regulatory body, accreditation body and similar and
- a relevant society group, such as a parents and citizens group, members of staff, and society as a whole (Standards Australia International, 2000).

Such a diverse stakeholder/user group indicates the complexity of the task of identifying the range of needs that we might include in a definition of quality in higher education. We

also need to consider what service/product we are providing to the user(s). HB 90.7-2000 includes the following suggestions:

- an educational environment
- a curriculum and other resources
- a community service or
- research outputs

for the enhancement of skills/knowledge/understanding/attitude/values (Standards Australia International, 2000). The many stakeholders in higher education lead to a multitude of measurements (or performance indicators) for various purposes, including factors such as retention rates, research outputs, completion rates, student evaluations, staff-student ratios, and graduate employment data.

Defining who the user is, and what we are offering to them, provides a framework for identifying what aspects of quality we would seek to control and/or improve and which areas of the organisation contribute to/impact on that quality as perceived by the user. In any conception of quality in higher education, students must be viewed as a principal user group. One survey of academic staff actively publishing in the literature related to quality in higher education from a range of disciplines and countries found that the most favoured definition of quality related to satisfying customers' needs, students were considered the most important customer group (followed by employers) and nearly all agreed that some form of quality measurement was important (Owlia & Aspinwall, 1996).

Some may argue that many undergraduate students are comparatively naive 'customers' with a limited conception of the knowledge and skills necessary in their field of study. However, ignoring the needs and expectations of any important customer group is a recipe for organisational failure, and the modern university undergraduate student is just as likely to turn out to be a mature age student (with significant experience of their field of study and/or prior experience in higher education) rather than an 18 year old directly from secondary school. Over the course of their studies, students will experience a wide range of teaching and learning, and be well placed to make comparative judgements of quality, and, as novices in their discipline, will also be qualified to judge whether their involvement in education is assisting them to learn (Ramsden, 1991).

If students are key users of higher education, what are the factors in their learning that they consider important? In Australia, a large analysis of open-ended comments made by university graduates on their studies as part of the course experience questionnaire (CEQ) has recently been completed (Scott, 2006). While confirming the complex and multi-faceted nature of quality that arise from such a diverse group of users, and that it is the total university experience that counts, a key finding from the investigation was that students highly value learning methods that engage them. Student engagement has long been identified as a key qualitative measure of quality of student learning (along with assessed student results as a quantitative measure) (Trigwell & Prosser, 1991). There also exists a literature that confirms a link between student evaluation of their 'quality of teaching' (perhaps better expressed as 'experience of teaching' to avoid apparently circular, but common definitions of quality based on quality) and their approach to and engagement with their learning (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). This is one of the reasons why student evaluation of teaching is used as an important measure of quality in higher education.

## 2.4.2 The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ)

Work by Ramsden and Entwistle in Britain in the early 1980s with a Course Perception Questionnaire established a link between students' perception of their learning environment and their quality of learning (Ramsden & Entwistle, 1981). Subsequent work in Australia during the 1980s on a Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), commencing with an initial 80 item inventory that was consolidated via trials to a 30 item inventory, lead to a 1990 national survey of students which confirmed the reliability and validity of the 30 item inventory (CEQ30) (Ramsden, 1991). A shortened (23 item – CEQ23) version of the CEQ (including the addition of a 'Generic Skills' scale) was developed in consultation with the then Department of Employment, Education and Training. Work that confirms the value of the CEQ23 instrument has also been done (Byrne & Flood, 2003; Wilson, Lissio & Ramsden, 1997). A version of this instrument has been included in the Graduate Careers Council of Australia (GCCA) national survey of graduates from 1993 onward. Clearly, there is a need to be clear about which version of the CEQ is being referred to.

One of the criteria for the initial development of the CEQ was that it be generally applicable to all students, hence discipline-specific questions (for example questions about lab work) were not included (Ramsden, 1991). Since its initial development and use in the GCCA national student survey, the number of CEQ-related items has increased to 49 to cater for discipline-specific course aspects, though individual institutions are only required to report results for 13 'core' items:

- GT01 - The staff put a lot of time into commenting on my work
- GT03 - The teaching staff normally gave me helpful feedback on how I was doing
- GT10 - The teaching staff of this course motivated me to do my best work
- GT15 - My lecturers are extremely good at explaining things
- GT16 - The teaching staff worked hard to make their subjects interesting
- GT27 - The staff made a real effort to understand difficulties I might be having
- GS06 - The course helped me develop my ability to work as a team member
- GS14 - The course sharpened my analytic skills
- GS23 - The course developed my problem solving skills
- GS32 - The course improved my skills in written communication
- GS42 - As a result of my course, I feel confident about tackling unfamiliar problems
- GS43 - The course helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work
- OSI49 - Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this course

For all CEQ items, respondents are asked to express their degree of agreement or disagreement on a five-point scale. On the national standard form only the 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree' points are labelled, however the instruments used at some institutions label all five points. The five-point response categories are generally interpreted as 'strongly disagree', 'disagree', 'undecided', 'agree' and 'strongly agree'.

The theoretical construction and the practical application of the CEQ are not without their critics. Some argue that the focus of the CEQ is too narrow as measure of the entirety of the student experience. Since its original development as a proxy measure of quality of student learning, the CEQ has been used for a range of purposes, some very different than for what it was intended, i.e. for determining institutional funding and use by third parties to construct league tables (Niland, 1999). The originally validated CEQ30 was reduced to the CEQ23, of which only 12 items are retained in the current 13 item core of the GCCA CEQ instrument. Some of the optional CEQ items relate to resource-

dependent aspects of the university experience, potentially advantaging well resourced institutions. There is some evidence that aspects of the CEQ may not be well suited to 'unconventional' teaching and learning environments, such as problem-based learning (Lyon & Hendry, 2002). Nevertheless, the CEQ (in particular the GCCA version) remains a widely used measure of student quality of learning.

The developer of the CEQ suggests that the use of mean CEQ scores to rank organisational units is problematic, as they are normative data (the highest ranked unit may still be unsatisfactory). It is more useful to consider the proportions of students agreeing with scale items. It is also valuable to consider the changes in results over time. The validity of all inferences from respondent data depends on how representative the sample is (Ramsden, 1991). It is also noted that systemic differences have been observed in CEQ ratings based on size of institution, field of study, age, gender and other demographic characteristics, and interpretation of CEQ results needs to be done with knowledge of local conditions (Graduate Careers Australia, 2006).

In addition to the 'quantitative' response items noted above, the CEQ instrument employed by the GCCA also includes an invitation to respondents to write open-ended comments on the best aspects (BA) of their university course experience and those most needing improvement (NI). These responses provide additional information that can help in understanding what students had in mind when agreeing or disagreeing with the CEQ response items. As noted above, a large analysis of open-ended comments made by university graduates on their studies as part of the course experience questionnaire (CEQ) has recently been completed (Scott, 2006). More than 160,000 comments from students graduating from 14 Australian universities (including Deakin) over the period 2001-2004 were analysed to identify common themes that were reported by students. Key findings include:

- the total university experience counts – not just what happens in the classroom
- students desire learning methods that engage them
- the preferred learning methods varied by discipline
- key areas needing improvement are assessment, student administration and support, and course structure and expectations
- computers and information technology don't figure highly in student ratings and
- staff make a principal difference in almost all aspects of the course.

***Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:*** Strategic leadership of Centres in analysing and interpreting CEQ data for course review and improvement, and ongoing critique of validity of instrument based on teaching and learning commitments and directions of institution.

### **2.4.3 Student evaluation of teaching and units**

While it has been shown that the original course experience questionnaire (CEQ) was a useful summative measure of student experience at the level of aggregation of whole-of-program and broad field of study, it was not intended as an instrument to examine the quality of individual units of study or performance of staff repeatedly within a program (Ramsden, 1991). So, in addition to participating in the national CEQ survey and perhaps administering their own CEQ-style graduate course experience survey(s), many universities also administer student questionnaires relating to individual units of study (Barrie, Ginns & Symons, 2007). These questionnaires have a range of names – Units of

Study Evaluation (USE) (Institute for Teaching & Learning, 2006), Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) (Emery, Kramer & Tian, 2003), Student Opinion Survey (SOS) (Bedggood & Pollard, 1999), Student Evaluation of Teaching and Subjects (SETS) (Neumann, 2000), Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) (Hicks, 1999), or in the case of Deakin, Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units (SETU). Collectively, they are referred to as student evaluation of teaching (SET) (Millea & Grimes, 2002). It should be noted that, while the data from SET surveys can inform the teaching evaluation process, of itself, administering questionnaires to students is not evaluation; evaluation of teaching is the on-going process of discovering the strengths and weaknesses of your professional work with students and acting upon this information (Ramsden & Dodds, 1989).

As the array of names suggest, these instruments have a range of stated purposes, including measurement of perceived worth/value of units of study, measurement of perceived performance of the teacher, to assist in the disaggregation of course experience-type survey data, etc., or a combination of these reasons. In the case of Deakin, the SETU instrument aims to collect student perceptions about both the delivery and content in units of study. The inclusion of items evaluating teacher performance in some SET instruments is premised on research that showed that effectiveness of student learning was influenced by teacher behaviours - teacher enthusiasm, preparation and organisation, presentation skills, clarity of objectives etc (Sheehan & DuPrey, 1999). The frequency of application of SET instruments varies. The frequency of application of SET instruments varies. Some institutions administer them bi- or triennially. At Deakin, SETU is currently administered to every undergraduate and postgraduate unit in every semester of offer (Deakin University, 2003).

Unlike the CEQ, the evidence that unit-based SET instruments are valid and reliable measures of teaching quality is more equivocal. There is evidence that well designed SET questionnaires can be made reliable - the same instrument administered under the same conditions yields the same results (Langbein, 1994). Validity refers to the ability of the instrument to accurately measure what it purports to measure without being influenced by factors that are expected to be irrelevant to teaching quality (Langbein, 1994). For many simple SET questionnaires it is not possible to establish reliability (Bedggood & Pollard, 1999), and many external factors beyond the control of academic staff have been found to influence SET results (and hence validity), including discipline, course level and whether the unit is mandatory or not (Emery, Kramer & Tian, 2003). In addition, while some SET ratings have been shown to exhibit a positive correlation with student outcomes, the correlation is modest (Miller, 1998).

To have confidence in making important judgements based on survey data, we must first be confident that the respondent group is a representative sample of the population under consideration. The range of recommendations for what is a valid minimum number of respondents and/or valid minimum response rate in SET surveys varies dramatically in the literature. Another concern is that many studies have shown that students who respond to voluntary SET instruments are different in their study habits and academic achievement to non-responders (Richardson, 2005). It is important that any SET results reported are statistically justifiable (Miller, 1998).

All of these limitations of typical SET instruments mean that the results must be interpreted with caution. The literature describes a range of formats for reporting SET results, from simple presentation of the raw data through to sophisticated schemes such as indicating performance range (within one of lower 25%, mid 50% or top 25%) for each

scale item against results from comparable study units based on grouping according to the known influence factors of discipline, class size and year level (Neumann, 2000). Where a SET instrument contains a range of items, there is an opportunity to examine comparative strengths and weaknesses, as well as overall student satisfaction. It is important to consider the range of external factors that may have influenced SET results, including class size, available resources, whether the unit was elective or compulsory etc (Institute for Teaching and Learning, 2006).

In the same way that the CEQ contains both quantitative and qualitative measures of student course experience, it is recognised that SET instruments containing only a fixed set of items that produce strictly quantitative results provide a very limited picture of unit teaching. It is desirable that students have the opportunity to also provide open-ended written feedback, commonly (including the current version of SETU at Deakin) this takes the form of asking students to comment on the 'best' and 'worst/most in need of improvement' aspects of the unit (Miller, 1998). This qualitative feedback can be extremely valuable in understanding the reasons why students have given a particular quantitative SET rating.

Reflecting the modern understanding of the multi-faceted nature of 'quality' and the finding that it is the entirety of the university experience that contributes to the student 'course experience', virtually all authors examining the value of the SET process recognise that SET data are only one of many sources of information that should be called upon when assessing the quality of teaching in units. This is reflected in Deakin's policy on Evaluation of Teaching and Units (Deakin University, 2003). Other equally valuable sources include objective measures of student learning (such as unit marks), reflective self-assessment of teaching performance, peer assessment of teaching and student focus groups. In summary, although remaining contentious, SET instruments are in wide use and for a range of purposes. With thoughtful questionnaire design, valid response rates, and careful interpretation of the results, SET data can be one useful input of the teaching and learning quality improvement process (Richardson, 2005).

***Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:*** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of valid instruments, assist in the analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data, advise on strategies to increase response rates, disseminate good practices in response to student evaluation feedback, and devise other supplementary and complementary methods of data collection for specific purposes.

