Women in leadership program 1993: shaping the culture

Catriona Pyner

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SHAPING THE CULTURE

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM 1993

Catziona Pyner

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About the Author

Catriona Pyner has worked in the field of EEO for the past 10 years with a particular interest in the structural impediments to equity organisations. Since leaving a position as Director of Equal Employment Opportunity in a Commonwealth department in 1989, Catriona has worked as a consultant in EEO, discrimination and equitable work organisation. Catriona is currently completing a part-time Law degree specialising in Human Rights and Discrimination Law and Feminist Jurisprudence.

Acknowledgements

The Women in Leadership Program is an exciting development initiative that over a two year period has contributed to a shift in attitudes towards leadership and the role of women in organisations.

Through the generous funding support of the Commonwealth Staff Development Fund, the goodwill of staff and the commitment of women, Edith Cowan University has been able to develop both a Conceptual Framework and development process for achieving organisational change.

Hopefully, the Women in Leadership Program will provide direction and a path for others who are seeking to build equitable and productive workplaces.

Jacquie Hutchinson
Deputy Director
Division of Human Resource Management
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In discussing Women in Leadership one member of the Management Group sometimes used the term “Program”, and sometimes “Project”. This was not a mere slip of the tongue. One useful way to conceptualise “Women in Leadership” is as a Project - which seeks to strategically engage with a changing institution, and which is both organic and structured. Part of the Project structure is the Program. The Program is made up of three formal elements: The Collegial Groups; the Public Lecture Series and the National Conference.

And yet, part of the Purpose of the Program is to engage with, shape and respond to changes in the structure and culture of Edith Cowan University - so the distinction is no more than arbitrary.

In this report, “Program” refers to the three formal elements; “Project” refers to the wider elements - “Women in Leadership” is used to denote the Program in the context of the wider elements.

Undertaking an evaluation for a client with a “successful” program should have been the easiest of evaluation tasks. Grappling with the parameters of the “Program”, and clearly characterising what the “Project” is, made the task more complex.

Evaluation of a program as innovative as Women in Leadership has raised challenges to the standard criteria of what constitutes evaluation. An evaluation which simply tests the extent to which the Program has met its objectives, as set out in the Funding Application (see Appendix 1), would exclude or marginalise much of what Women in Leadership is “about”.

Over the course of this evaluation, it became clear that the crucial element of Women in Leadership is the paradigm of leadership upon which the Project is based. This raises challenges for identifying specific evaluation criteria. How to evaluate a paradigm, or a Project such as Women in Leadership, which is directed at long term cultural change? Further, in an institution undergoing rapid changes, causalities are difficult to untangle.

The extent to which Women in Leadership is the causal factor in the discernible changes in the structure and culture of Edith Cowan University is and will continue to be debated. This debate encourages reflection about the structure of Edith Cowan University and is in itself a catalyst for change. This is a relevant evaluative criterion, given the long term nature of the Project.
In addition to meeting evaluation obligations to the external funding body (Commonwealth Staff Development Fund), this evaluation has a second function. It also seeks to explain the nature of the Women in Leadership Project, and the paradigm upon which it is based, and to make this information available to non-participants at Edith Cowan University, as well as people from other institutions.

Many people have heard that there are exciting things going on at Edith Cowan University - but are unclear as to precisely what “it” is, that is going on. Amongst senior staff, including the Vice Chancellor, participants, facilitators, and the Management Group there is strong acceptance that “it” is a successful Project. Clarifying - characterising - what “it” is, has proved to be more elusive than documenting approval. “It” is different things to different people.

“it” is, in part, like a staff development program; an EEO program; a corporate strategic plan; an organisation development program; a women’s support group, and a grass roots “movement” - there are recognisable elements of each of these in Women in Leadership. (Indeed, one could evaluate the Project as if it were an EEO or a staff development program, an organisation development or a corporate plan, with positive results.)

One thing, it is NOT however, is a grab bag - a smorgasbord of ideas (or competencies, or activities) based on differing assumptions and frameworks. The Program was planned with a deliberate strategy to go beyond superficial understandings of competency and leadership, and to develop deeper understandings of “leadership”.

To simply state the purpose; to say baldly that “it” is a program “to enable women to claim their place at Edith Cowan University and play a role in its future by shaping its structures and culture in ways which will recognise and rewards women’s contribution” glosses over much of the complexity and innovation in the Conceptual Framework, the design and strategic insights that have contributed to success (and travails) of managing the Project.

To reflect on the purpose of the Project - and to identify evidence that the purpose has in part been met: - that women have begun to claim their place, and have indeed played a significant role in shaping the emerging structure and culture of Edith Cowan University is to gain an insight into something much more exciting than a staff development program.

The Project could also be described as a rigorous piece of action research, as the test of the application of new theoretical understandings - a new paradigm. The unusual features of the planning, design, content, processes, and management of the Project are directly attributable to the application of a paradigm that provides new understandings of leadership in institutions.

Leadership” is thought of as a behaviour which makes a real difference to the operation of the institution in ways which support the interests of the institution, its staff and clients/customers. Such leadership is needed in all areas, and at all levels of any institution. The Women in Leadership Project offers a way of reconfiguring leadership, esteem and status so that all who contribute to “leadership” can be recognised.

This is done through a set of processes that taps existing skills, and develops relevant skills to address issues and develop strategies for the mutual benefit of staff and the institution - any institution.

In the context of tight resources, and of the need for Edith Cowan University, as a young university, to establish selected research strengths at a nationally recognised level, Women in Leadership provides a framework that is assisting, and will continue to assist this institutional endeavour.

In the context of some questioning of the effectiveness of current understandings of management and leadership, and of management education/training to meet the needs of a restructuring economy, Edith Cowan University is well placed to demonstrate leadership in a significant field of study.
The evaluation was based on information gathered in the following ways:

- analysis of documentation of the Women in Leadership Program administration;
- interviews with planners, organisers and facilitators of the Program;
- interviews with Program participants;
- observation of some elements of the Program;
- analysis of internal evaluation of the program;
- interviews with senior academic and administrative staff of the university; and, last but not least,
- shooting the breeze with participants and the women who developed the Conceptual Framework.

This evaluation is at best a “snapshot” of the project in December 1993. It was somewhat different at the beginning of 1993, and will be different again by the time this report is ready for printing. That in itself is an evaluative indicator - an essential element of leadership is shaping and responding appropriately to changing environments. In order to explain the Project, this evaluation addresses elements of the Project from its inception. This is necessary to explain the cumulative changes in the University and the Project.

