Building fieldwork coordinator leadership capabilities

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Conference sub-theme(s) addressed

Leadership – How are notions of leadership changing to meet new challenges in higher education?

Background/context

Fieldwork (a form of work integrated learning [WIL]) is an integral component of many courses and provides students with an opportunity to build their graduate employability, confidence and consolidate their professional skills as well as develop positive professional attitudes and qualities (Nash et al 2009). Despite needing sophisticated leadership skills to manage fieldwork education in order to maximise benefits for students, the university and external partner organisations (Coll & Eames, 2004), Fieldwork Coordinators (FCs) remain largely invisible in their roles within universities. In a recent national scoping study of work integrated learning, Patrick et al. (2009) strongly supported leadership for FCs. This poster will present the findings of the first phase of a national ALTC project aimed at designing and implementing an academic leadership development program for FCs from a wide variety of disciplines.

Research/evaluation method

The study is based on an extensive literature review and an online survey of FCs within the partner universities. The survey was developed from the “Learning and Teaching Leaders Survey” developed by Scott et al. (2008) and modified to reflect fieldwork coordination. The instrument is designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data and will enable a comparison between the leadership of fieldwork and other academic leadership roles previously explored by Scott et al. (2008).

The questionnaire also reflects the complexity of fieldwork leadership through drawing on the capabilities in the Integrated Competing Values Framework (Vilkinas & Cartan 2006) and covers the following roles:

- **Developer**: eg. providing training and support for educators in the field around coaching, supervision, fair and equitable assessment of students;
- **Innovator**: eg. changes to professional practice due to increasing enrolments, competition for placements requiring innovative and new approaches to models of FC;
- **Broker**: eg development of strategic partnerships with agencies, accreditation and professional bodies, fieldwork educators, and Head of School/Department;
- **Deliverer**: eg systems to manage fieldwork, communication strategies and initiatives to manage risk and legal issues associated with FC;
- **Monitor**: eg continuously improving the quality of WIL, placement quality, evaluation of fieldwork and models of education, moderation of fieldwork assessment;
- **Integrator**: eg reflecting on practice, taking a critical perspective on one's own leadership role, and involving others such as peer coaches, critical friends or colleagues in one's ongoing development as an FC.

**Outcomes**

The poster will present the results from the FC survey, provide some preliminary discussion and clarify the academic leadership role of FCs. Furthermore, the presentation will provide a framework of core leadership competencies and capabilities required for successful FC mapped against two current leadership frameworks.

**Key references**