#### **2.4.4 Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF)**

Another reason the CEQ is important in Australian higher education is its relationship with the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (LTPF). The LTPF aims to reward those Australian universities that best demonstrate excellence in undergraduate learning and teaching in four major discipline clusters:

- Science, Computing, Engineering, Architecture and Agriculture
- Business, Law and Economics
- Humanities, Arts and Education
- Health

Eligibility to participate in LTPF funding is currently determined by a combination of performance indicators, including the core 'student satisfaction' indicators from the CEQ, 'outcome indicators' from the Graduate Destination Survey (GDS), an Australian national survey of employment or further education status of graduates, and 'success indicators' (student progression and retention rates) from the federal Department of Education, Science and Training student statistical information. The quantum of funding that is contingent upon the results of the LTPF (over \$AU82 million was available for allocation in 2007) means that it, and by implication the CEQ, will remain an important concern for Australian universities.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres need to be aware of opportunities to support the improvement of LTPF outcomes, provision of advice on the best ways of spending funding to enhance teaching and learning in the institution, and evaluation of outcomes of funding deployments.

## 2.5 Recognising, promoting and enhancing quality

### 2.5.1 Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

Launched in 2004 and succeeding a sequence of predecessor institutions, the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education provides a national focus for the enhancement of teaching and learning in Australian higher education providers. Included in its published objectives are that it will:

1. promote and support strategic change in higher education institutions for the enhancement of learning and teaching, including curriculum development and assessment (through a scheme of competitive national teaching grants up to \$AU220,000 each)
2. foster and acknowledge excellent teaching in higher education (through a scheme of national teaching awards of up to \$AU75,000 each and Fellowships valued up to \$AU330,000 each) and
3. identify learning and teaching issues that impact on the Australian higher education system and facilitate national approaches to address these and other emerging issues (by funding a range of 'discipline-based initiatives' investigations in the range \$AU100,000 - \$AU200,000 each).

This funding is highly prized, and Australian universities compete and collaborate to win it by demonstrating the quality of their teaching, teachers and teaching enhancement project ideas. The Carrick Institute has funded over 100 projects under its Fellowship, Grants and Discipline-based Initiatives Programs. Outcomes will need to be mobilised for the particular benefits of the range of universities in the sector. Carrick is providing major stimulus for educators to pursue the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education by undertaking cross-institutional research and development projects of national and international significance.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres can analyse and adapt Carrick project outcomes for the benefit of particular institutional needs and directions, facilitate the mobilisation of interest in actively participating in Carrick programs drawing on the particular strengths of institutions and their staff, and

support the promotion of the most outstanding educators for national teaching excellence awards. It is important to situate Carrick developmental opportunities in ways appropriate to advancing academic teaching staff careers.

## 2.6 Responding to the ongoing debate on the purposes and value of higher education

### 2.6.1 Development of graduate attributes

Arising from the push in higher education for quality assurance, accountability for outcomes and capability of graduates (Leathwood & Phillips, 2000) specifying a list of qualities or capabilities that graduates will attain, provides a benchmark against which the performance of a higher education institution can be measured. Required by DEST since 1998 in response to the West Review, most higher education institutions, including Deakin (Deakin University, 2005), identify a list of expected graduate attributes or outcomes. In addition, many program accrediting professional bodies also specify a list of graduate attributes that accredited undergraduate programs must incorporate. An inventory of desired/intended graduate attributes may be expressed in a range of forms, including:

- a simple list
- in terms of **generic attributes** that are common to all or most graduates, and **discipline specific attributes** that relate to the particular program(s) the student is studying
- **knowledge or understandings, attitudes or qualities**, and **skills or abilities**, representing theoretical knowledge, beliefs and practical abilities (and related to Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives, including the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains) developed during the program or
- some combination of these categories.

It has been suggested that it is the generic attributes that are the most important (Hager, Holland & Beckett, 2002), perhaps because the discipline specific body of knowledge is prone to obsolescence and will require continual renewal, and, in the longer term, as graduates progress in their careers, they may become less involved in the details of their discipline, and more reliant on their generic skills. A large consultation project with Australian industry and business in 2001 identified the following generic 'employability' skills that enterprises sought in their staff, in addition to job-specific and/or relevant technical skills:

- Communication that contributes to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers
- Teamwork that contributes to productive working relationships and outcomes
- Problem-solving that contributes to productive outcomes
- Initiative and enterprise that contribute to innovative outcomes
- Planning and organizing that contribute to long-term and short-term strategic planning
- Self-management that contributes to employee satisfaction and growth
- Learning that contributes to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes
- Technology that contributes to effective execution of tasks and a list of

- Personal attributes that contribute to overall employability (e.g. loyalty, honesty & integrity, adaptability) (Department of Education Science & Training, 2002).

In the discussion surrounding graduate attributes, it is important to make the (perhaps subtle) distinction between a program of study that has been designed to provide opportunities for students to be exposed to activities intended to develop, exercise and assess certain graduate attributes, and those attributes that students have actually developed by the time they graduate from their program of study. It is the former 'certification of programs' that is still most commonly required in internal and external program accreditation exercises; while it is the latter that really determines the competency/capacity of the graduate. We can imagine the possibility of a 'pass student' carefully negotiating through their accredited program curriculum and assessment, to the point of graduation, having consciously avoided one or more perceived desirable attributes that they are uncomfortable with.

In the literature related to graduate attributes, there can be observed varying levels of 'sophistication' in approach. The range includes:

- identifying and prioritising desirable graduate attributes (Scott & Yates, 2002)
- identifying where and at what level in the curriculum attributes will be covered (Atrens *et al*, 2004; Teaching and Learning Centre, 2007)
- designing assessment to explicitly measure graduate attributes (Yeo, 2004)
- evaluation of the effectiveness of delivery of graduate attributes (Bullen *et al*, 2004) and
- evidence-based certification of attainment of graduate attributes (Williams & Sher, 2004).

Though the topic of graduate attributes has been around for some time, for some universities, statements of graduate attributes have historically been more rhetorical than real (Lister & Nouwens, 2004). Having a list of graduate attributes published on a web site or in a program handbook does not automatically mean that:

- their existence and importance has been well communicated to students, staff and other stakeholders
- students appreciate the importance and relevance of the various attributes in their studies and
- exposure to the theory, practise and assessment of attributes has been coherently integrated across the program curriculum.

It is important to acknowledge that the concept of graduate attributes in higher education is not uncontested or universally accepted. Academic staff may suggest that specifying required graduate attributes is just another step in the vocationalisation of higher education, or just another mechanism for the administrators of higher education to micro-manage the activities of staff and students.

Beyond the development of what might be described as generic personal work-related skills lies the more ambitious agenda of developing generic attributes related to good citizenship. These can cover areas relating to ethics, social responsibility and cultural sensitivity; international perspectives and competence in a global environment; and the principles and applications of sustainable development.

## 2.6.2 Employability of graduates

A greater focus on the on relationship between education and employment outcomes is one of the three major factors seen to have an influence on the value placed on graduate attributes (Cummings, 1998). There is a definite link between the development and publication of graduate attributes and employability of students as most, if not all, university websites attest. Further testimony to its importance is the Government's commissioning through the Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council of a research study to investigate and report on:

- how universities currently develop and integrate employability skills into their programs of study
- how universities teach employability skills
- how universities currently assess students' employability skills
- how graduate employability skills might be assessed and reported upon.

(Precision Consulting, Commonwealth of Australia, 2007).

Over the last two decades the Higher Education sector has been characterised by a greater emphasis on professional and vocational programs driven more strongly by employer needs and expectations. This has had a substantial effect on the nature of the programs that are offered and the nature of outcomes for students (Kirkpatrick, 2007). As a consequence, to a greater or lesser extent, professional bodies in Australia have influence in shaping university curricula through the specification of both discipline-specific content and generic attributes. AUQA includes "the role of professional bodies and associations in accrediting professional courses such as health and medicine, law, accounting, engineering and architecture" as one of the significant dimensions of quality assurance processes involving universities (Australian Universities Quality Agency, 2007b).

Key professional bodies are acutely aware of their importance and have looked to extend their influence. For example, in its submission to *Higher Education at The Crossroads* (2002) the Australian Computer Society claimed that, with over 97,000 members, as it accredits university courses for admission of graduates as associate members it has a detailed knowledge of the higher education sector, particularly with regards to accounting and business courses and that, since 1966, "CPA Australia has worked assiduously with the universities in the development of the high level educational programs in accounting appropriate for a graduate profession". (Australian Computer Society, 2002).

Ramsden (2003, pp29-30) points out that, while it is popularly supposed that employers are highly critical of their graduate recruits and the 'irrelevance' of higher education to the world of work, research does not support such conclusions and there appears to be many variations in employers' views of the quality of graduates, with the majority believing that higher education did improve employees' generic skills.

***Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:*** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of policies, approaches and practices which outline, give meaning and allow students to reflect on their learning of desired attributes.

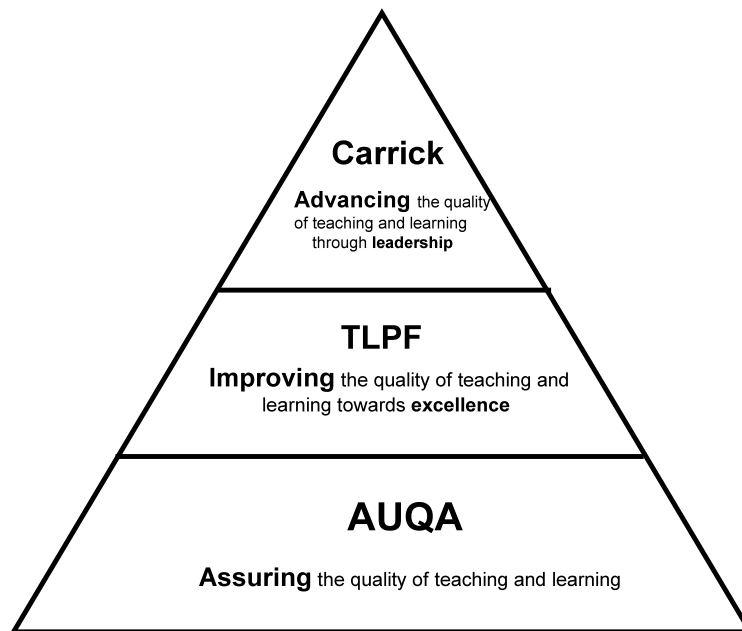
## 2.7 The targeted stakeholders

Given that the key interest of the research lies in investigating the nature of leadership in central organisational groups, potential participants in the project are those strategically responsible for creating and directing these groups, such as Pro-Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic and/or Teaching and Learning), those responsible for managing the groups, e.g. Centre Directors and Heads, those who contribute to their development on advisory boards, senior academic and general staff who work within these groups responsible for operational actions and those senior Faculty teaching and learning leaders who interact most directly with these groups in representing their faculties' interests, e.g. Associate Deans, Teaching and Learning. The needs of this collective leadership group are significant given the rapid change affecting their roles and operations both internally and externally.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of the roles of faculty teaching/learning leadership, support their work within their faculties and schools, and contribute to their professional development as leaders in learning and teaching.

## 2.8 Strategic leadership contributions to quality in higher education

In summation, strategic leadership of Teaching and Learning Centres can contribute to teaching and learning at three levels: **Assuring** the base-line level of quality of teaching and learning; **Improving** the quality of teaching and learning to achieve excellence; **Advancing** the quality of teaching and learning through national and international leadership in areas of strength and based on appropriate theory and scholarship: see Figure 1.



**Figure 1: The pyramid of strategic contributions to quality in higher education**

## **3 THE ORGANISATIONAL LANDSCAPE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **3.1 Overview**

The organisational landscape of higher education is considered encompassing the classification of types of universities in the system. The classification of each of the six partner institutions involved in this projects is provided, with a more expanded discussion of the lead university, Deakin.

### **3.2 Classification of the partner universities in this project**

Marginson & Considine (2000) charted the landscape of Australian higher education through the classification of different types of universities based on their academic capital reputation and historical development. In relation to the partner universities in the project:

1. **Deakin University** was considered a 'Gumtree' university which had transformed itself into a 'New University', and is now seen as unaligned and belonging to no particular grouping of universities
2. **Macquarie University** was also considered a 'Gumtree' university, although more recently is seen as a member of the group of Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRU)
3. **Monash University** was considered a 'Redbrick' University and is now a member of the Group of Eight (Go8) research intensive universities
4. **University of Newcastle**, like Macquarie, was seen as a 'Gumtree' University, and is now a member of the group of Innovative Research Universities Australia (IRU)
5. **RMIT University** was considered a Unitech and is a member of the Australian Technology Network (ATN)
6. **University of New England** was considered a Gumtree University, and, while more recently seen as unaligned and belonging to no particular grouping of universities, is recognised as being strongly allied with Open and Distance Education.