This report draws heavily on the experiences of Project participants - without their “voice”, the report cannot adequately convey the linkages between the personal and the organisational - a crucial element in the success of Women in Leadership. The Report also draws on the views of senior staff, who are increasingly part of the Project.

This report includes observations and personal insights which provide “voice illustrations” to the evaluation report text. In this way, the evaluation report itself is structured to provide layers of understanding, and reflect the links between the personal and organisational which is an important aspect of the leadership paradigm. These illustrations are drawn from interviews, written and taped materials.

The seamlessness of the conceptualisation of the Capacities for Leadership Framework and the design, implementation and management of Women in Leadership has made the task of selecting the boundaries for categories and chapters, (which made sense when developing a brief), extremely problematic. A linear narrative is barely able to contain the facets and dimensions of Women in Leadership.

There are, therefore, numerous cross-references enabling the reader to read different “slices” of the narrative. As one member of the Management Group commented: ‘the Project is like a rock - you can take a slice and examine that: each slice tells you a lot about that slice, but not necessarily a lot about the whole - the slice may have missed a fascinating seam’.
1 BACKGROUND

The Women in Leadership Program drew much of its initial momentum from the anger and the alienation of women at Edith Cowan University. Many women in the institution felt that for too long they had been excluded from leadership and decision making.

Many institutions have responded to the reality of the alienation of women workers by initiating programs providing “personal coping and assertiveness skills”. In the short term, such programs do provide participants with useful and therapeutic support. To know, and name forms of alienation at least helps maintain a sense of sanity.

Over the longer term, the therapeutic value must decline: without analysis of the organisational context, precisely what one should be assertive about is hazy at best. Organisational issues that are clearly political and structural are (assertively) raised - in personal terms. This tends to reinforce stereotypes of a presumed “lack of objectivity” in women. This in turn can increase the perceived need for more personal coping skills... From an institutional point of view, the potential contribution of skills and leadership of women workers remain untapped.

This kind of model has been characterised by author Naomi Wolf in Fire with Fire as “Victim Feminism”. (One Management Group member identified the participants of the initial Collegial Groups as women “wanting to get out of the victim rut”). Indeed, much of the Women in Leadership Project anticipates Wolf's critique of “victim feminism”.

The purpose of Women in Leadership is a clear rejection of “supportively sharing” personal alienation, or victim status, and, unlike traditional women's support groups, provides a unambiguous focus as to what women workers must be assertive about: to enable women to claim their place at Edith Cowan University and play a role in its future by shaping its structures and culture in ways which will recognise and reward women's contribution.

Implicit in this purpose is a strong sense of entitlement; a “place” to be claimed - not simply because women have been excluded from leadership, but because as workers, the structure and culture of Edith Cowan University is as much “theirs” to contribute to, and gain recognition from as anyone else's.

The clarity of this sense of entitlement to contribute; and an eschewing of merely coping with an alienating workplace is deeply embedded in the four categories of leadership capacities.

Figure 1.1.1

Conceptual Framework ©

Societal Context

UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

CREATOR OF ENVIRONMENTS

COMPETENT SELF

STRATEGIST

PUBLIC VOICE

Dimensions of Leadership
### Framework of Leadership Capacities

#### Capacities relating to being a STRATEGIST
- Understanding the existing power structures
- Having a clear vision of a desired future
- Knowing the organisation's procedures, policies, and committees
- Analysing the organisational culture
- Recognising potential allies and enemies
- Understanding organisational resource use: funding, equipment, human resource policies
- Understanding costing: personal, human, financial
- Valuing risk taking, collegiality, patience
- Making choices and decisions
- Conflict resolution and negotiation
- Managing discomfort and vulnerability
- Knowing your limitations
  - Strategic planning
  - Debating skills
  - Communication skills
  - Cultivating mentors

#### Capacities relating to having a PUBLIC VOICE
- Documenting achievements and views
- Understanding the use of language
  - Making recommendations
- Understanding media and mediums
  - Understanding the audience
  - Understanding when to speak and when to be silent
- Using enquiry, putting views, negotiating
- Representation: political, academic, and organisational
- Knowing appropriate forms of communication
- Public speaking, debating and marketing skills
  - Valuing courage, sincerity, persistence
  - Capacity to summarise
  - Knowing your own image
  - Forming alliances

#### Capacities relating to being a WORK AND IDENTITY COMPETENCE
- Developing competence in scholarship, teaching and community service, research
- Knowledge of industrial awards, organisational structures, funding structures, government policies
- Understanding the impact of technology, political and academic changes
- Understanding policies impacting on the institution, such as restructuring, performance management, enterprise bargaining
  - Delegating
  - Facilitating

#### Capacities relating to being a CREATOR OF ENVIRONMENTS
- Knowing the history of the organisation
- Shaping departmental structures and culture
  - Setting up a learning environment
  - Managing change, making a difference
  - Collaboration and cooperation
- Valuing the capacity to take responsibility, the capacity to take risks
- Maintaining personal, moral and ethical standards
  - Time management
  - Mobilising resources
  - Team building
  - Valuing mutual respect
1.2 GENESIS

Over the course of a year, five women workers at Edith Cowan University formed an initially ad hoc core of a planning group. This group consulted with and drew on the expertise and contributions of others, both on and off campus. This group was formalised as a Management Group in July 1991. The Management Group comprised women who held positions of authority within the University, women who were perceived as credible with other women, women who could exercise political influence, women who would bring particular knowledge and women who would be committed to the long term process.

The Conceptual Framework was first fully articulated at an intensive, two day workshop. This workshop included two external consultants who have been closely involved with the implementation of the Project itself.

The diversity of backgrounds of the core planning group ensured a strong multidisciplinary approach to the development of the Conceptual Framework. Perhaps of critical importance is that Management Group members are from academic and administrative backgrounds, and that the consultants have interests in personal development as well as experience in organisational change programs. From discussions with members of the Management Group, a set of shared assumptions emerge which inform the Leadership Framework:

- day to day "leadership" in an organisation is more than a set of theoretical personal traits, it is a workplace practice - a behaviour.
- "leadership" and "contribution" have no lockstep relationship to formal position within the hierarchy;
- workers, (male and female), are "whole" people who are not stripped of concerns of family, self, gender/race identities etc as they enter their workplace - i.e.; that the personal and the organisational are inextricably linked;
- there is an under-utilised and unrecognised body of tacit knowledge in all workers acquired through formal education and personal experience;
- leadership does involve an exercise of power;
- making a real difference in the working lives of women (and workers more generally) requires changes to the structure and culture of the organisation; and,
- any training/development activities for women should deliberately avoid a "deficit model".

