

Leadership Needs in International Higher Education in Australia and Europe

Report from Phase One of a Delphi Study

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Executive summary

The development of advanced leadership capabilities amongst up and coming international education professionals is an area of particular concern to both the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and was a focus of a joint Symposium, *Advancing Europe-Australia Cooperation in Higher Education*, held in 2009 in Sydney.

With financial support from the Australian Government (Australian Education International) the two Associations conducted a joint research study, the technical components of which were conducted by the LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management, University of Melbourne (Australian partner) and IVA, Tilburg University, the Netherlands (European partner). EAIE has supported the European component of the project.

The research sought to identify the generic and specific leadership capabilities required by the future generation of international education leaders in Australia and Europe.

A two-phase Delphi methodology was adopted and a first phase web-based questionnaire developed based on a conceptual framework (Quinn et al, 2007) (see Appendix 3), which identifies eight "competing" leadership roles: facilitator, mentor, innovator, broker, director, producer, monitor and coordinator.

The questionnaire focussed on the perceived leadership capabilities that professionals in the field perceive to be needed today and in the years to come. In addition, respondents were asked to indicate the key issues confronting international education.

Respondents for the study were drawn from the membership of EAIE and IEAA. Phase 2 of the project will be conducted in the light of the finding from Phase 1 and will involve group discussion at both the 2012 EAIE and AIEC Conferences as well as structured interviews involving selected respondents to Phase 1.

The intention in Phase 1 was to identify if there are differences in the way international education leaders in Australia and Europe perform their role, and where gaps exist between what leaders perceive as their realities and what they ideally would like their jobs to consist of in terms of a mix of the eight roles. Answers to these ques-

tions could then inform the design of appropriate leadership development activities for EAIE and IEAA, separately and jointly.

Analysis of general leadership findings indicated there is significant agreement amongst respondents about the order of importance of particular leadership roles. With the exception of the director and innovator roles (swapped across the two groups) the relative order in roles is the same for Australia and for Europe.

However, when the current and optimal mix of roles is examined there is a notable difference between the two groups of respondents.

For Australian international education leaders, the importance of the "facilitator", "mentor" and "director" roles in an optimal situation remains the same as it is currently. On the other hand, Australian leaders seek to strengthen their capabilities in the "innovator", "monitor" and "coordinator" roles, with less emphasis on the "producer" and "broker" roles. Australian respondents consider themselves relatively capable in the area of teamwork and in planning, goal setting, productivity and efficiency. They seek to improve their capabilities in the "innovator" role, which stresses flexibility, growth, resource acquisition and external support, and in the "monitor" and "coordinator" roles that focus on information management and communication, stability and control.

For European leaders, the "facilitator" role remains the most dominant. However, in an ideal world European leaders would like to see themselves play out more of the "innovator", "monitor", "director" and "coordinator" roles, and less of the "producer" and "mentor" roles. They seek to improve their capabilities across a broader range than their Australian colleagues - in terms of flexibility, growth, resource acquisition and external support ("innovator"), in terms of internal processes such as information management and communication, stability and control ("coordinator" and "monitor") and in terms of planning, goal setting, productivity and efficiency ("director").

The implications of this analysis for general international education leadership in Europe and Australia will be taken up and investigated in depth in the Phase 2 of the study.

In the final section of the survey, participants were asked to identify the main benefits of internationalization, what the key priorities for internationalizing higher education are, and what the main obstacles to internationalization might be.

By far the strongest perceived benefit is the positive impact internationalization has on societies: contributing to a global, mutual understanding, increasing cross-cultural awareness, creating global citizens and contributing to helping to deal with global issues. There is no difference in the emphasis placed on this dimension from a European or Australian perspective.

A second set of benefits relates to student outcomes (a better education for students, specifically developing a global perspective, providing students with an international experience, contributing to an open mind set including tolerance, and resulting in better personal development. This is closely followed by a group of responses that emphasise broadening the educational experience for all students (and staff), the building of networks, and preparing students for a global labour market and international careers. Again, there is little difference in emphasis or importance if we look at Europe and Australia.

When it comes to benefits that relate to institutions, a more varied picture emerges. Australian respondents see better research through international collaboration as a significant outcome and rank this fifth. This dimension does feature prominently in the minds of European respondents who are focussed far more on the benefits that relate to quality assurance.

Both European and Australian respondents rank the programmatic impacts of internationalization as important, stressing quality and innovativeness, the increased breadth of programs and the reflection of the international dimension in the curriculum.