These classifications give some insight into where universities are seen to stand in the order of Australian higher education, and their histories, cultures and aspirations in teaching and learning. By implication, their standing in the sector, their missions, commitment and directions, provide some basis for understandings about the nature and role of their teaching and learning Centres. A sense of institutional place in the sector though may change over time as institutions evolve and diversify in size and scope. As one example, Deakin University was established in the late 1970s as a single regional city campus with a mandate in distance education. In the 1980s, it was recognised as one of the country's major Distance Education Centres. Through institutional mergers in the early 1990s it became a multi-campus, multi-city, regional and metropolitan

university committed to multi-modal flexible delivery through online and distance education (Holt & Thompson, 1995). During this decade, and into the new millennium, the student population grew and diversified to include on-campus, domestic and international students studying together with off-campus students. Though these transformations are not unique to Deakin University the structure of the university and its heritage have led Marginson & Considine (2000) to classify Deakin's principal academic culture as both 'corporate' and 'entrepreneurial'. They describe, as mentioned above, Deakin as a university belonging initially to the 'gumtree' organisational segment of Australian higher education before transforming itself into a 'new university'. A more recent report has merely classified Deakin as non-aligned or non-grouped university in the sector (Barrie, Ginns & Symons, 2007, p.50). Given the transformation of Deakin over its 30 year history it is not surprising that commentators have found it difficult to grasp its changing character. This, in turn, has driven various changes to the way it has structured its central teaching and learning support operations.

***Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:*** Strategic leadership of Centres can enable benchmarking within liked grouped universities, selective benchmarking across different groupings of universities, and help negotiate collaborative endeavours for national funding. Moreover, strategic leadership of centres needs to manage constructively the tensions which may exist between universities wishing both to differentiate and align themselves with various university groupings in the sector.

## **4 ORGANISATION AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **4.1 Overview**

This section considers contemporary organisation and staff development needs for teaching and learning capacity building in higher education with an emphasis on emergent developments.

### **4.2 The changing world of academic teaching work**

Over the past 15 years there has been rapid growth in the systems, tools and applications available to support teaching and learning in higher education. These include technologies such as Learning Management Systems, virtual classrooms, automated lecture capture, plagiarism detection software, social software and simulations. An example of how the newer technologies have created new options for educational practice relates to the use of virtual classrooms involving formerly isolated off-campus students in a 'classroom' environment with their on-campus counterparts. Many educators are now seeing the potential of such systems in support of developing innovative ways to enhance the learning experience. These forms of innovative adoption include greater emphasis on enabling student directed learning, increased peer learning and workplace learning (real and virtual).

Moreover, it has been argued that newer generations of students entering higher education come with different approaches to learning being more holistic in their approach, tending to be less analytical, being more comfortable in multi-tasking, having shorter concentration spans, having greater computer expertise and being extensive

users of electronic forms of peer communication. These claims are subject to critical scrutiny, however, and ongoing national investigations (see Kennedy *et al*, 2006). There is a sense though that the newer generations of higher education students are different from their predecessors and the diversity of learning needs, expectations, circumstances and styles discerned when the generations are mixed is creating challenges on the ground for academic teaching staff. This is further exacerbated by the increasing mix and magnitude of cultural diversity in the student cohorts where different cultures also have different learning styles. According to Hofstede (2001), cultural dimensions including individualism (versus collectivism) and power distance influence the way students learn and behave in the learning environment.

Added to this emerging picture is the changing nature of student expectations, needs and study circumstances, shaped in part in Australia by the increasing extent to which students are funding their own education. One impact of this increased cost to students is that they are spending far greater time in paid employment (Krause *et al*, 2005). As a result of this increased contribution to their education, students are demanding both higher quality and greater flexibility in their educational offerings. This is also true of the national agenda in Australian higher education where government policy is also placing greater emphasis on educational quality and flexibility. This can be seen through the establishment of the Carrick Institute, the LTPF and AUQA. This has led to greater scrutiny of teaching performance, with strong emphasis on the requirement to enhance the quality of the total student learning experience and on the importance of systematically gathering and responding to student feedback on their experiences in university study. These external imperatives have placed increasing demands on universities to professionalise teaching as a valued occupation in higher education. Most universities have introduced Graduate Certificates in Higher Education for their new staff members. These are designed to improve teaching quality, enhance student learning and to help ease the transition for staff in switching between different e-learning technologies in use in different universities in the sector.

Over the last two decades the Australian Higher Education sector has changed significantly. This includes an increased massification of education “exemplified by a shift from semi-elite to semi- mass provision of education which has resulted in increased student numbers, and a more diverse student population, with varied and markedly different student expectations of the university experience” (Kirkpatrick, 2007). The then Australian Minister for Education claimed in 2003 that “Globalisation, massification of higher education, a revolution in communications and the need for lifelong learning, leave Australian universities nowhere to hide from the winds of change” (Nelson, 2003). All those teaching in Australian universities must be aware of, and responsive to, these transforming influences.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres for Teaching and Learning needs to be aware of, and responsive to, the profound changes to academic teaching work and how these impact on lecturers. In particular, they should be mindful of how ICT can best support the role of educators and, hence, student learning.

### **4.3 Towards new conceptions of quality teaching and learning**

The platform for institutional aspirations in flexible education must be built on clear understandings of the meaning and indicators of quality teaching in contemporary higher education. The Carrick Institute has set out five criteria for determining teaching excellence for national teaching award purposes: approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn; development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field; approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning; respect and support for the development of students as individuals; and scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching. The descriptors for the Scholarship criterion harmonize with the five approaches to the scholarship of teaching enunciated by Trigwell *et al*, (2000, p.159): knowing the literature; improving teaching based on literature; investigating teaching to improve learning; relating literature to discipline knowledge; and improving learning in a discipline by communicating expertise.

The Carrick Institute is currently extending its investigation into teaching excellence through a new national study examining rewards and recognition of quality teaching in higher education through systematic implementation of indicators and metrics on teaching and teacher effectiveness. To date, learning and teaching indicators have been identified for four dimensions of teaching practice: institutional climate and systems; diversity and inclusivity; assessment; and engagement and learning community (Chalmers, 2007). Moreover, work by Scott (2006) has provided a useful framework based on CEQuery for examining the domains of teaching and learning quality encompassing Outcomes, Staff, Course design, Assessment and Support. He concludes that quality learning contexts recognise the importance of the total experience; that learning is a profoundly social experience; that teaching and information does not constitute learning; one size of learning context does not fit all; and assessment is a key focus for students (Scott, 2007a). Scott argues that these considerations for student learning engagement and productive learning can, and should be, equally applied to the professional learning of academic teachers. That is, academic development and academic developers should consider the total teaching staff professional learning experience; the situated and socially constructed nature of effective professional learning; that the provision of professional learning resources is a necessary but not sufficient condition for effective professional learning; that one size of professional learning approach may not suit all teachers in their development; and evaluation of teaching and appraisal of academic performance is a key focus for teachers and their engagement with professional learning opportunities.

The Carrick criteria, and accompanying descriptors, along with the CEQuery and Dimensions of Teaching Practice frameworks, are generic and applicable to all forms of teaching and learning in higher education, with the central focus being on the quality of student learning outcomes and experiences. All forms of education provision must ultimately meet the test to provide opportunities for accessible, productive and satisfying learning amongst the variety of student cohorts.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** It makes eminent sense that Australian universities carefully consider such national developments in determining teaching excellence within their own contexts. Strategic leadership of Centres for teaching and learning has a pivotal role to play in these considerations.

## **4.4 Conceptualising academic career advancement in teaching and learning**

Once teaching and learning quality is framed there is a need to recognise its demonstration, provide various development opportunities for its cultivation, and enable the promotion and sharing of exemplary practices. Staff members who excel need a stronger sense of there being rewarding career advancement pathways, and leadership in learning enhancement needs to be seen as a critical capacity requiring institutional development. Teaching and learning Centres have a key role to play in this process. In order to progress institutionally, equal weighting in career advancement needs to be given to academic staff who adopt a scholarly, research- based approach to teaching in their discipline, when compared to those who conduct the more typical research into their disciplines. More focus needs to be placed on other constructive relationships between research and teaching, extending to research-led teaching and curriculum development and research-based learning. Trowler & Wareham (2007, pp.3-5) identify the following ways of forging productive relationships between teaching and research:

- Learners do research
- Teachers do research
- Teachers and learners research together
- Research embedded in curriculum (research influences the what and the how of curriculum design)
- Research culture influences teaching and learning
- The nexus, the university and its environment
- Teaching and learning influences research.

Brew (2003) mounts the powerful argument about the need to forge robust communities of teachers and learners working collaboratively on seamless agendas of research, learning and teaching. With an overall increase in the knowledge and skill set required of tertiary educators, and the increased pressures on staff time, there also needs to be recognition of the ability of staff to specialise in one dimension of good teaching so as to become leaders in that aspect and to share their expertise with others in the institution. This includes appropriately designed e-supported learning and professional development environments that allow staff to develop as specialists and to share their expertise.

### **4.4.1 Developing whom?**

Knight (2002) considers the needs and challenges of new teachers, part-time teachers and mid-career teachers in higher education. For each category, he outlines guides for action in helping particular teaching staff enhance their teaching practices.

In Australia, the needs and circumstances of 'part time' teaching staff are currently being investigated by a Carrick Discipline-based Initiatives project, 'Inducting, supporting and developing casual/sessional teaching staff'. In this category are the needs of casual/teaching staff who may be teaching face-to-face on-campus or teaching online (from campus work location or home) or those who do both. Their professional development needs are significant, and service delivery support problematic given their work payment arrangements. Teaching and learning assurance and improvement can still be fostered through a systematic institutional and local coordinated approach to meeting their initial and ongoing professional development needs. New continuing

academic staff may be new to teaching, new to teaching in tertiary education and/or new to teaching in a particular organisational context. Again, their diverse range of needs is the subject of a Carrick Discipline-based Initiatives Higher Education Enterprise project, 'Inducting and developing staff new to the university'. Renewing established academic teaching staff is also the focus of a Carrick Discipline-based Initiatives Higher Education Enterprise project, while developing academic educational leadership is being examined by a varied number of projects, including this one, in the Carrick Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Program. Finally, an initial Carrick funded scoping project is being undertaken in the field of academic development and the development of academic developers.

A major focus of professional development in recent times has been the development of new media/new technologies in higher education and this has spawned the formation of many non-academic professional development positions and incumbents specialising in building staff capacities in key areas of sustainable value creation in online teaching and learning (see Segrave, Holt & Farmer, 2005).

Overlaying the professional needs of various categories of staff is a recognition of the changing nature of the academic teaching workforce, with emphasis on the diversification of its memberships, and the nature, location and timing of their contributions and needs for timely, effective development and ongoing support.

#### **4.4.2 Developing what?**

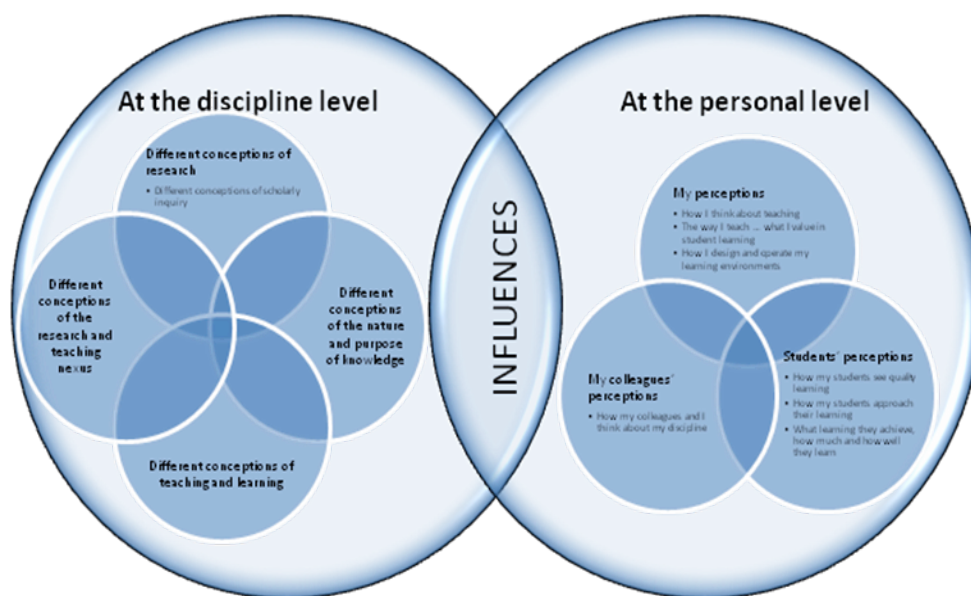
What can be generalised about effective teaching for quality learning in higher education? What needs to be considered about effective teaching in different disciplinary contexts? What factors enable and hinder effective teaching across and within different contexts? And what is changing in the environment which continually brings these questions to Centre stage? Voluminous bodies of work across many inter-related fields of education (i.e. experience of learning and teaching, adult, open, distance, online, professional, experiential) have informed viewpoints on these questions. Their prominence has been fortified through the rise of international interest and work in the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education. Debates on them continue with the continuing diversification of the student population and apparent change in its learning needs, preferences and circumstances, the massification and internationalisation of higher education, the intensification of academic work, greater demands for new sets of teaching skills, and the ubiquitous use of information and communications technologies (ICT): see 4.2 above.