None of these assumptions are exceptional in themselves. It is the degree to which such assumptions are embedded in the Conceptual Framework which has allowed this Framework of Leadership Capacities to offer new understandings.

The four overlapping Categories are framed in terms of "Capacities" rather than personal traits - making the perceived potential to acquire (or to accept that one already has) such capacities, less threatening to workers en-culturated to deny their "natural" capability to lead and/or exercise power.

For example, "Managing discomfort and vulnerability" is, in most people's experience, an essential capacity in being an effective strategist - but is rarely acknowledged in mainstream (malestream) management texts. Nor are discomfort and vulnerability much described as something which can be "managed". (Such silence is the source of the "heat in the kitchen" rhetoric which has served to deny many women the "choice" to seek positions of power.)

The Framework of Leadership Capacities can, at one level, be seen as turning the "problems" of all alienated workers (but for all the well known reasons, particularly women as a group) - on their head. For example, the "problem" and reality of feeling oneself to be silenced is turned into Capacities relating to having a Public Voice.

The Conceptual Framework then, is based on a sense of entitlement, and a commitment to contributing to a workplace that is "owned" by all workers, and to gaining recognition for real contributions that are being made.

The Framework, is informed by gender research, and change management theory; as well as knowledge of theories informing social movements. Equally important, there was, without a diminution of intellectual rigour, a willingness to be reflective and rely on (and value) personal experience as workers, and intuition - rather than narrow texts.

The Framework offers insights into a socially constructed reality in which women's voices are not "grafted" onto existing understandings, but are an integral part of a new paradigm.
1.3 LINKING THE PERSONAL AND THE ORGANISATIONAL

Many texts list “Leadership Qualities” under headings such as “Skills”, “Competencies” and “Values”. (Some even address the “tensions” between these “qualities”). The Conceptual Framework of the Women in Leadership Project is built upon a recognition that, in large part, the practice of leadership is fundamentally “about”:

- behaviour that makes a real difference to the operation of the institution in ways which support the interests of the institution, its staff and students.
- one’s personal self in the workplace;
- “connecting” the individual worker to the organisation - for mutual benefit;
- personal and ethical as well as positional rights and obligations.

The capacities in this paradigm cut across “skills”, “competencies” and “values”. The capacities listed under each of the four Categories have a strong resonance for readers, because of this blend of personal and organisational capacities.

One test of a theoretical framework is the extent to which the theory can describe the real world (as opposed to the ideal or normative); the explanatory power of the framework, and the extent to which the framework can be applied in real world situations. For women as a group, much of what can be termed “management theory” does not get past first base. The world described is not a world with which there can be a close identity. It is a world where the personal self is subordinated.

The Leadership Framework includes and reflects a more “real” version of the reality of women’s (and men’s) lives. The Framework resolves many of the ambiguities surrounding the idea of “leadership” and women’s relationship with “power”. For women who have personal conflicts about seeking or being in positions of power, there is a clear message that one can learn to manage this ambiguity, and, that one does not have to fully resolve it before one can “be” a leader. The Framework, by it’s very characterisation of leadership, “permits” women to see themselves as leaders despite the ambiguities all leaders feel to some degree. This kind of insight can lead to a change of consciousness: it “undoes” the constraints of enculturation.

It is this changed consciousness that can encourage women to apply for promotions etc. There are many studies which show that women who apply for senior positions have a good success rate. It is the relative shortage of applications (as well as discrimination) which make outcomes so gloomy.

Further, there is now increasing evidence that many men prefer to work in a work-culture that could be termed “EEO friendly”. Also there is increasing evidence that innovation flourishes in institutions with open, flexible working arrangements where difference is valued.

This linking of the personal and the organisational is fundamental to the strength of the paradigm, and the success of the Program - and of the Project. Because the Framework explicitly addresses the lived experience, and gives legitimacy to the subjective experience of workers in their workplace, it balances the recognition that workers are people, with the recognition that people are workers. For women, the Framework is empowering by the very fact that it is based on perspectives that recognise that women are workers and people - and leaders too: by recognising and legitimating leadership qualities that might otherwise be dismissed as “female characteristics”.

This linkage is the conceptual “bridge” between personal growth programs (which focus on people) and programs which offer a smorgasbord of discrete competencies (which focus on workers knowledge-based on institutional needs) and which neutralise participants in terms of their workplace. It is reflected in, and reinforces the practice, processes, management and outcomes of the Project.

For example: a word frequently used by Program participants in describing what they got out of their participation is “permission”. If notions of vulnerability, or how one feels about being seen as powerful are part of what developing capacities of leadership are “about”; there is a strong sense of “permission” to raise these issues.

Equally, since the raising of these personal issues is grounded in the framework of organisational leadership, facilitators have “permission” to encourage participants to find productive ways of working through personal feelings and come up with strategic institutional responses, without participants feeling that important concerns have been cut off.
For the Management Group also, a conscious decision to model its own operation within the framework gave "permission" and legitimacy to "shooting the breeze", which was clearly a sustaining element in on-going project management. (See Section 4).

This sense of "permission" and entitlement has been a powerful force in "enabling women to claim their place at Edith Cowan University", as well as shaping the nature of the Conference and Public Lecture Series.

The easy flow between personal and organisational - one being the conscious context for the other, is a feature of discussions with and between women involved in the project - it is a feature of the culture and environment they have created. (It is also one of the challenges the Project presents to Edith Cowan University - See Section 7).

This easy flow did not just happen - moving from a state of dis-ease in linking the personal and the organisational requires confronting one's identity as a person and as a worker, as well as in organisational terms, and an analysis of the nature of language, institutions and leadership. It is one of the key outcomes of the Collegial Groups and an important evaluative criterion. It is the concrete manifestation of the environment that has been created.

The Framework avoids the "questions" of how to "teach" women to be effective leaders in existing structures, which is perceived by many women as having to choose between conforming to masculine norms or being their selves. It asks far more fundamental questions - what would an institution look like or be like, what would it be if it accommodated, indeed celebrated difference?