The economic side of internationalization is also acknowledged but perhaps not surprisingly features more prominently with Australian respondents.

Finally, capacity building (education for development) comes up as the last major benefit with a little more prominence in Europe than Australia, although the difference is not significant. Key priorities for internationalizing higher education

The key priorities for the internationalization of higher education are strongly aligned with the objectives of internationalization and how these might best be achieved. Student and staff mobility comes up at the top priority. What is particularly significant with respect to mobility is the emphasis in the Australian responses on outward mobility and the focus on Asia.

The second key priority - building institutional relationships - relates closely to the first priority. Interestingly, for Australian respondents this includes a strong emphasis on the development of research collaboration, whilst European respondents emphasize collaboration in teaching through the development of joint or double degree programs.

The development of an internationalised curriculum and curriculum innovation, including the use of technology, features as the third priority. This is closely followed by a set of priorities that relate back to the socio-cultural benefits identified earlier.

Responses by Australian and European respondents to other matters diverge. From an Australian perspective the development and implementation of clear institutional strategies with a high level of institutional commitment are important priorities. This is much less the case in Europe, where again quality issues are perceived as far more important.

Overall, responses about the key issues for internationalizing higher education are more widely spread than those about the benefits of internationalization.

The final section of the questionnaire sought to canvass opinions about perceived major obstacles to further internationalisation of higher education. Respondents were practically unanimous in identifying resourcing as *the* stumbling block. Resourcing should not be interpreted simply in the narrow sense of finances available but rather more broadly, reflecting the full set of human, infrastructure, administrative and financial resources needed to fully engage with internationalisation. Under resourcing is far more prominent as an obstacle than as a key priority.

There is considerable difference between Australian and European views about other obstacles. Particularly problematic from an Australian perspective are issues related to government policies and regulations (especially concerning student visas) and more generally the politicization of international education in the Australian Parliament and media.

From a European perspective, subordinate obstacles relate more to a lack of leadership, vision and strategy, as well as awareness of the importance of internationalisation.

Matters raised earlier in the study such as system diversity and quality assurance are reflected in a further set of obstacles that again predominantly feature in Europe: the mismatch of educational systems, at times reflected in degree content, resulting in problems with recognition and exchange, and a series of structural impediments that in particular reflect Europe working through the Bologna agenda.

A clear problematic for many Australian respondents is the tying of internationalization to the financial imperative to keep Australian institutions financially viable.

An obstacle that is clearly identified by European respondents but far less by Australian respondents is the lack of foreign language skills of both staff and students.

Whilst Australian respondents are less concerned about leadership and strategy issues than their European counterparts, they are more concerned about the lack of support they receive within their institution for internationalisation. Lack of commitment (from the top of the institution), competing priorities, lip service to internationalization and overall coordination problems are the most common obstacles mentioned.

Both European and Australian respondents perceive more or less equally a problem in the attitude of academic staff to internationalisation. This points to a somewhat problematic relationship between administrative and academic staff responsible for internationalization. The success of internationalization of an institution is clearly at risk without an understanding and acceptance of co-dependency between different groups of players in the institution.

Lastly, both European and Australian respondents note generalised negative attitudes that appear to exist in their societies with respect to internationalisation. Described variously as an "inward looking country climate", "ethnocentricity", "nationalism" or "xenophobia", these perceptions, indeed concerns, all refer to the adverse responses to ethnic and cultural diversity rife in certain parts of the Australian and European communities.

The findings and their implications for international education leadership in Europe and Australia will be taken up and investigated in depth in Phase 2 of the study.

Specific matters to be pursued:

1. How Australian leaders might strengthen their capabilities in the innovator, monitor and coordinator roles.
2. How European leaders might strengthen their capabilities in the innovator, monitor, director and coordinator roles.
3. Perceived lack of resources and how to overcome this in Europe and Australia.
4. Barriers of leadership, vision and strategy, as well as awareness of the importance of internationalisation and how to overcome these in Europe.
5. What Australian institutions and professionals might do to overcome the problem of overemphasis on financial benefit to the detriment of other significant objectives.
6. Perceived lack of support Australian staff receive within their institution for internationalisation. Lack of commitment (from the top of the institution), competing priorities, lip service to internationalization and overall coordination problems.
7. The tensions around the role and participation of academic staff in the process of internationalization in Europe and Australia.

Generalised negative attitudes that appear to exist in Australian and European societies with respect to internationalisation (and particularly in the Australian context the presence of large numbers of international students within local communities), and what to do about them.