As we have identified, there are many stakeholders with various views on these questions. A selected list of perspectives on the nature of effective teaching in higher education can be found in:

- Ramsden's (2003, pp.93-9) ***Principles of effective teaching in higher education***, and their embodiment in the CEQ and SETS (i.e. Interest and explanation; Concern and respect for students and student learning; Appropriate assessment and feedback; Clear goals and intellectual challenge; Independence, control and engagement; Learning from students);

- Knight's (2002) conception of the **backstage and front stage work activities** defining teaching (i.e. Planning, Preparation, and other Activities teachers do to help student learning);
- Toohey's (1999) analysis of the way in which **different values, beliefs and ideologies** shape all aspects of teaching and learning (ie Traditional or discipline-based approach; Performance or systems-based approach; The cognitive approach; Experiential or personal relevance approach; The socially critical approach);
- The **criteria and descriptors of the Carrick Institute's national teaching award** program (drawing no doubt on the work of Ramsden) which details the scope of teaching work which might be judged as excellent;
- The **emotional along with intellectual engagement** required to be effective educators (see in relation to distance education, Walker, 2003a, Walker 2003b);
- Various **capacities** (mindsets, knowledge, skills & attitudes) that might be required to work effectively in particular teaching and learning environments, for example, online environments requiring: Designing for learning, Communicating, Collaborating and Community development; Assessing student learning; Developing learning resources; Experiential learning; and Continuous Quality improvement (Segrave, Holt & Farmer, 2005, p.120).

There appear to be two useful lines of relationships in framing effective teaching and learning in higher education: see Fig 2.



**Figure 2: Relationships in framing effective teaching and learning in higher education**

#### 4.4.3 Developing how?

Table 1 sets out the kinds of activities which can provide opportunities - both individually and collaboratively - for staff to develop their academic capacities in teaching, learning

and research. While we have aimed to be comprehensive, we recognise that the list is not exhaustive and there are likely to be instances where the same kind of opportunity exists, albeit to a different degree and level, across the designated functional areas.

**Table 1: Shared academic professional development opportunities for capacity building**

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Institutional</b>	<b>National</b>
Through day-to-day reflective teaching	Course (re) development	School planning events	Faculty seminars & workshops	Courses – Graduate Certificates in Higher Education	Carrick colloquia, forums and workshops
Unit development	Discipline-wide communities of practice	Course development	Faculty teaching and learning development projects	Teaching and learning innovation and development grant schemes	Carrick Grants program
Student evaluation of teaching and units	Mentoring	School-wide communities of practice	Faculty teaching award schemes	University teaching award schemes	Carrick Fellowship program
Peer review	Professional accreditation	Probation mentoring groups	Professional portfolios for promotion	Professional portfolios for promotion	Carrick Teaching Awards program
Mentoring	Discipline teaching and learning resources	Department teaching and learning resources	Teaching Scholar, Fellow and intensive positions	Teaching and Learning Fellowships	Carrick Discipline-based initiatives
External unit and course benchmarking			Faculty planning events	Joint Centre and Faculty appointments	Carrick special projects
			Cross-school course development	Educational leadership development programs	Tertiary education conferences
			Faculty-wide Communities of practice	Face-to-face and online workshops, seminars and Forums	Discipline-based education conferences
			Faculty reviews	Online teaching support services	Journals, books etc
			Faculty teaching and learning resources	Online professional development and training modules	Professional associations
				Institution-wide communities of practice	Carrick Exchange
				University Teaching and Learning Conferences	External Networks
				Case exemplars	Case exemplars

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				Induction/ foundation programs	
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**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:**

- Strategic leadership of Centres needs to contribute to professional capacity building systematically across all categories of staff and in ways addressing varying needs and circumstances as shaped by organisational commitments, directions, teaching circumstances, and student learning needs.
- Strategic leadership of Centres needs to initiate, coordinate and foster the delivery of professional development opportunities and support in appropriate ways, at appropriate levels and with evidence-based approaches to their effectiveness. The mix will be strongly shaped by the educational, structural, cultural, political and geographical character of the organisation.
- Strategic leadership of Centres needs to contribute to University principles, values and policies, and assess and develop approaches to staff development appropriate for its various teaching and learning contexts.

## **5 PURPOSES AND MODELS OF ORGANISATION FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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### **5.1 Overview**

This section considers the purposes of a Teaching and Learning Centre suited to the contemporary context of higher education challenge and notes the highly variable and quite rapidly changing models of organisation.

### **5.2 Purposes of Teaching and Learning Centres**

The evolution of the ‘enterprise university’ across the higher education sector globally, has brought with it “new forms of organisation, new methods of work and new values that have more in common with the private sector and economic consumption than they do with traditional public sector culture” as Marginson & Considine (2000, p.4) have argued in Australia and others have argued internationally (Tierney, 2000; 2004; Rhodes, 2000; Havnes & Stensaker, 2006). These changes require university governance that includes ‘leadership’, ‘management’ and ‘strategy’, and challenges the university executive to develop the appropriate internal structures to mobilise the ‘academic heartland’ of staff and students to embrace its strategy of enterprise (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

Organisational Centres for teaching and learning are called on to engage with the ‘academic heartland’ to advance teaching and learning and to progress the ubiquitous quality agenda (Hart *et al*, 2005; Havnes & Stensaker, 2006). Such Centres take many forms and generally include support and services for academic professional development - for example, the provision of graduate educational programs for academic staff, curriculum development and education design advice and student

learning support. Centres may provide learning and teaching materials production, evaluation and other quality improvement services including research and library and information literacy services. Ostensibly, then, these Centres are expected to be sites of service and sites of leadership for quality enhancement in teaching and learning.

Given the complexity of the 'enterprise university', Centres often play a mediating role between the 'realities of institutional life' (arising from the policies of the Executive) and the traditional beliefs and values of academic staff on the other (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006, p.376). In a recent survey, Australian Heads of Centres viewed their leadership role as being expressed by instigating change, leading their own Centre staff, advocating on issues relevant to teaching and learning, and helping to 'change the agenda' at an institutional level (Taylor, 2005). Centres are increasingly likely to find themselves charged with significant responsibility for implementing aspects of the institution's strategic plan, as they relate to teaching and learning. This creates a political role of translating management imperatives into the context of academic work (Taylor, 2005). There is a danger that Centres, in aligning strongly with the institutional executive, may lead to a loss of educational legitimacy in the eyes of academic staff. But, taking a strategic role means that Centres need to put themselves in the 'squeeze' between policy and practice, and manage the tension (Havnes & Stensaker, 2006).

In response to external opportunities and threats relating to quality assurance, teaching/learning performance funding, the Carrick Institute awards, grants and fellowships and the Research Quality Framework, many Australian universities have, are or will be reviewing and restructuring their central teaching and learning operations. At the heart of these developments is the call to more systematically support the professionalisation of academic teaching roles in higher education (Dearn, Fraser & Ryan, 2002). New forms of teaching and learning Centres/Institutes are emerging to better position universities to deal with external environmental forces and internal organisational performance. These newly established operations sit at the intersection between university strategic directions and the operational world of teaching and learning. They provide vital intelligence in connecting parties within the organisation to opportunities external to it. Increasingly, such entities are being seen as important nodes or, indeed, hubs, in a new networked approach to developing distributed academic development, and staff teaching and leadership capacities. It is argued the new forms of distributed and layered thinking and action are essential to mainstreaming teaching and learning enhancements and building leadership capacity through the institution over time. Our experiences lead us to concur with Chalmers and O'Brien (2005, p.51) as they delineate the purposes of a Teaching and Learning Centre suited to the contemporary context of higher education challenge. They see those purposes as:

- maintaining a corporate memory of, and sustained engagement in, the issues and innovations in teaching in higher education;
- engaging in comprehensive and systematic implementation of teaching and learning initiatives;
- creating and facilitating communities of learning involved in the iterative and dynamic top-down/bottom-up engagement and management of educational initiatives;
- investigating, articulating and disseminating scholarship in (and on) teaching, learning and education development.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership needs to justify and articulate the purpose of Centres and disseminate a shared understanding of purpose through the organisation.

### **5.3 Teaching and Learning Centre models of organisation**

As noted above, organisational Centres for teaching and learning take many forms and may include one or more of the functions of academic professional development, educational design, learning technologies, materials production, student support, quality evaluation, library services, information technologies services, institutional research and education research. The role of these Centres is complex, including building capacity in people and curriculum, integrating IT and developing the careers of academic staff (Taylor, 2005). The increasing managerialism in higher education has led to the Heads of these Centres having a mediating role between the 'realities of institutional life' (arising from the policies of the executive) and the traditional beliefs and values of academic staff (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006).

We are very much aware of the dynamic, evolutionary and rapidly changing nature of these organisational models with its significant implications and, for this reason, an important aspect of the study will be to chart the changes made at each of the partner institutions during the life of this project.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to align purpose with internal staffing capability and organisation, and the performance expectations of various organisational stakeholders.

## **6 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP, CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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### **6.1 Overview**

To consider institutional quality enhancement initiatives, a sophisticated and context-dependent understanding of leadership, management and change is required. This section adopts a broader frame by providing a range of theoretical perspectives on the nature of leadership, change and improvement in higher education in Australia and with reference to relevant international studies. Morgan's (2006) metaphorical framework is explored as an aid to understanding the needs to adapt to external environmental change, the value of becoming a learning organisation, the need to understand the institution's educational values, beliefs and practices, the appreciation of how sources of power can be marshalled positively in the interests of parties to the organisation, and how organisations experience flux and transformation as they change and develop.

### **6.2 Theoretical perspectives on leadership in higher education**

Recent research internationally in higher education supports a complex, context-dependent and relationship-based model of leadership in teaching and learning broadly

and for Centres particularly (Knight & Trowler, 2000; Knight, 2006; Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006; Marshall, 2006). The importance of department level heads in promoting improvement in teaching and learning practices is noted, as is the fact that their interventions are strongly context-dependent, being situated within a discipline and within an organisational structure (Knight & Trowler, 2000). Mok (2000) argues that, despite globalisation, educational policies are still national in character and require a 'local' response and an analogous argument can reasonably be made as the context under consideration is scaled down to individual universities and faculties, department and schools.

Particularly in relation to institutional quality enhancement initiatives, a sophisticated and context-dependent understanding of leadership, management and change is required because:

- change is just as likely to be emergent as planned – determined by the responses of policy users as much as policy planners
- the meaning of 'quality' in higher education remains a contested domain
- what is achievable with 'quality' in a higher education organisation is not a 'blank sheet', practical realities may subvert an idealistic, blueprint-driven plan and
- there is a need to balance external regulatory requirements with internal values, expectations and context (Newton, 2002).

A review of seven English universities concluded that "...there is neither a panacea nor a simple blueprint to help with the most difficult task of embedding quality" (Lomas, 2004, p.163). While Lomas found some ideas 'well worth considering', he concluded that the diversity of institutional cultures and departmental sub-cultures meant that leaders would have to develop a way forward that was contingent on the nature of the particular academic unit (Lomas, 2004). In an Australian context, a survey of academic developers suggested that leadership was not any prescribed set of characteristics. Rather, it was "... a synergy between variable characteristics of the person, the academic development role, development strategies, and institutional context that determined effective leadership in academic development practice..." (Taylor, 2005, p.44). Further as "institutional challenges change over time, leadership must evolve. Leaders need to discern which style is appropriate and change with the new requirements" (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2006, p.8). In the Australian context, Marshall (2006, p.12) calls for a research agenda in leadership that will:

create institutional cultures that clearly define for all key stakeholders, the nature of leadership in learning and teaching, and tangibly, as well as rhetorically, value same.

Many different conceptions of 'leadership' can be found in the literature. In the context of teaching and learning in higher education, Marshall (2006) has compiled a summary that includes:

- traits-based – where we might seek to appoint those with the right characteristics to leadership roles
- behaviour-based – identify the behaviours of effective leadership and provide development for those in leadership roles to adopt these behaviours

- contingency approach – recognising that situational factors influence the choice of the most appropriate leadership style, and that leadership effectiveness can be enhanced by developing both the leader and the organisational context
- power and influence – leadership can be based on a range of power sources – position, ability to reward or punish, expertise and personal influence
- social exchange – includes transactional and transformational leadership – how those in positions of leadership can use their physical, intellectual, social and other resources to satisfy the expectations of others while also achieving organisational goals? and
- leadership as an emergent feature of the complex social systems – where leaders fulfil required cultural and symbolic roles that facilitate organisational achievement (Marshall, 2006).

As we have illustrated, leadership for change, change management and strategic development are prominent themes throughout the international literature on leadership in higher education. Furthermore, there is arguably some consensus that there is no 'right' way to lead - or, indeed, no right model of leadership - for the complex settings of change facing the sector. Indeed, a report from a national leadership summit by the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education found that "leadership happens at all levels and is driven by the context of change facing institutions" (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2006, p.9). Preliminary findings from Scott's (2007b) major study of leadership in higher education, capture:

the constantly shifting context in which heads of school [one group in a study of over 500 participants] must operate, the importance of being able to leverage and work productively with a diverse range of people, the constancy of change and the uncertainty of it all (Scott, 2007b, p.8).