We are all conscious of working positively with difference, rather than negatively which excludes people. We work to hold everybody in the group and support the purpose. In the same way we work to get alongside the organisation rather than being in opposition to it. (Facilitator).
Evaluating a Program is relatively straightforward. Outputs, impacts and outcomes can be identified to answer the “simple” question: how well has the program solved the problems or met the needs it was set up to do? There are a number of program evaluation models that can be used.

Once it became clear that it is not so much the Program components, but the Capacities of Leadership Framework that best “explains” the concrete successes of the Project, the question becomes more complex. At the same time, it becomes clear that it is crucial that the evaluation does not proceed as if the Project is an EEO, staff development program, or a change management strategy etc. For, while the Project is observably like these, it is informed by a quite different paradigm.

The challenge in evaluating Women in Leadership is the need to evaluate a Project in a way which is informed by the Women in Leadership paradigm, and yet is comprehensible to those who approach this evaluation from the perspective of other paradigms.

This evaluation addresses the priority of explaining the Framework, and stimulating debate for establishing relevant and appropriate evaluation criteria over time.

The Project necessarily is one that will take much longer than this evaluation period (1993), or the life of the Project to date.

Nor is it not possible to compare this program with other similar programs, because Women in Leadership is the only Program informed by this Framework - there are no similar programs, and a detailed “compare and contrast” of theoretical frameworks is beyond the scope of this brief.

This evaluation then, can only be an interim evaluation. It identifies the concrete outcomes of the Project to date but cannot provide a clear evaluation of the degree to which the Project has met its purpose. As in any organisation, change is happening in any case. What Women in Leadership has done is initiate debate, initially within Edith Cowan University, but increasingly more widely.

The purpose of Women in Leadership is directed at cultural as well as structural change. The “culture” of an organisation is related to how it is experienced, subjectively as well as objectively. The widespread belief that the Project is successful is a function of the “objective” data (such as the numbers attending the Conference) as well as the more subjective perceptions (such as the preparedness of senior staff to acknowledge that they have changed their views on the benefits of a “women only” Program).
3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Women in Leadership Program can be described as the vehicle for the wider Project. The analogy of a benign Trojan Horse springs to mind. Once the superficially innocuous “Staff Development Program for Women” was brought into the university, the contents were revealed not as vengeful foot soldiers, but as women with more than just a few clues as to how to improve the workplace for all - and how to contribute to the long term development of Edith Cowan University.

As with all aspects of the Project, the formal elements of the Program operate on a number of levels, and are the product of, and serve to reinforce a deeper understanding of the Capacities of Leadership Framework.

For example, issues raised in the Collegial Groups are amplified and clarified by the National Conference and Public Lecture Series, which exemplify the Public Voice element of the Framework. In turn, issues raised at the Conference and Public Lecture Series provide input for, and shape the agenda for the ongoing project.

The speakers at both the Public Lecture Series and the Conference draw on and reinforce a depth of understanding of the Capacities of Leadership Framework. As well as benefits for the audience and Program participants, the context and nature of the Public Lecture Series and the Conference create an environment that gives “permission” to speakers to test out ideas, and present material that could be seen as risky in other forums. This enhances the place of the National Conference and Public Lecture Series at the cutting edge of feminist, organisational and leadership research.

The National Conference and Public Lecture Series provide the means for personal contact with experts in the fields of feminist research and leadership around Australia and overseas. This provides, in the western world’s most isolated capital city, a strong (and strategic) impetus for the intellectual work of the project - to deepen understandings of women’s leadership capacity, and of leadership in institutions.

3.2 THE PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

This is the most public and high profile of the Program elements. From its large and receptive audience from academic, public sector and corporate communities, a great deal of interest has been engendered in Women in Leadership. Edith Cowan University is now regularly approached for advice in setting up similar programs in a range of settings.

Through its significant contribution to the profile of Edith Cowan University, the Program itself has demonstrated leadership by providing a Public Lecture Series which has a high profile and reputation in WA. The Public Lecture Series is one of the most successful community education activities offered by Edith Cowan University, and supports and stimulates debate in an important area of concern. The Women in Leadership Public Lecture Series is a strong public voice for both the Project - and Edith Cowan University.
The profile of the Program and Edith Cowan University is further enhanced by the National Conference which can attract internationally renowned speakers from overseas, and a large audience from across Australia. The Conference Women’s Voices: Challenging for the Future provided a wide range of Keynote Speakers with parallel paper presentations and workshops as well as Focus Groups. (See Appendix 3)

The Focus Groups in particular provided participants with an opportunity to discuss keynote addresses, providing the “space” to deepen their understanding of issues raised, and to develop effective networking structures. It was an effective means of ensuring reflection and a sense of inclusiveness, which meant that less vocal participants could find their own voice to link the issues to their own working and personal lives.

The atmosphere at the Conference reflected the care that had been taken to structure a participative and interactive forum. It was productive in a professional sense as well as being enjoyable and rewarding at a personal level. There was a strong sense of solidarity and purposefulness.

At another level, women at Edith Cowan University, and Collegial Group participants in particular, can legitimately add to their curricula vitae. The Conference provided women within the University the opportunity to develop and present papers and workshops around their research and areas of interest. Surprisingly, many women within Edith Cowan had never presented at a conference and for academics this is a necessary way of establishing their credibility.

Collegial Group members in Administration participated fully in planning the content of the Public Lecture Series and Conference, took part in Workshop presentations, and demonstrated competencies and skills in the significant work of conference organisation. Planning, strategic management and decision-making skills and capacities that staff already had were recognised and further developed “on-the-job”.
While Collegial Groups are one of the three elements of the formal Program, they need rather more description and explanation than either the National Conference or the Public Lecture Series. The Collegial Groups are the core of the Program - particularly from the point of view of the participants.

To claim the term “collegial” in a university setting has a certain irony. The term “collegiality” associated with universities suggests democratic processes where everyone is enfranchised. This was not the case at Edith Cowan where the perspectives of women who make up more than 50% of the staff and student body were largely excluded from decision-making.

Many participants give feedback on Collegial Groups as if they were traditional Women’s Support Groups. That is, the feedback is highly personal. And why not? - the Groups have given some women life-changing experiences. The purposefulness established by the Program’s close linkage of the personal and the organisational means that as “support groups”, the Collegial Groups are highly effective.

They are perceived by some non-participants within Edith Cowan University, and by some people interested in getting a better understanding of the Project, as being almost magical. This is in part, because some participants do appear transformed, and in part because among Collegial Group participants, there is a care not to speak “for” Groups other than their own, which can add to a perception of mystery.

