

# DEVELOPING EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## **Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership in Higher Education**

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**L**eadership is a much debated topic and one that has generated abundant research with regard to the competencies, factors, principles, attributes, traits, behaviours and qualities that beget effective leadership. Countless articles, books and reference literature have attempted to answer the question of ‘What makes an effective leader?’ In response to this question, numerous theories, attributes and models of effective leaders and leadership have been proposed. Leadership in higher education has also been widely researched over a sustained period to identify elements, practices and aspects of effective leadership (Rowley 1997; Ramsden 1998; Rantz 2002; Gibbs, Knapper & Picinnin 2006; Bryman 2007a; Bryman 2007b; Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008). In the context of this research study the broad conceptualisation of effective leadership is perceived as the ability to successfully move others toward a desired mission or goal.

There is sound evidence to suggest that emotional intelligence is a key factor in effective leadership performance and that emotionally intelligent leadership will result in highly productive and successful work organisations (Chen, Jacobs & Spencer 1998; Goleman 1998a; Cavallo & Brienza 2010). In the higher education setting there has also been research to support the importance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership (Rantz 2002; Rowley & Sherman 2003; Bryman 2004; Bryman 2007a; Scott, Coates & Anderson 2008; Bryman 2009). This research investigation examined the relevance and significance of emotional intelligence competencies and abilities for effective leadership in higher education. While literature identifies the importance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership in higher education (Hesburgh 1988; Horner 1997; Hall 2002; Anderson & Coates 2009), it does not explicitly establish how emotional intelligence is applicable for leadership. This study aimed to identify the pertinent emotional intelligence competencies and abilities and the practical applications of these for leadership in the higher education sector.

This research study also explored and endeavoured to distinguish the elements of emotional intelligence that should be developed for effective leadership in higher education. Emotional intelligence training and development programmes are escalating in popularity and employment in various work settings including higher education. However, there is little empirical evidence to verify that these development programmes are in fact resulting in

sustainable emotional intelligence competencies and/or abilities transpiring in practice. Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2008) stress that the success of development initiatives in higher education rely on the programme content being relevant to “how leadership practice actually occurs within universities” (2008, p70). An intention of this study was to conduct an indepth examination of the relevance of emotional intelligence for effective leadership practice in higher education, thereby leading to the elucidation of emotional intelligence competencies and/or abilities that are relevant and as such should be developed for leadership in a higher education context. A subsequent aim from this examination was to establish a framework for developing emotional intelligence for leadership in a higher education context.

This research project examined various strategies for developing emotional intelligence for leadership in a higher education context. While there has been significant progress in regard to the development of leadership in higher education there are few if any programmes available that address how emotional intelligence for leadership in higher education can best be developed. The Australian Government through the Australian Learning and Teaching Council<sup>1</sup> (ALTC) provided incentives for universities to examine and explore how leadership in higher education can be enhanced. Initiatives targeting leadership and leadership development were funded through the ALTC ‘Leadership for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Program’ (LELT) <<http://www.altc.edu.au/grants-funding-available#leadership-program>>. The instigation of this programme and the commitment to it by the Australian Government, in the provision of substantial funding, acknowledges the importance and need for leadership development in higher education. A leadership capacity development programme that was a component of an ALTC, LELT project was the basis for investigating leadership capacity development strategies in this research study. The ensuing aim of this investigation was to identify effectual strategies that would be of greatest benefit and most relevant for developing emotional intelligence for leadership in a higher education context.

Finally this research study explored the relevance and interrelationships between job satisfaction, emotional intelligence and effective leadership. Theorists have highlighted the fact that leaders’ emotional intelligence can impact on job satisfaction and job performance (Bachman et al. 2000; Gardner & Stough 2002; Wong & Law 2002; Prati et al. 2003). Embracing this assertion, this study examined whether there was any significance or interrelationship between job satisfaction, emotional intelligence and effective leadership. The aim of this examination was to identify and explain the significance and interrelationships, if any, between job satisfaction, emotional intelligence and leadership practice for overall effective leadership in a higher education context.