At the 2006 Carrick Institute Leadership Colloquium, in response to the question, "What is understood by effective leadership for learning and teaching in Australian higher education?", the context-dependent or contingent response was observed again in the discussion summary which suggested that the 'relationship between different levels of leadership is important and any understanding should encompass the political as well as the structural' (Carrick Institute, 2006, p.3). Many such questions remain, and were asked subsequently at the 2007 Carrick Institute Leadership Forum: "Where do institutional Centres or units for promoting teaching and learning fit in?"; "How should the role for the 'director' or 'head' of such a Centre and the staff of the Centre relate to the actual teaching activities of the institution?"; "How effective can such entities be if they appear to be set apart from the mainstream action?" (Dow, 2007).

Surveys of Heads, and staff, of Australian Centres have revealed a wide range of backgrounds, qualifications and experience (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006). Coupling this with the wide range of structures and functions to be found amongst Australian Centres, it seems clear that a single approach to the development of strategic leadership capacity for such Centres is unrealistic.

Scott's (2007b) work aims to establish the capabilities that may be vital 'for effective performance in each of the learning and teaching leadership roles studied' and one of these includes Centre directors. His research builds on a capability framework for school leaders and will benchmark its findings internationally. Scott's (2007b) work is informed by the multi-disciplinary academic 'leadership' literature on and arising from school

education. For example, Mulford and Silins' (2003) major longitudinal Australian study provided evidence that stressed 'support, care, trust, participation, facilitation, and whole staff consensus' as conditions that differentiated highly performing from poorly performing schools on measures of organisational learning, and that 'leadership that makes a difference to a high school having a community focus, staff feeling valued and [organisational learning], is *transformational* and *distributive*' [our italics] (Mulford & Silins, 2003, p.178).

Supportive of the value of image making in understanding the nature of organisations and leadership in higher education, Scott (2007b) in his Carrick funded Leadership project on 'Learning Leaders in Times of Change' asked his respondents to invent an analogy/metaphor to describe their academic leadership role in higher education. Preliminary analysis of the analogies provided by a range of academic leaders in teaching and learning provided insights into the nature of their work and the challenges they confront:

- Leadership is a mixture of external forces and local ones;
- Relationships, team effort and culture are important in leadership;
- In leadership one cannot pre-plan and expect it to turn out exactly as one wanted – leaders need to be flexible and responsive;
- Leaders' sense of 'efficacy' varies with role and whether one is in line control or on the other side.

### **6.3 Morgan's metaphorical framework**

Morgan (2006) uses metaphor to help explain organisational behaviour and leadership approaches in organisations. Metaphor is presented as providing powerful perspectives on how leaders and managers conceive, see, feel and act on their organisational worlds. Each metaphor or 'image' presented by Morgan provides a partial but insightful view on how organisations are structured, led and act in the ways they do. They also provide useful ways to categorise and explain myriad leadership and management theories. The value of Morgan's approach is to view the organisation through multiple metaphorical frames of reference to develop a richer overall synthesis on why leaders, managers and people in general act the way they do in organisational life. Hence, Morgan (2006) provides metaphorical frames relating to Organisation as Machine, Organisation as Organism, Organisation as Brain, Organisation as Culture, Organisation as Political System, Organisation as Psychic Prison, Organisation as Flux and Transformation, and Organisation as Instrument of Domination. His metaphorical framework has found its way into the analysis of organisations in higher education. For example, Whitworth (2007) has drawn upon Morgan's work in researching the cognitive cultures of e-learning.

For the purposes of this paper, we have selected five of these eight metaphors to explore key themes. Our attention, however, is not to the metaphors, themselves, but to the categorisation that arises from them. Hence our concern is to consider the implications for Teaching and Learning Centres.

#### **6.3.1 Organisations as organisms: the need to adapt to external environmental change through strategic management**

**Metaphor:** Let's think about organisations as if they were organisms. We find ourselves thinking about them as living systems, existing in a wider environment on which they depend for the satisfaction of various needs (Morgan, 2006, p.33).

The profound changes observed in higher education internationally are not new. The evolution of the 'enterprise university' has brought with it new forms of organisation, new methods of work and new values that have more in common with the private sector and economic consumption than they do with traditional public sector culture (Marginson & Considine, 2000). These changes require university governance that includes 'leadership', 'management' and 'strategy', and challenges the university executive to develop the appropriate internal structures to mobilise the 'academic heartland' of staff and students to embrace its strategy of enterprise (Marginson & Considine, 2000).

As previously observed, organisational Centres for teaching and learning take many forms and include a number of possible functions. The increasing managerialism in higher education has led to the Heads of these Centres having an important mediating role. External factors, such as AUQA, developments in information technology and internationalisation have impacted on the roles of these Centres, and particularly their Heads. Heads have found themselves directly reporting to senior university management and charged with the responsibility to address major organisational change (Taylor, 2005). In response to external pressures, particularly in relation to institution-level quality improvement, Centres have moved from primarily technical and operational activities, to playing a more strategic role – it's now less about staff development than it is about organisational development (Havnes & Stensaker, 2006).

The effectiveness of Centres is constrained by assumptions about their role – what they are and what they do. The new strategic role that Centres play requires a strong theoretical foundation, but the traditional role of providing a service to academic staff can lead to a clash of ideas and beliefs – who 'owns' the 'correct' view on how to improve teaching and learning? (Havnes & Stensaker, 2006) Should Centres pursue their own legitimacy, capacity and academic status through their own research agendas, or simply facilitate the teaching and learning activities and research of others? These, and similar questions, suggest tensions between competing agendas and uncertainty of roles.

Apart from Centres and their Heads needing to adopt context-dependent forms of leadership, they must also be strategic in their operation. If Centres are to play a leadership role in quality enhancement, they must recognise that tactical responses to quality assurance may satisfy external auditors, but that it requires a strategic response to build an institutional culture of quality improvement (Gordon, 2002). If Centres are to influence the quality agenda, rather than simply follow it, they must engage strategically with the institution – participating in the structures, and finding the 'leverage points', that influence teaching and learning (Taylor, 2005). Centres and Heads are increasingly likely to find themselves charged with significant responsibility for implementing aspects of the institution's strategic plan, as they relate to teaching and learning.

### **6.3.2 Organisations as brains: The value of becoming a learning organisation**

**Metaphor:** Is it possible to design 'learning organisations' that have the capacity to be as flexible, resilient, and inventive as the functioning of the brain? Is it possible to distribute capacities for intelligence and control throughout an enterprise so that the system as a whole can self-organise and evolve along with emerging challenges? (Morgan, 2006, p.72)

In the context of quality improvement in higher education, many authors suggest the apposite model of the 'learning organisation' as the way to move from a culture of compliance to improvement (see, for example, Avdjieva & Wilson, 2002; Hodgkinson & Brown, 2003; Yorke, 2000). A learning organisation is one that achieves both individual and collective learning through open and honest reflective practices based on objective information (Senge, 1990) and this is often interpreted as action research. While the application of action research in higher education can be interpreted in a range of ways (Kember & Kelly, 1993; Zuber-Skerritt, 1992), generally, action research seeks to improve/transform practice through the considered application of actions, objective evaluation of the outcomes and the continued refinement of our understanding of the factors at play in a given situation. It incorporates the concept of well informed action, and when applied to improving the quality of teaching and learning, challenges us to define 'quality', and to develop methods to measure this quality. Acknowledging the multidimensional nature of quality, and that the emphasis in higher education quality is moving from compliance to development, Kekäle & Pirttila (2006), for example, present participatory/action research as a quality improvement approach that embodies the learning organisation philosophy in a methodology that would be familiar to many academic staff. The similarity between the cyclical nature of the action research model and the cyclical nature of the plan-do-check-act cycle that is the core of many QI methodologies has been noted elsewhere (Tolbert, McLean & Myers, 2002).

Recent evidence suggests that much improvement in teaching practice occurs informally and on the job, leading to doubts about the capacity of Centres to make an effective and systematic contribution to institutional quality enhancement, and posing serious questions regarding the best ways to organise and deliver educational professional development in universities (Knight, 2006). Drawing on the general management literature, many authors suggest the 'learning organisation' as a model for facilitating quality enhancement in higher education (see, for example, Collie & Taylor, 2004; Hodgkinson & Brown, 2003; Yorke, 2000). As one instance, James and Baré (2007) outline how Melbourne University has worked toward integrating strategic business and development plans with HR strategies to effectively motivate and develop all University staff. But, in adopting the processes of commercial organisations, if the investment in quality is to pay off, "then the business of quality enhancement in higher education needs... scholarly attention and sustained commitment..." (Knight, 2006, p.39).

### **6.3.3 Organisations as cultures: the need to understand the institution's educational values, beliefs and practices**

**Metaphor:** But what is the phenomenon we call culture? The word has been derived metaphorically from the idea of cultivation: the process of tilling and developing land. ...Shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense making are all different ways of describing culture. In talking about culture we are really talking about a process of reality construction that allows people to see and understand particular events, actions,

objects, utterances, or situations in distinctive ways. These patterns of understanding help us to cope with the situations being encountered and also provide a basis for making our own behaviour sensible and meaningful. ...we must root our understanding of organisation in the processes that produce systems of shared meaning. ...successful organisations build cohesive cultures around common sets of norms, values, and ideas that create an appropriate focus for doing business (Morgan, 2006, p.116, p.134 & p.137).

While the restructuring of Centres is a common response to organisational or environmental changes, it may not be the most appropriate response when the issues to be addressed are cultural as much as structural (Hart *et al.*, 2005). As Anderson & Johnson (2006) remind us, change for change's sake does not always improve the situation. While off-site, intensive management development activities may have a high short-term impact for individuals, more sustained and wider-ranging organisational impact may be derived from learning situated within the organisation and grounded in practice. For instance, position rotation within an organisation may be one way to create the break from the familiar, without abstracting the individual from the relevant context and culture (Hart *et al.*, 2005).

Marshall advocates communities of scholars as an important way to build shared values and reduce tensions: "It seems to me that an essential part of the process of developing leadership capability in learning and teaching is to develop an active community of scholars working to resolve these dilemmas" (Marshall, 2006, p.7). Initially proposed by Lave & Wenger (1991) and then advanced by Wenger (1998), Wenger & Snyder (2000) and Wenger, McDermott & Snyder (2002), communities of practice (CoPs) are places of negotiation, learning, meaning and identity. The environment specifically recognises a social dimension where trust relationships without a formalised structure act as the bridge that allows what may normally be conceived as a committee to then become a networked learning environment. CoPs can provide a suitable learning environment not only for the achievement of tacit knowledge based on participation and practice in real contexts, but also for implicit knowledge. Trowler & Knight (2000, p.36) identify two implicit theories which shape professional induction and socialisation in higher education: the 'rational-cognitive model of learning' where 'learning is considered to be individual, private, cumulative, permanent, context independent, acquired and predominantly rational in nature'; and professional learning which 'is social, provisional, situated, contingent, constructed and cultural in nature' (Trowler & Knight, 2000, p.37). The former characterisation of professional learning they argue is not sufficient but can be useful in cultivating an environment most conducive to academics acquiring the skills to be effective tertiary educators.

#### **6.3.4 Organisation as political systems: how sources of power can be marshalled positively in the interests of parties to the organisation**

**Metaphor:** When we summon terms like autocracy and democracy to describe the nature of an organisation we are implicitly drawing parallels between organisations and political systems. ...in each case we are characterising the organisation in terms of a particular style of political rule. ... Analysis of organisation from the perspective of comparative government can place our understanding of organisations in a refreshing perspective. We can analyse organisational politics in a systematic way by focussing on relations between *interests*, *conflict*, and *power*.

In talking about 'interests' we are talking about predispositions embracing goals, values, desires, expectations, and other orientations and inclinations that lead a person to act in one way rather than another. Conflict arises whenever interests collide. ...Whatever the reason, and whatever the form it takes, its source rests in some perceived or real divergence of interests (Morgan, 2006, p.152, p.156, p.157, p.163).

The academic profession is one of critique, diversity of viewpoint and often contested discourses within the context of collegiate communities operating locally, nationally and internationally. Academics have particularly strong allegiances with their disciplinary contexts. It is not surprising that changes in higher education have elicited spirited debate and divergent opinions on the desirability of much of the change which has occurred. Of relevance to this project are the teaching and learning changes driven through the concentration of power, decision making and resource allocations at the executive level of the organisation. Diversity of viewpoints and varying interests can be seen in relation to strategic directions, the changing nature of academic teaching work, the desired relationships between different academic roles, the changing nature of the student population, and desired forms of learning, teaching, and the use of new media/new technologies (considered below in more detail to illustrate this point).

All universities have embraced to various degrees and through various approaches the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching and learning. The choice of appropriate online teaching and learning systems and tools has particular strategic importance for those universities strongly committed to flexible, online and distance education. ICT investments are large and require whole-of-institution commitment to effective use. Various assumptions and interests can impact the decisions on what is developed, acquired, how it is implemented, and how it is sustained. Educational values are inherent in the new media/ new technologies. As a consequence they provide different affordances for teaching and learning and understandably any decisions made create substantial debate amongst various academic teaching constituencies. Differences of opinion exist within the domain of pedagogical values, beliefs and practices, but, as Holt *et al* (2001) examine, other parties have their own strictly speaking non-educational interests to advance in relation to such investments. Pedagogical values are by no means the primary, or certainly not the only, consideration in determining a university technology environment for teaching and learning purposes.