It is clear that the various Groups worked in quite different ways - the details of the content and process arising in an organic way to meet the personal and work-situational needs of participants.

And yet, there is a clear structure to the facilitation process. This section therefore is, in part an attempt to demystify Collegial Groups, for, at one level, Collegial Groups are no more than a specific form of group work.

The Collegial Groups Program has three objectives:

1. For individual women to identify and develop those technical and personal skills and knowledge required in academic leadership roles.

2. For each participating collegial group to identify organisational change strategies that will more effectively include women in the decision-making process.

3. To build a strong and enduring network which will be a continuing source of support for participants and which will assist them to develop to their full potential as academic leaders.

Collegial Groups were initially developed as a model of staff development for people in “like” jobs. At Edith Cowan, the groups are “collegial” by virtue of the participants being women, who work in a particular institution, and who have common workplace issues that need to be addressed.

What makes this specific form of group work particularly appropriate for the Project is its groundedness in the workplace, and the way in which the processes strongly support the linkages between the personal and the organisational. The Collegial Groups processes therefore, draw on, demonstrate, explicate and reinforce the Framework of Leadership Capacities.

The Collegial Groups model explicitly rejects working from any sort of “deficit model”. There is no sense of a fixed curriculum, or that there is a need for remedial training. The focus is on developing skills and re-naming/claiming skills which the participants already have, which reinforces the sense of entitlement and encourages a purposeful and strategic approach to problem solving.

_I was initially suspicious about the motives - I did not want a shot of “organisational B12”, or to be motivated to become a “happy worker”. What I got was permission to be a mature resister. It has helped me to conceptualise what I think the organisation is all about. I can challenge practices that wound me, and some of my colleagues, both men and women, and ultimately wound the organisation._ (Collegial Group participant)

The specific problem “is” the Purpose. How to:

**enable women to claim their place at Edith Cowan University and play a role in its future by shaping its structures and culture in ways which will recognise and rewards women’s contribution?**

In order to start this large task, to create an environment that is more amenable to women workers, women needed to develop a much greater understanding of their organisation. The Collegial Groups seek to make the organisation more accessible to each group member.

The technical, economic and industrial environments were made more accessible by providing avenues for seeking knowledge, facilitating networking, providing encouragement, allowing the practice of new skills and encouraging reflection.

By developing their own skills members learn of new possibilities for themselves and their roles within Edith Cowan University. For example; the participative development of the strategy to run the Public Lecture Series as a means of providing a Public Voice - and running it so successfully that it would have ongoing institutional support, is a direct outcome of Collegial Group processes reinforcing the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*.

Group members “learn” that there is nothing magic in “strategic planning” - it is no more than a specific form of skills (with its own language forms) which members already have to a large degree. Further they “learn” that contribution to strategic planning does not necessarily imply that personal responses to planning outcomes are proscribed or irrelevant.

While only some Collegial Group members may have then gone on to further study of strategic planning texts, all are better equipped to participate in strategic planning within their own work area.

Further, those who do become involved in an institutional strategic planning exercise can bring up issues in the Collegial Group meetings, or, informally through the mentoring network that is part of the Collegial Group structure. This network operates across faculties, and between academic and general staff, so that work-based issues gain input from a wide cross-section of the University.

The process is, in effect, a means of consultative decision-making - albeit informal. New work identity and competencies arise out of the practical strategies developed in finding a public voice and creating an environment where all women worker’s public voices are heard.

The Collegial model is highly interactive and acknowledges that everyone has a largely under-utilised and unrecognised body of tacit knowledge acquired through both formal education and personal experience. This knowledge is “uncovered” and shared, and is critical in the group developing their own agenda, and strategies. One feature of the model as developed in the *Women in Leadership Program* is the focus on language and the politics of talk.

The *Politics of Talk*: Any time you speak in a group, it is an act of politics - you take up some time, you have some influence over the topic which can set the stage. Speaking out can evoke emotions that range from shame to joy - to any number of things that remain relatively unclaimed. Part of the discipline of the facilitator is to understand this and support people in working through this. In a well facilitated group we are sharing the time more democratically, supporting an interdependence between people. (Facilitator).

The initial two day workshop of Collegial group members is a crucial part of the Program. It is in this two day workshop that participants develop a sense of “collegiality” - the insight that, irrespective of their position within Edith Cowan University, there are issues that women workers have in common. And, that solutions are possible.

The initial two day workshop is also the foundation of learning how the groups will operate consistent with the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*. For many women workers; to actually be listened to, to find that women can disagree or defend positions without being personally disapproved of; to find that disagreement is not necessarily personally wounding, and that it is OK for women to have diverse views; to explicitly discuss the “politics of talk” - and to participate in setting up processes and structures that will build trust and enable the group to move through initial dis-ease, is a confronting experience.
I did find the first two days threatening, but the structure helped - and from then on it was just challenging and exhausting, but not threatening. (Collegial Group participant).

In the workplace, as in all spheres of life, structure is something into which women have attempted (and been expected) to "fit". The idea that the workplace can be structured to become more humane and congenial for women (as well as men) can initially seem fantastically beyond reach. The idea that women can actually take the lead in such an exercise can initially seem even more remote.

So, the process can arouse conflict, but it also provides the structure for the personal trust and commitment to "get through" the conflict, and makes the strategic institutional outcomes possible. Group members provide support in strategic planning of a more personal nature as well - developing strategies of career planning, or support in applying for a particular position etc. It may be supporting a decision that it is appropriate, at this point in one's life, not to apply for a particular position - without a loss of esteem, and support in resisting the presumption that one lacks ambition. These are fundamental to the linking of the personal and the organisational.

Issues and themes for the ongoing meetings are formulated at the initial workshop, the agenda being shaped by the particular mix of issues raised during the two days. Each group consists of 10 - 12 members and a trained facilitator, who meet over a semester for half to one-day blocks of time. As with the two day workshops, continuity of attendance is a key factor in successful outcomes.

The facilitation of the Collegial Groups is absolutely critical. A clear distinction is made between facilitation and training. The facilitator is not there to provide solutions, rather the task is to support and hold the group to its purpose.

What the facilitators do is help people find their way. Most people know where they want to get to, the sort of direction they want to set. (Management Group Member).

The facilitators help the groups define issues, and find the means to resolve them by implementing processes and introducing some content to establish and maintain the learning environment.

In 1992, the groups were facilitated by outside consultants who had been closely involved in the development of the Capacities of Leadership Framework. In 1993, graduates from the 1992 Program were offered facilitation training. Five women completed this training and four have co-facilitated the 1993 Collegial Groups Program, with continuing support and advice from the original facilitators. (See App 2).

Collegial Groups then, operate at a number of levels. Firstly, they provide a space where women can create their own environment, provide mutual support and test and develop understandings of the nature of Leadership, and their own Leadership capacities. Secondly, Collegial Groups provide a supportive and effective base from which to tackle issues of the institutional environment.

Unless the facilitators are effective, the group may not extend its boundaries - it will remain comfortable and safe. (Management Group Member).

Thirdly Collegial Groups offer Edith Cowan University (and other institutions) a model of a way of operating, a consciousness of process, which has a proven "track record" of strategic planning, staff and organisation development.

Versions of Collegial Groups have also been run within Edith Cowan University as the Middle Management Program, and the Chairpersons Group (both mixed-gender groups) - as well as for another institution, and in a quite different setting. The specific processes and content can be tailored to the purpose of the Groups. (See Section 5, Potential For Sharing With Other Institutions.)

Two Women in Leadership Collegial Group members also participated in the Middle Management Program, which included women and men. It was noted that the Middle Management Group generally was "more task oriented" and that the initial two-day workshop had "less impact" than for the Women in Leadership Program. What makes the groups "collegial", particularly in respect of the personal self obviously changes in mixed sex groups. (See Section 7. Contradictions and Challenges).
INTRODUCTION

One measure of the success of the management of the Project is the extent to which a Program with such a radically subversive purpose (in a non-pejorative sense) is now embraced by key senior staff as “part of the wider organisational change process”.

Further, the Program was described by one senior staff member as “not a compromise - but somehow catching the middle ground”. Another observed that the women involved in the project were “not aggressive” despite initial fears that it would be a “rabid women’s group”.

CHAPTER FOUR

Women in Leadership is orientated to getting things done without a lot of jumping up and down. (Male senior staff member).

A year ago I did think a women’s only group was divisive. Women in Leadership is not a refuge for women to scurry back to for support, it is not a retreat, it is a base from which they come out from. I find that now I am conscious of gender representation in meetings. (Male Senior staff member).

The leadership role of the Management Group in effecting cultural change in Edith Cowan University is highlighted when one takes the institutional context into account. The project started in the context of some hostility to the idea that a “real” university could be successful if it were to be “saddled” with the name of a woman. The Project played a significant role in partly (indeed mostly) turning that view around.

Dr Brennan’s keynote address was very powerful. Women do not occupy a symbolic leadership role. I’d never seen that before. (Male senior staff member).

Edith Cowan University has no history of professional administration. Women in Leadership has assisted in the task of redefining roles and professionalising administration. (Male senior staff member).

CAPACITIES OF LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

The management of the Project strongly reflects the Capacities of Leadership Framework both in terms of the paradigm and the implementation processes that flow from this. In discussing the Project with Management Group members, it is difficult to separate the intellectual work of deepening understandings of the Framework from the implementation work of the Project. Women in Leadership has been based on strategically creating an environment in which women’s public voices are heard, and in which the meanings of the language used to debate “leadership” itself incorporates female as well as male perspectives. One of the planned issues to be raised in the next stage is to address the issue of the meanings attached to “research”.

One example of how the paradigm informs the management of the Project is the way in which opportunities were created so that women can demonstrate leadership. Labour market segmentation means that women have less opportunity to demonstrate leadership because their formal positions are “not senior enough”. By taking on the organising of the Conference and Lecture Series, women get to do something for themselves - and to create opportunities denied them in the formal structure.

For the Management Group, and for participants, there have, of course, been defeats as well as victories - there is no magic in the process. For example; the Collegial Group based at the Bunbury Campus was not as effective as those in metropolitan Perth. Distance led to some compromise of the process. The Framework has been consciously drawn on to analyse - and learn from - these less successful parts of the Program. In this way, the meaning of the terms used, and the relative importance of elements in the
Capacities of Leadership Framework have been re-analysed and emerge as shared meanings which are applicable in a wider range of settings and contingencies.

**PRACTISING WHAT THEY PREACH**

The commitment to Practising What They Preach - to ensuring that the Project is competently, strategically, and collaboratively managed is fundamental in understanding the management processes by which Women in Leadership has claimed a public voice and created an environment in which that voice can begin to flourish.

*The bottom line is we wanted to make a difference for women and that means making a different organisation.* (Management Group Member).

The management structure of the Women in Leadership Program draws on the expertise and experience of women academics and women in administration. (See Appendix 2). In the context of an institution made up of recently amalgamated parts, Edith Cowan University must benefit from the understanding of the interdependencies between academe and administration which the Project encourages.

The one planning meeting observed was not characterised by the gritted teeth "consensus at all costs" typical of many women’s support groups. Nor was there point-scoring, or deference to positional authority, typical of many institutional meetings. There was free exchange of ideas and lively debate, where the contributions of all participants were sought out - the kind of planning meetings which any institution must have to meet the challenges of the 1990's and beyond.

From the initial planning stages on, the Management Group has been committed to using a collaborative and participative management style. The modes of operating in managing the Project reflect the operation of the Collegial Groups. The Management Group members are part of the on-going Project network; as well as network facilitators and, to a large degree, “role-models” and leaders in the Project. Managing this multiplicity of roles, as well as maintaining rigour in the intellectual work has been achieved through maintaining a consciousness of the Framework - recognising that leadership involves personal as well as positional roles.

**SHOOTING THE BREEZE IS SERIOUS WORK**

One frequent characteristic of the world of work for women is a tendency to accept (or, at least to accept as problematic) the put-down, the label, of women’s gossip whenever women meet to discuss anything. The Project participants have turned this “problem” on its head by naming, claiming legitimacy for, and adding “shooting the breeze” to the lexicon of Edith Cowan University. Since the personal self is part the Framework of the Project, then constructively working through personal responses to work issues is legitimated as organisational work.

For the Management Group members, who put in enormous amounts of time, both off their “real” jobs and out of work hours to get the Program off the ground, shooting the breeze is a particularly effective means of maintaining the “space” to plan reflectively and strategically, and to consciously refer actions back to the Framework.

If one accepts a definition of one strand of post modernist “deconstruction” as celebrating “the inevitability of different perspectives rather than mourning the loss of a single absolute truth” then much of shooting the breeze is deconstruction analysis. Organisational issues are discussed and analysed from a range of perspectives - personal, feminist, mainstream (malestream).