The needs of the collective leadership group being examined in this project are significant given the rapid change affecting their roles and operations both internally and externally. It is important to examine their interests, sources of power and the conflicts they encounter that need constructive resolution as one basis for providing new insights into strategic leadership as it is practically enacted in and through central organisational groups. There may, indeed, be conflicting views amongst the strategic leadership parties on the mandate, roles and services to be offered by the Centres. Moreover, how such parties might best relate to other central academic support providers and faculty teaching and learning development staff may also be points of contestation. These contestations are commonplace and permanent feature of the organisational landscape. Strategic leadership of teaching and learning Centres cannot ignore these tensions which need to be understood and managed in constructive ways. On the other hand, the appropriate exercise of power can provide positive energy to the organisation, or at least

force the organisation to confront deficiencies in its operations and resolve them in reasonable time before serious harm is done.

### 6.3.5 Organisation as flux and transformation

**Metaphor:** Around 500 B.C. the Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted that “you cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on”. He was one of the first Western philosophers to address the idea that the universe is in a constant state of flux, embodying characteristics of both permanence and change. For Heraclitus, the secrets of the universe were to be found in hidden tensions and connections that simultaneously create patterns of unity and change (Morgan, 2006, p.251).

Morgan (2006) examines four major theoretical perspectives on the processes of organisational change which he calls the ‘logics of change’. As Morgan (2006, p.242) observes, “Each perspective offers a metaphorical frame for explaining how explicit reality of organisational life is formed and transformed by underlying processes that have an order or logic of their own”. These perspectives cover:

- A reconceptualisation of the relationship between organisation and environment such that the organisation is not separate from its environment but is enacted through its relations within its broader environment.
- The organisation and environment as elements of the same interconnected pattern as illuminated through the application of chaos and complexity theory where coherent order always is seen to emerge out of unpredictability, apparent randomness and seeming chaos. ‘Under conditions of nonlinearity and randomness, incremental changes that may themselves seem insignificant can precipitate major discontinuous or qualitative changes because of the emergent properties triggered by marginal adjustments’ (Morgan, 2006, p.255).
- The study of relationships amongst elements in complex systems in terms of mutual causality and not linear causality, and where systems dynamics can be understood in relation to negative (mitigating effects) and positive feedback (amplifying effects) loops in the directions of stability and change, respectively.
- The study of contradiction or opposites in terms of the logic of dialectical change where, “Any phenomenon implies and generates its opposite...Whenever a situation develops extreme qualities it invariably turns around and assumes opposite qualities...” (Morgan, 2006, p.273).

As Morgan (2006) outlines, these theoretical perspectives have implications for the strategic leadership of change. For example, based on the implications of chaos and complexity theory as applied to change in complex human systems, strategic leaders need to:

- Rethink what we mean by organization, especially the nature of hierarchy and control
- Learn the art of managing and changing contexts
- Learn how to use small changes to create large effects
- Live with continuous transformation and emergent order as a natural state of affairs

- Be open to new metaphors that can facilitate processes of self-organisation (Morgan, 2006, p.255).

Another example, relating to dialectical analysis of organisational change, suggests that strategic leaders need to master skills in dealing with contradictory tensions existing at the intersection of old states of organisation and new desired states of organisation. Without this understanding, the organisation reverts strongly to the *status quo* negating all attempts to change it to the more desirable state, or the organisation is catapulted to the other extreme state of change which is equally undesirable. The pendulum of organisational change can swing dramatically and counter-productively from one extreme to the other under the weight of lack of understanding of opposite forces in counter-motion with each other. Morgan (2006, p.283) notes that “The first step in the successful management of paradox rests in *recognizing that both dimensions of the contradictions that accompany change usually have merit*”. Hence, rather than wishing to see change from one clear-cut undesirable state to another clear-cut desirable state, strategic leaders see the desirability of elements of both states co-existing or being integrated in managing the paradox. As Morgan (2006, p.283) observes, “Paradox cannot be successfully resolved by eliminating one side”. This can be illustrated by way of reference to universities’ moves into online teaching and learning. Leaving aside dedicated virtual universities, policy initiative to drive substantial movement into online, and away from face-to-face contexts, can in turn bring forth the opposite counteracting forces which negate the very policy direction taken by management in the first place. Arguments and counter-arguments can rage between proponents of face-to-face and online education such that the organisation is stalemated betwixt and between the two organisational states experiencing the benefits of neither. The challenge is to provide contexts for the exploration of new understandings and actions in designing and operating learning and teaching environments which can, in turn, bring forth the best qualities of both face-to-face and online education in integrated ways.

**Implications for Teaching and Learning Centres:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to consider:

- The appropriate ‘fits’ between various curricula, pedagogies and media/technologies on the one hand, with the various learning needs, preferences and circumstances of students on the other
- Continually reflecting on and giving meaning to the organisation’s core values, beliefs and principles on teaching and learning
- Fostering the development of the University values, beliefs and principles throughout the organisation in ways where these are key reference points in the day-to-day work of teaching and learning
- Fostering the development of new forms of collegiality at various levels and contexts through, for example, communities of practice
- Recognising and giving support to the multiple points of emergent intelligence (i.e. thought and action) which exist across the organisation and which enact core values, beliefs and principles
- Codifying and disseminating throughout the organisation good practices in forms readily and easily usable by staff
- Its mediating role in balancing the divergent needs of various parties as related to strategy, policies and investments related to teaching and learning
- Situating the Centre’s work as a key ‘node’ in the network of teaching and learning activities and services offered by various groups across the organisation

- The fluctuating landscape within and outside the organisation and the adaptations required to remain relevant and productive as these changes occur
- The possible range of positive and negative consequences of organisational actions taken to enhance teaching and learning, and the inherent unpredictability of the consequences of change
- The need to focus on creating contexts conducive to innovation in teaching and learning rather attempting to determine in advance the innovation required by the institution.

## **7 LEVERAGING THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING CENTRES**

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### **7.1 Overview**

Note that in all of our discussions of complexity...no mention has been made of any grand design. There has been no mention of a master manager or grand architect. ...*the fundamental role of managers is to shape and create 'contexts' in which appropriate forms of self-organisation occur*  
...*transformational change ultimately involves the creation of 'new contexts' that can break the hold of the dominant attractor patterns in favour of new ones.*  
...any person wishing to change the context in which he or she is operating should search for 'doable' high-leverage initiatives that can trigger a transition from one attractor to another (Morgan, 2006, p.256, p.257 & p.260).

This section provides a conclusion by highlighting key issues pertaining to fostering strategic leadership in teaching and learning through and by Teaching and Learning Centres. As the authors' direct experience is largely drawn from Deakin University illustrative material has generally been drawn from that source.

### **7.2 Leverage point 1: New visions/new plans/new times**

Given the intensely competitive national environment, universities are developing more ambitious visions and plans. Clear and ambitious visions and goals proceed naturally from universities' historical commitments and strengths. They lead directly into their ambitions for special positioning and recognition in the sector. Visions and plans can provide the key point of differentiation and attraction for universities in the minds of their various stakeholders. They address the questions of who we are, what we stand for and how we go about our business. It seems that many universities continue to develop, review, clarify or change their vision as articulated with the directions they wish to take in teaching and learning. Vision seems essential given the changing nature of teaching and learning environments in higher education. For example, Bates (2000) argues for the centrality of educationally well grounded and articulated visions to shape the best uses of technology in higher education. Choice, possibilities and pitfalls loom large in charting desired future directions. A university's vision for guiding desired directions in teaching and learning needs to be widely recognised, understood and enacted throughout the organisation. Lack of clarity of vision can be reflected in misguided, fragmented and localised teaching and learning initiatives. It can be reflected also in the haphazard

proliferation of unrelated teaching and learning policies which can often be found in universities. The range of specialised policies on many different facets of teaching and learning can lack overall focus and force in the absence of a well articulated, widely accepted and enacted vision. Action can be determined through reference to policy procedure, to the extent it exists, and not to more holistic views on what might really count in advancing the quality of teaching and learning. University vision statements can often appear bland, lacking theoretical rigour, evidential grounding and inspirational tone. As a consequence, strategic actions can attempt to cover too many bases and be pre-occupied with short-term concerns. A limited sense of vision can suggest a lack of confidence on the part of academic leadership as to the direction the organisation should take in teaching and learning, and this may permeate through to all levels of staff as well as students.

Students are less likely to develop a strong sense allegiance to an organisation that is uncertain about the values and principles underlying its approaches to teaching and learning. Similarly, it is less likely that teaching staff will engage effectively with students if the relationship between their goals and objectives and the mission and vision of the university is ambiguous or even contradictory. Nor is it likely that administrative and support staff can convey a clear and unified sense of purpose with respect to the services they provide. The vital concepts of the student experience and of engaging learners need to permeate university plans and policies and draw upon national and international research and trends in good practices. In developing contemporary visions and plans universities can benefit from developing formal connections with other universities with similar aspirations for the purpose of sharing practices, innovations and insights emanating from strategic direction. Given the scholarship of teaching and learning emphasises the centrality of the student learning experience, universities are taking their own distinctive approaches to enhancing their students' learning experiences and making these prominent in their teaching and learning plans. It is suggested that such plans are more likely to gain wide acceptance among academic and administrative staff through wide consultation led by the university's strategic leadership.

Universities are developing visions for learning, teaching and research in times of major change. Visions of desired states of organisational growth and development should be crafted for and by the key stakeholders affected and charged with their implementation. They should be informed by national and international bodies of theory and practice in higher education, and based on an analysis of particular university's student profile as related to significant changes in the nature of the student experience. Effective strategic leadership requires university teaching and learning plans to have appropriate goals and objectives accompanied with achievable targets, timeframes and accountabilities. The cornerstone of a teaching and learning plan should be a succinct and potent statement of theoretically well grounded principles to which a university is committed in relation to teaching, learning and the student experience. The teaching and learning plan should inform and align with a university's infrastructure planning as it relates to the:

- use of online learning systems and the design of physical teaching and learning spaces;
- provision of opportunities for informal interactions amongst students and teaching staff;
- provision of student services

as reported in an external review of teaching and learning at Deakin University in early 2007:

It is noteworthy that two decisive issues that have emerged from the experience of teaching and learning plans in UK universities over the last ten years or so are the coherence of teaching and learning strategies with other parts of the institution's strategic goals, and eliciting buy-in from all levels of staff. Also of importance are explicit reporting mechanisms against operational targets associated with plans, and clear links between plans and resourcing. The success of these interventions is wholly dependent on their being located in a coherent system, which should be evidence-based, inspirational, and methodically repeated throughout the University from the leadership at the top to every level. These findings are consistent with the Australian experience. A sturdy teaching and learning strategy, collegially developed and fully embedded in each Faculty, is an important starting point in this process (PhillipsKPA, *Final Report*, 2007).

The following observations have been made on the key components of strategic planning and implementation in relation to teaching and learning in higher education:

**Table 2: Implementing successful change in teaching and learning in higher education**

<b>Key components of plan</b>	<b>Missing element results in:</b>
Clear shared vision	<i>A quick start but early fade</i>
Capacity for change	<i>Anxiety and frustration</i>
Actionable first steps	<i>Haphazard efforts and false starts</i>
Model the way	<i>Cynicism and distrust</i>
Reinforce and embed change	<i>Drift back to old ways</i>
Evaluate and improve	<i>Scepticism and stagnation</i>

**Source:** C. McInnis, Keynote presentation on 'From vision to success: Implementing the Deakin Teaching and Learning Plan 2008-2012', Deakin Teaching and Learning Conference, 25<sup>th</sup> September, Melbourne: Burwood campus.

Clearly, these are all vital concerns of strategic leadership of teaching and learning Centres in Australian universities.

### **7.3 Leverage point 2: Preparation of new continuing academic staff**

The appropriate induction and preparation of academic teaching staff is a national priority area of investigation in Australian higher education. Universities have introduced

compulsory Graduate Certificates of Higher Education (GCHE) to develop the teaching knowledge and skills of new teaching staff. Some of these courses have been very rigid in their course structures, although anecdotal evidence suggests that some have been reviewed and restructured to make them more suited (i.e. relevant and flexible) to the changing world of academic work. Rather than having rigid structures which develop the same basic set of teaching knowledge and skills in all new academics, courses are being revamped to allow each new staff member to develop the knowledge and skills most appropriate to their own professional and personal circumstances. This has been a consequence of recognising the enormous diversity of staff teaching capacities undertaking such courses on entering their university. This diversity is multi-dimensional covering not only existing teaching experience, which can range from first time teaching to twenty years' existing experience, but also dimensions such as the different pedagogies that are the norm across disciplines, the commitment to completing such courses, career stage, and expertise in specific areas of teaching, knowledge of technology, existing teaching qualifications and research skills.