Different perspectives of leadership, organisational change etc, (including dominant male perspectives) are seen as just that - different, and part of the mosaic of factors to be taken into account in planning how
women and Edith Cowan University can offer more to each other. There is little of a sense of blaming or defeatism; there is an openness to working effectively with male colleagues, to turn potential conflict between emerging cultures into constructive improvements for all. The politics of generosity, as one participant described it.

Enabling women to participate more fully in structuring and shaping the culture of an institution means that the perspectives of women workers are taken seriously. That is hardly likely if women themselves do not take their perspectives seriously. Shooting the Breeze is an affirmation that women’s perspectives are worth taking seriously.

People do comment on how our language has become more active. We used to say “God! What are we going to do about this?”; now we say “I need to develop a strategy to deal with this.”
(Management Group Member).

RESOURCES

Women in Leadership is the story of a Project that started, superficially as a staff development program for women, and which has become one of the six priority areas of Edith Cowan University.

One critical factor for the successful outcomes of Women in Leadership is that the external funding (Commonwealth Staff Development Fund) allowed time for the detailed theoretical and practical planning phase lasting one year.

The Program alone is a substantial undertaking with real costs as well as commitments of time and effort. The Project is also a substantial undertaking with real costs.

In addition to the substantial support from the Commonwealth Staff Development Fund, the University has provided increasing support. Ms Jacquie Hutchinson was seconded from her position as Deputy Director of Human Resource Management to undertake full-time coordination of the Program between July and December 1993. In February 1993 Ms Judy Dawes was appointed to provide full-time administrative support. (See App 2)

The facilitators for the 1993 Program are graduates from the 1992 Collegial Groups, and their “time-out” represents significant in-kind support for the Program. The Women in Leadership Project has been a Branch of the Human Resources Division since January 1 1992.

Actually costing the in-house resourcing of the Project is extremely difficult because of the successful management of the Project towards achieving its purposes. Any action taken by participants which further the purpose of the Program would need to be “counted in”. For the Management Group, there is some blurring between their formal positions and their roles in the formal management of Women in Leadership. Women who are participants in the Program are applying their skills in their roles and positions. The extent to which faculties and divisions gain benefits to offset costs is one of the challenges facing Edith Cowan University. (See Section 7. Contradictions and Challenges).
INTRODUCTION

On an initial analysis, it seemed reasonable to attribute much of the success of Women in Leadership to a unique conjuncture of people, location, time, and events:

• Edith Cowan is one of the youngest universities and oldest tertiary institutions in Australia. During the 1980's four Western Australian teachers colleges were amalgamated into WACAE. In 1991 this institution became a university: in one sense a "green fields" institution.

• There were women in key locations of the University - including Human Resource Management - and the Academic Staff Association who developed a Program, and put together a proposal for external funding.

• External consultants with unusual combinations of backgrounds and skills, contributed to the Project.

• A new Vice Chancellor, charged with creating a competitive, outward-looking University, from what had been a highly hierarchical and centralist one, gave his support to a Program he perceived to be “useful to my purposes”.

• There was a "market" in Western Australia for the Public Lecture Series and Conference.

These factors add up to a distinctly “one off” scenario, which could be seen to limit the transferability of the three elements of the Edith Cowan University Program. However, it is the Collegial Group Model, and the wider Project that has great potential for sharing with other institutions. It is the Framework - the paradigm of Leadership which has the greatest potential.

Further, this initial analysis tells only of one exercise of leadership - of creating an environment that makes a difference for the mutual benefit of one institution and workers - in this case, at Edith Cowan specifically.

To analyse the story of the Women in Leadership Project at Edith Cowan as merely serendipity, detracts from the strength of the Leadership Capacities Framework, and the strategic management of the Project. To get the Project "off the ground", the context and environment were analysed, opportunities were seized, proposals researched and argued for. In short, it was, in itself an exercise of Leadership.

For example:

• Women in Leadership won the support of the Vice Chancellor because, in his view, “it works”; and it was successful in the context of competing organisational change strategies;

• The Project was located in Human Resources Division because that was strategically the right place, providing a key bridge between administration and academe.

Women in Leadership is a story of the application of the Capacities of Leadership Framework. It tells a story of the changes in one institution that were planned, implemented and strategically managed consistent with this Framework.

There are as many stories to be told as there are institutions involved in change and restructuring. The strategies, the work and identity competencies developed, the expressions of public voice and the working environments created will be diverse, according to institutional circumstance.
**PACKAGE, PROGRAM, PROJECT OR PARADIGM?**

In concrete terms, what can be shared with other institutions is the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*, and the Collegial Groups processes. The Collegial Group Processes can be documented, and to a large extent these can be “packaged” and shared. The *Capacities of Leadership Framework* has been readily shared and is no secret.

However, the insights, experiences and strategies - i.e. the application of the *Capacities of Leadership Framework* are less concrete. *Women in Leadership* posits that cultural change in organisations occurs as a result of collective action and shared meaning. Sharing these understandings is a more complex task. What can be shared, (but less readily packaged) is a consciousness - a way of looking at and interacting with the world of work - a world of work that adequately reflects the reality of both males and females.

It is the shared meanings that arise from the constant referral back to the *Framework* which are most problematic if attempting to “package” *Women in Leadership*. The *Capacities of Leadership Framework* can be seen either as just “another list of Leadership traits” or, as the basis of a new paradigm.

**APPLICABILITY IN OTHER SETTINGS**

It is not necessary for all Collegial Group programs to have a Purpose as far-reaching as that of the Edith Cowan University *Women in Leadership Program*. For example, a *Women in Leadership Program* has been run in Australia Post. The purpose of the Australia Post *Women in Leadership Program* was to:

*Examine the nature of leadership for women within Australia Post within the context of organisational change and to identify strategies at both the individual and organisational levels necessary to include more women in management roles.*

This purpose, while more limited than that of the Edith Cowan University Program, is appropriate given the structure and culture of the organisation. However, although this program was an Affirmative Action initiative, it offers greater scope than most AA programs because of the efficacy of the Collegial Group model, and because it is based in the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*. Without the linkage to the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*, benefits would have been limited to those one might expect from an effective Staff Development Program.

What distinguishes the Australia Post Program from other staff development programs for women is that, drawing on the *Framework*, it does not take existing understandings of the nature of leadership as a “given”. The purpose explicitly links including more women in management roles to the nature of leadership.