The aims of Graduate Certificates in Higher Education (GCHE), as part of the deliberations of the National Foundations Colloquium, are being recast to better recognise more relevant and flexible approaches informed by the scholarship on academic preparation to teach in higher education, and which appropriately consider existing expertise of participants and allows for depth of study as well as breadth of study as valid pathways through the courses. By way of illustration, this process has, for example, been undertaken with Deakin's GCHE whose new structure allows for a diversity of staff background by:

- having only one compulsory unit and a choice of pathways,
- the development of 'experts' and 'leaders' through a research project pathway working with recognised 'experts' as supervisors, and
- the inclusion of any combination of the large range of existing online professional development modules combined into a unit which allows for staff to include development of knowledge and skills in new teaching approaches, practices and tools into their compulsory program (rather than in competition with the compulsory program).

A compulsory one day induction program has also been introduced for all staff with a teaching role that includes the essential information about Deakin's academic processes and teaching support processes. The vast majority of the program is offered in an online format taking appropriate advantage of the technologies available. It aims to be a model of the University's commitment to flexible education underpinned by appropriate research and scholarship in all its facets. Other universities seem to be reshaping their courses in ways consistent with their own teaching and learning strengths, commitments and directions.

#### **7.4 Leverage point 3: Compulsory casual teaching development program**

As with continuing academic teaching staff, the recognition of the special developmental needs of casual staff is also a national area of priority investigation in Australian higher education. Again, as one example, in response to this national agenda, Deakin University reviewed its casual staff induction and support program in 2006 and

introduced a revamped program in 2007 coordinated by a person who, himself, is an experienced casual teacher in the Deakin context. The program has been developed with an emphasis on a student-centred/learning-centred approach to teaching - an approach that will lead to deep (rather than surface) learning. It is premised on current educational theory, but is designed to be practical in nature. The program has been developed by staff within Deakin's Institute of Teaching and Learning, in association with staff from Human Resources, the Division of Student Life and the Faculties. The program also incorporates ideas and feedback from sessions run with casual academic staff over the last two years. It also draws on materials available in similar programs at other Australian universities. The program is intended to be completed in the first semester of employment as a casual academic - Tutor, Demonstrator or Marker - at Deakin and is a condition of continuing employment in this role. Casual staff members are reimbursed for their participation in the program. A new addition to the program has been the introduction of a compulsory module online, *Teaching with DSO (Deakin Studies Online)*. This module gives casual staff a broad introduction to e-learning technologies being used at the University and is beneficial whether the staff member concerned is directly involved in online teaching or not.

## **7.5 Leverage point 4: Just-In-Time/Just-Sufficient/Just-for-me professional development**

Peters (1992, p.383) observes in relation to developing knowledge management structures in dispersed organisations that "Wise application of information technology is a necessary, but far from sufficient, condition for knowledge management success". Professional development (PD) online should be available in geographically dispersed organisations just-in-time/just-sufficient for the individual staff member's immediate needs, and just-for-them. Many universities are spread geographically over different campuses, different cities, and through different regions locally, nationally and internationally. Many academics are highly mobile in their research, teaching, management and consultancy work. It would be fair to say that the contemporary academic enterprise, work and work patterns are now highly dependent on information and communications technologies. Flexibility of provision of professional learning opportunities seems imperative in most institutions, irrespective of the degree of their formal commitment to online or flexible education for their students.

Online-supported professional development environments should be viewable by key domains and skill areas related to excellence in tertiary teaching and learning. Moreover, they could be viewable by a staff member's level of tertiary teaching competence and experience. For example, the environment could be viewed by those new to tertiary teaching, new to teaching at the University, and by more experienced, competent teachers for their ongoing professional development. To achieve this, such environments are best driven by searchable databases. Such environments should be problem and issue centred therefore allowing staff to quickly locate resources and use communication channels to improve their teaching in both virtual and physical settings. They should contain generic advice and support on tertiary teaching and learning principles and practices along with connections into discipline-based educational concerns. The sites should be open to a broad range of parties who can contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and student learning, including visitors who may wish to understand how quality tertiary teaching is conceived, and how its quality can be enhanced in an e-supported, dynamic action oriented environment. In many institutions, online-supported

professional development environments need to promote a sense of community involvement across faculties, departments, programs and disciplines (see 7.6 below). The resources within these environments should be rich in multimedia and such material should be able to be manipulated by teacher-users for different purposes. Overall, these environments should showcase the integration of the best of a range of e-learning technologies from learning management systems to multimedia content repositories to social software tools like blogs, wikis and podcasting.

## 7.6 Leverage point 5: Communities of Practice in teaching and learning

The career advancement view above is designed to develop educators with specialist expertise relevant to teaching in their fields of interest and their possible contribution is discussed above: see also 7.5. They can also act within 'Communities of Practice' to support excellent teaching within the institution through activities such as recognition of new outstanding educators within the institution, and dissemination of outstanding teaching practice.

Communities of teaching/teacher and learning/learners practice can be fundamental in enabling the realisation of an institution's teaching and learning vision. However, as Viskovic (2006) notes, not all teacher's local communities are 'warm, friendly and cooperative', and this may hinder the operation of CoPs. A further factor that that may explain the slow emergence of successful CoP activity in Australian higher education is that industry-focused management/corporation CoPs may not translate readily into the academic environment. Given that research into and practical applications of CoP have primarily been industry-focused, a new paradigm for CoP in academe called CoP-iA can be argued. Table 3 summarises the salient points of difference between CoP in the commercial world and CoP-iA.

**Table 3: Points of difference between corporate CoP and CoP-iA**

<b>Differences relevant to CoPs</b>	<b>Corporations</b>	<b>Academe</b>
Power relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power structures well defined:</li> <li>• Power is vested in Department, Division, Company to meet organisational objectives</li> <li>• Governments have little power over specific organisational objectives over the short term</li> <li>• Organisational objectives are usually well understood by employees</li> <li>• Individual employee objectives are subordinated and compliant to organisational objectives</li> <li>• Organisation is more likely to support CoP that have a close fit to organisational objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power structures poorly defined:</li> <li>• Power is diversely spread over a wide mix of teaching, research, and funding objectives, where the individual has power to influence that mix</li> <li>• Governments have significant power, short and long-term, over policy decisions and funding</li> <li>• Organisational objectives are usually poorly understood by employees</li> <li>• Individual employee objectives are often influenced by personal objectives</li> <li>• The institution, as a sector, has little experience in how CoP-iA should be encouraged, supported, or</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have little freedom to individualise their personal objectives within the organisation beyond those of the organisation</li> </ul>	<p>managed and has difficulties matching organisational and personal objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees have significant freedom to individualise their personal objectives within and beyond the organisation</li> </ul>
Incentives/rewards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employee incentives are organisationally controlled in that incentives are matched to and measured by organisational strategies and individual employee contribution to strategy success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentive is dispersed between the institution and the individual rewards for effort fragmented and often external</li> </ul>
Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are usually directly suborned within relatively cohesive organisational structures built to meet organisational strategy and objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although Academe has structure such as discipline, school and faculty, there are often over-arching teaching-focussed , research-focussed and funding-focussed structures, within which individuals can have diverse or indirect responsibilities</li> </ul>
Resource control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiated to meet organisational objectives. Usually unit controlled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where power structures are poorly defined, employee objectives are influenced by personal objectives. Where responsibilities and resourcing is poorly aligned control is likely to be diverse and poorly focussed</li> </ul>

**Source:** Nagy, J. & Burch, A. (2007). Communities of practice in academe (CoP-iA) – understanding academic work practices to enable knowledge building capacities in corporate universities, *Oxford Review of Education*, August (in press).

The range of communities of practice that could be fostered organisationally is outlined in Table 4.

**Table 4: Range of communities of practice**

Type of CoP-iA	Membership	Staff Focus	Support/involvement Of Institution	Theme	Agenda
Organic	Voluntary	Self-determination and interest but a private involvement with others	CoP-iA is unknown to the Institution	Discipline related	Self-determined
Nurtured (Recognised)	Voluntary	Self-determination but a desire for the Cop-iA to be recognised by the Institution	CoP-iA and members are registered by the Institution and some minor support provided	Discipline related	Self-determined
Intentional (Supported)	Voluntary + Mentored +Performance appraisal related	A desire to work with the Institution on issues of personal interest	A significant level of Institutional support both financial, technical and work-load recognition	Cross discipline Guided	Guided Self-determined

Strategic (Intentional)	Voluntary + Invited + Mentored + Performance	By institutional invitation Career choice appraisal related	Institutional imperative	Cross discipline Guided Strategically important themes	Guided
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**Source:** J. Nagy & A. Burch, internal presentation, Deakin University forum, 'Establishing and sustaining Communities of Practice in Academe (CoP-iA) to Enhance Teaching and Learning at Deakin', June, 2007.

While, conventionally CoPs meet face-to-face Spratt, Palmer & Coldwell (2000) showed that virtual CoPs can be effective. Online environments are crucial as a key focus of investigation relating to good practice, policy development, research and scholarship in flexible education and as a key means in a distributed organisation to enable virtual communication and collaboration. Fostering a range of communities of practice at different levels, on different topics of interest and in relation to different faculties, schools, disciplines and campuses will require the new forms of social software tools and networking underpinning an online-supported social learning architecture.

At Deakin, CoPs are proposed in the following areas:

- Research into Scholarship in Teaching and Learning (SOTL) and flexible education
- Enhancing the quality of teaching and development of new academic staff
- Enhancing the quality of teaching and development of sessional and casual staff
- Enhancing the use of Deakin Studies Online (DSO) technologies
- Supporting and enhancing academic teaching and learning leadership
- Enhancing the work of the University's academic development staff.

CoPs have been used successfully elsewhere. As an example from an international university, the following table indicates the areas and staff numbers involved from CoPs at the University of British Columbia, Canada.

**Table 5: CoPs and Staff numbers at the University of British Columbia (UBC)**

■ UBC Problem-based Learning (PBL) Network	258
■ Community Service Learning (CSL)	115
■ Teaching and Learning for the Heart and Mind	129
■ Undergraduate Research Implementation Team (URIT)	48
■ ISoTL Network	157
■ Teaching Portfolios Community	59
■ New/Junior Faculty	19
■ Graduate Student Teaching Network	32
■ The Facilitation Community	8
■ The Course Design Community	12
■ Sustainability in the Curriculum Working Group	1
■ Global Citizenship in Teaching and Learning	41
■ Qualitative Data Analysis Groups	111

**Source:** Gary Poole, Director, Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, UBC, December 2007.

## **7.7 Leverage point 6: Strategic funding for teaching and learning development**

The delicate balancing act in higher education relates to emphasis on the conservation of resources often associated with quality assurance, and risky investments in innovation associated with quality improvement, indeed, major quality break-throughs. Encouraging innovation is an important aspect of demonstrating major strengths in teaching and learning. It has been seen as particularly important in demonstrating leadership in new technologies related to on- and off-campus education. Over time many universities have attempted to stimulate innovation through substantial strategic institutional funding devoted to projects directed towards advancing teaching/learning within disciplines, within and across faculties, and for the entire organisation. A significant proportion of this funding has been directed to projects related to the use of technology in teaching and learning, an area of continuing ongoing importance.

## **7.8 Leverage point 7: Supporting teaching excellence through awards and fellowships**

Teaching awards and fellowships are powerful ways of recognising excellent teachers, and providing them and their colleagues with development opportunities. The Carrick Institute has developed a strong framework of criteria and descriptors for assessing teaching excellence and programs that enhance learning. Carrick has been concerned with recognising and rewarding a broader range of staff and teams who directly or indirectly contribute to the quality of the student learning experience. Universities have been aligning their own teaching excellence award schemes with the Carrick framework. Various motivations can lead staff to apply for national and institutional awards. Some staff members seek alone, or with colleagues, recognition and reward for their accomplishments which in turn might support their own career development and advancement. They may not wish to feel obliged to share formally their special educational expertise with colleagues in the organisation. Others may be motivated to apply for both individual recognition and reward, and to use it as a vehicle for demonstrating their educational expertise and leadership in the organisation through various formal roles and mechanisms (see 7.10).

Moreover, the secondment of academic staff in faculties to work on fellowship projects with staff from teaching and learning Centres can contribute significantly to strengthening connections between both parties. There may be different categories of teaching and learning fellows. For example, those academic staff members who are project leaders of strategic teaching and learning development projects could be deemed Teaching and Learning Innovation Fellows. Faculty staff members could be seconded to teaching and learning Centres, as Teaching and Learning Professional Development Fellows, to develop new approaches to professional development on key teaching topics of interest to the institution. Faculty staff might focus on developing and disseminating expertise relating to new media/new technologies in the role of Online Teaching and Learning Fellows. In addition, joint appointments might be made over a period of time between Centres and faculties, where the Teaching and Learning Fellow might work on both a strategic institution-wide project, and on disseminating good teaching/learning practices through their faculty in ways grounded in particular

disciplinary concerns. Fellows often apply for teaching awards both institutionally and nationally. Their recognition, in turn, can see them in leadership roles and as active contributors to the formation of communities of practice, local mentoring, and so on. It is another example of where various initiatives can cohere to build the broad ranging teaching expertise required by the institution in advancement of their teaching and learning commitments and directions.

## **7.9 Leverage point 8: Disseminating exemplary practices online**

In the corporate world, Peters (1992) highlights the importance of computer-based knowledge management structures to enable the acquisition, storage and deployment of organisational learning outcomes for future business value. As related to higher education, the value of cases of good practice as an integral resource in e-supported professional development environments has been argued by Segrave, Holt and Farmer (2005). Jonassen, Peck & Wilson (1999), drawing upon the ecological metaphor of learning environments as spaces, identify Cases as a key resource in supporting individual and collaborative exploration and problem solving. Cases in such environments provide 'on-demand advice. They supplant the experience that the novice teacher has not had' (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, 1999, p.198). Holt *et al*, (2005) have completed an online case resource to support the professional development of staff particularly in the area of digital and online-based teaching and learning.

## **7.10 Leverage point 9: Recognition, use and expansion of education 'experts'**

By building up a pool of 'experts' in different areas of teaching, as universities do with researchers in different areas of research, institutions can create a resource bank of potential mentors who can help others wanting to build up their own specialist teaching expertise. Such a pool of experts could also be called upon to oversee or drive innovative teaching developments across the institution. Universities need to increasingly draw upon the knowledge and experience of their best educators, wherever they might be located in the organisation, to enhance significantly the student learning experience through leadership in teaching and learning. In response to the challenge to give greater recognition and developmental opportunities to a much broader range of talented and committed staff, these teaching leaders may occupy formal or informal leadership roles across the institution.

In doing this it is important for universities to recognise publicly the achievements of their most outstanding educators in a way that creates *parity of esteem* with conventional research activity for the scholarly practice of teaching and learning. In Deakin's case, it has created a College of Distinguished Deakin Educators (CDDE) whose members are recognised as experts and leaders in teaching and learning in the institution and who will contribute to developing the next generation of teaching and learning experts. Staff judged by their peers or their students to be leading educators are invited to apply for membership. Successful applicants are expected to contribute to the leadership and development of teaching and learning at the University through activities such as:

- supervision of a GCHE candidate undertaking the research project option;

- contribution to the Deakin teaching and learning conference;
- contribution to the seminar program of the Institute of Teaching and Learning;
- mentoring of other academic staff;
- conducting research in teaching and learning;
- leadership of a Strategic Teaching and Learning Grant Scheme project;
- contribution to a Carrick Institute-funded project;
- an existing formal teaching and learning leadership role, including Program Leader, Associate Head of School (Teaching and Learning) and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning);
- leadership of strategic course development activities;
- a leadership role in a teaching and learning related Community of Practice;
- significant contribution to an initiative to enhance the student learning experience; or
- contribution to an academic professional development initiative for Deakin staff.

In addition to creating the CDDE two other initiatives have also been introduced to recognise outstanding educators: Teaching Scholars and Professional Development Fellows. Teaching Scholars are staff who are given special appointments as teaching leaders with an expectation that their scholarship and research be in teaching and learning rather than their normal discipline area and Professional Development Fellows are co-opted to the Institute of Teaching and Learning to develop material to extend the teaching and learning knowledge and skills of their fellow staff (see, also, 7.8 above). The development of Teaching Scholar or Fellowship positions is also occurring at other universities.

### **7.11 Leverage point 10: Establishing reliable ICT infrastructure**

Encouraging adoption of educationally sound use of technology requires reliable and effective ICT infrastructure. Most universities have invested considerable funding into developing such infrastructure for both production and development systems. This is a key to the acceptance of technology in teaching and learning by both staff and students.

### **7.12 Leverage point 11: Enhancing the use of student evaluation to improve teaching and learning**

Evaluating the quality of teachers and the teaching program is important as a means of recognising those with expertise. Recognition is a major incentive to improvement and development. Institution-wide student evaluation surveying is a prominent feature of universities' approaches to assuring and improving the quality of teaching and learning in Australian higher education, and such surveys currently form one aspect of Carrick's Teaching Quality Indicators project. At Deakin, for example, the student evaluation system was upgraded in 2006. Two major changes of relevance were the introduction of evaluations of named individual teachers that are available to both the individuals evaluated and those with line management responsibility for their performance, and the separation of the question about online resources into two with one question about the systems that support online learning, and a separate question about the teaching and learning resources used through those systems. While student feedback is only one

dimension of measuring the quality of the teaching program these changes focus considerable attention on key aspects of adapting to the changed world as it relates to the online learning experience.

### **7.13 Leverage point 12: Renewing leadership in teaching and learning**

Ramsden (1998, p.3) observed “These are sharp and stimulating times. These are times when leadership comes into its own. It is the task of academic leaders to revitalise and energise their colleagues to meet the challenges of tough times with eagerness and with passion. We have seriously underestimated the power of leadership in higher education” Almost a decade on the observation still holds true. Jameson (2006, p.36) argues for a new ‘connected transformational leadership field’ in post-compulsory education encompassing distributed and shared leadership in educational organisations, and which is a major focus of this project.

The Carrick Institute has funded a number of leadership capacity building grants projects, *inter alia*, examining the roles of various academic leaders from Deans, Heads of departments, Associate Deans, Teaching and Learning and Course Coordinators. There are universities currently reviewing the roles of Associate Deans and Associate Heads of School, Teaching and Learning, with the view to refocussing their contributions around quality improvement, development and innovation in realising scholarship-driven visions for teaching and learning. Coupled with refocussing the roles of those in formal leadership positions is the expansion of scholarly teaching leaders as above and their mobilisation within communities of practice. The aim of such initiatives it appears is to develop a more inclusive distributed leadership capability in teaching and learning across the institution by recognising the important relationships between those:

- in both formal and informal leadership roles
- in different areas and
- operating at different levels of responsibility within the organisation.

With the adoption of corporate-wide e-learning technologies by universities aimed at adding value to on-campus and off-campus education, an ongoing challenge appears to be the effective leadership and management of technology-enabled, distributed learning environments (Coates, 2006). This, in turn suggests the need for robust forms of distributed educational leadership to ensure that such distributed learning environments generate maximum teaching and learning value for all parties, with a strong focus on enhancing student engagement and productive learning in a broad range of contexts. Universities are implementing special leadership development programs for Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning), Associate Heads of School (Teaching and Learning) and Course Coordinators, and strategic leadership of teaching and learning Centres is well placed to help conceive and deliver these initiatives.

## 8 APPENDIXES

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### 8.1 Appendix 1

#### Key terms related to quality

**Quality:** an assessment of the degree to which service or product meets the expectations of a user based on an identified set of attributes. The relative importance of particular attributes depends on the individual user and their context.

**Quality Control (QC):** a process based on measuring identified quality attributes to ensure that the product or service delivered to users is of a defined/agreed quality standard. For products, QC is normally applied following production, and defective items have to be scrapped or re-worked. QC often incorporates statistical sampling from batches, such that only a comparatively small proportion of all items need be tested to ensure a low level of defective items reach the user.

**Quality Assurance (QA):** a set of procedures (system) designed to ensure that a product or service meets a specified minimum level of quality. While a QA system would normally incorporate some form of QC, rather than relying on 'inspecting in' quality using QC, QA systems typically seek to implement delivery systems that do not produce defective items. A QA system would use QC data to identify quality problems and rectify them to maintain the required level of quality.

**Quality Improvement (QI):** encompasses a wide range of techniques for attaining improved levels of quality. Changes in user/customer demands and/or developments in competing products/services mean that there is likely to be a need to improve quality over time. The most appropriate QI techniques depend on the service or product in question, the organisational context and the nature of the improvement sought.

**Quality Management System (QMS):** a system for managing all aspects of quality in an organisation. A QMS would normally encompass QC, QA and QI processes.

These terms are sometimes confused, for example, QC and QA are not same as quality. What represents quality in a particular service or product is generally an individual assessment; QC/QA are simply methods for ensuring that a specified level of quality (low or high) is achieved.

### 8.2 Appendix 2

#### Listing of implications for strategic leadership of Teaching and Learning Centres

**Academic work:** Strategic leadership of Centres for Teaching and Learning needs to be aware of, and responsive to, the profound changes to academic teaching work and how these impact on lecturers. In particular, they should be mindful of how ICT can best support the role of educators and, hence, student learning.

**Alignments of purpose, staffing and performance:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to align purpose with internal staffing capability and organisation, and the performance expectations of various organisational stakeholders.

**AUQA:** Strategic leadership of Centres can help implement approaches which systematically provide opportunities for different categories of academic teaching staff to develop their teaching capabilities and to take action on various forms of evidence on the quality of their teaching.

**Benchmarking and collaboration:** Strategic leadership of Centres can enable benchmarking within liked grouped universities, selective benchmarking across different groupings of universities, and help negotiate collaborative endeavours for national funding. Moreover, strategic leadership of centres needs to manage constructively the tensions which may exist between universities wishing both to differentiate and align themselves with various university groupings in the sector.

**Carrick:** Strategic leadership of Centres to analyse and adapt Carrick project outcomes for the benefit of particular institutional needs and directions, the mobilisation of interest in actively participating in Carrick programs drawing on the particular strengths of institutions and their staff, and supporting the promotion of the most outstanding educators for national teaching excellence awards. It is important to situate Carrick developmental opportunities in ways appropriate to advancing academic teaching staff careers.

**CEQ:** Strategic leadership of Centres in analysing and interpreting CEQ data for course review and improvement, and ongoing critique of validity of instrument based on teaching and learning commitments and directions of institution.

**CQI:** Strategic leadership of Centres can develop teaching and learning visions, principles, plans and activities which can guide the process of continuous quality improvement in teaching and learning at various levels and in various areas of the institution.

**Graduate attributes:** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of policies, approaches and practices which outline, give meaning and allow students to reflect on their learning of desired attributes.

**Images of strategic leadership in organisations:** Strategic leadership of teaching and learning Centres needs to consider:

- The appropriate 'fits' between various curricula, pedagogies and media/technologies on the one hand, with the various learning needs, preferences and circumstances of students on the other;
- Continually reflecting on and giving meaning to the organisation's core values, beliefs and principles on teaching and learning;
- Fostering the development of the University values, beliefs and principles throughout the organisation in ways where these are key reference points in the day-to-day work of teaching and learning;
- Fostering the development of new forms of collegiality at various levels and contexts through, for example, communities of practice;

- Recognising and giving support to the multiple points of emergent intelligence (i.e. thought and action) which exist across the organisation and which enact core values, beliefs and principles;
- Codifying and disseminating throughout the organisation good practices in forms readily and easily usable by staff;
- Its mediating role in balancing the divergent needs of various parties as related to strategy, policies and investments related to teaching and learning;
- Situating the Centre's work as a key 'node' in the network of teaching and learning activities and services offered by various groups across the organisation;
- The fluctuating landscape within and outside the organisation and the adaptations required to remain relevant and productive as these changes occur;
- The possible range of positive and negative consequences of organisational actions taken to enhance teaching and learning, and the inherent unpredictability of the consequences of change;
- The need to focus on creating contexts conducive to innovation in teaching and learning rather attempting to determine in advance the innovation required by the institution.

**LTPF:** Strategic leadership of Centres to support the improvement of LTPF outcomes, provision of advice on the best ways of spending funding to enhance teaching and learning in the institution, and evaluation of outcomes of funding deployments.

**Purpose:** Strategic leadership needs to justify and articulate the purpose of Centres and disseminate a shared understanding of purpose through the organisation.

**SET:** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of valid instruments, assist in the analysis and interpretation of quantitative and qualitative data, advise on strategies to increase response rates, disseminate good practices in response to student evaluation feedback, and devise other supplementary and complementary methods of data collection for specific purposes.

**Staff development needs:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to contribute to professional capacity building systematically across all categories of staff and in ways addressing varying needs and circumstances as shaped by organisational commitments, directions, teaching circumstances, and student learning needs.

**Staff development approaches:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to contribute to University principles, values and policies, and assess and develop approaches to staff development appropriate for its various teaching and learning contexts.

**Staff development impacts:** Strategic leadership of Centres needs to initiate, coordinate and foster the delivery of professional development opportunities and support in appropriate ways, at appropriate levels and with evidence-based approaches to their effectiveness. The mix will be strongly shaped by the educational, structural, cultural, political and geographical character of the organisation.

**Stakeholders:** Strategic leadership of Centres can contribute to the development of the roles of faculty teaching/learning leadership, support their work within their faculties and

schools, and contribute to their professional development as leaders in learning and teaching.

**Teaching excellence:** It makes eminent sense that Australian universities carefully consider such national developments in determining teaching excellence within their own contexts. Strategic leadership of Centres for teaching and learning has a pivotal role to play in these considerations.

**Strategic leadership leverage points:**

- L1 *New visions/new plans/new times*
- L2 *Preparation of new continuing academic staff*
- L3 *Compulsory casual teaching development program*
- L4 *Just-In-Time/Just-Sufficient/just-for-me professional development*
- L5 *Communities of practice* in teaching and learning
- L6 *Strategic funding for teaching and learning development*
- L7 *Supporting teaching excellence through awards and Fellowships*
- L8 *Disseminating exemplary practices* online
- L9 *Recognition, use and expansion of education 'experts' in the organisation*
- L10 *Establishing reliable ICT infrastructure*
- L11 *Enhancing the use of student evaluation to improve learning and teaching*
- L12 *Renewing leadership* in teaching and learning

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