The Collegial Group model, informed by the *Capacities of Leadership Framework*, has also been used within Edith Cowan University in other staff development activities. The Middle Management Group program includes male and female managers, and has assisted individuals - and Edith Cowan University as a whole - to deal effectively with a devolving management structure.
OUTPUT AND OUTCOMES

At the level of output, the Program has "delivered" a staff development program for 16 women, four trained facilitators, a high profile National Conference and Public Lecture Series and a proven staff development process that has been used for a Middle Management Development Program within Edith Cowan University. A Collegial Groups Program has been run with Australia Post.

The positive outcomes of the Project are indicated by the increased number of women participating in decision-making, and the interest expressed by other institutions in running the Women in Leadership Program.

Significant as these outcomes are, it is the Capacities of Leadership Framework which is the most significant achievement of Women in Leadership.

MEETING ITS PURPOSE

In short, the Project has gone a considerable way in meeting its purpose: "to enable women to claim their place at Edith Cowan University and play a role in its future by shaping its structures and culture in ways which will recognise and rewards women's contribution".

Outcomes

CHAPTER SIX

CLAIMING THEIR PLACE

Women in Leadership is now one of the six priority areas for Edith Cowan University. What the Project has achieved is to:

• initiate and contribute to a theoretical and practical debate about the nature of leadership, organisational change, and our understandings of the capacities of women to exercise leadership in organisations. These are important debates in times of significant restructuring of organisations, and of some questioning of the appropriateness of current management training,

• create an institutional environment where women have demonstrated leadership, and where there is increasing recognition that Edith Cowan University cannot flourish if the full capacities of more than half the staff are underutilised. Which, it must be acknowledged, is more than can be said for most EEO programs in organisations.

• created an environment where women can raise and address work issues without having to suppress the personal issues that are an integral part of their selves as workers.

SHAPING THE STRUCTURE

In the previous evaluation (which focused on the Collegial Groups which were operating in second semester of 1992), a number of work issues emerged. These issues are fairly common across a wide range of institutions.

Many participants reported that their participation in the Program alerted them to the need for broader institutional reform.

Key areas identified include:

• the nature and definition of merit;

• the nature and extent of support for staff development;

• the balance between teaching and research;

• the support given to staff for their responsibilities at home and work;

• the lack of collegiality and cooperation in research and teaching;

• the lack of open, participative management and administration policies and practices;

• the insensitive human resources policies;

• the unresponsive administrative practices for dealing with the regional campus; and

• the relationships between the general and academic staff.
"In airing these issues, staff became more aware of them as issues which can be tackled, no longer seeing them as institutional givens. While not claiming that they are able to bring about marked reforms, participants reported that they were able to examine and plan what they could do to assist the organisation to address them. They felt better equipped to assist and steer the organisation in these directions."4

Twelve months further into the Project, structures are being changed in ways which address the above issues:

**Merit**
- A full review of Merit and Promotion procedures is to be undertaken.
- New training programs have been developed on Merit-based Selection.
- Fifty percent of the negotiators for the new General Staff Award were women.
- Women made up more than 50% of the Hay Job Evaluation Committee members.

**Decision-making**
- Women in Leadership graduates are referred to in meetings, asked to speak, and are confident to do so.
- 18 women are included on Executive Development Forums.
- The composition of the Academic Board has been reviewed to address inclusiveness of decision-making structures.
- The Edith Cowan University Women’s Association has been formed - (Edith Cowan University WA).
- See above re decision-making with respect to Merit and work-value.

**Staff Development**
- The Middle Management Development Group is modelled on the Women in Leadership Collegial Groups, and, as well as providing concrete skills, is a symbolic acknowledgment that “middle management” is a functional role within Edith Cowan University.
- In 1993, 16 women completed the Women in Leadership Program, and have contributed to the development of the organisation as well as benefiting individually.

**Administration**
- Some administrative procedures have been devolved from the central administration and streamlined (eg; leave and travel claims).

**Collegiality**
- The project has dramatically demonstrated the power of collegiality and has significantly contributed to building bridges between general and academic staff.
- There are now 74 graduates and participants of the Program. Networks have opened up - with productive contact within and between Collegial Groups, and increasingly with others at Edith Cowan University who are not “graduates” of the Program. This Network forms the basis for consultative processes of decision-making.

**Teaching and Research**
- Policies have been developed to provide support for women doing higher degrees.

**Quality of Professional Relationships**
- Participants report greater personal and professional confidence in the way in which they relate to professional colleagues. (And see Section 4, Program Management)

**Human Resource Management**
- The Women in Leadership Program is a Unit (Special Projects) of the HRM Division and part of a newly-formed Organisational Development Branch. The Review of Merit and other issues listed above are also indications that Human Resource Management is more sensitive to equity and performance issues.

**Home and Work**
- A major study of Work and Family Responsibilities is planned for 1994.
- Paid Maternity and Family Leave provisions have been instituted.

SHAPING THE CULTURE

The ready acknowledgment by some senior staff that they have changed their perception of the utility of the Program and the appropriateness of a women’s only development program, is a clear indication of cultural change.

This is not to say that all senior staff (nor indeed all staff) have been “converted” to gender inclusiveness. It is to say that most have at least concluded that it is in their interests to support (or at least go along with) Women in Leadership. The Capacities of Leadership Framework provides a paradigm that does indeed take some of the “heat” out of “women’s issues”. The focus on positive institutional outcomes means that a burgeoning sense of entitlement is not misplaced.

RECOGNITION AND REWARD FOR CONTRIBUTION

The review of Staff Selections, the Job Evaluation exercise, devolution and restructuring all provide opportunities for increasing the recognition and reward for contribution by all staff.

The groundwork laid by the shifts in the organisational culture and new understandings of leadership will make the changing employment profile less contentious than in some other institutions where affirmative action has been introduced with less regard for the impact of organisational culture on resistance to change.

CAUSALITY AND CONCLUSIONS

The extent to which Women in Leadership caused these changes is a moot point that can be argued interminably. The fact that Women in Leadership contributed to these changes is readily accepted by most staff at Edith Cowan University. The inclusion of Women in Leadership as one of the priority areas for Edith Cowan University, and the fact that the Vice Chancellor regularly reports to Council on progress of the Project as part of the organisation development strategies are important evaluation indicators.

Participants continue to enthusiastically endorse the value - and utility of the Program, from both a personal perspective and as a worker.

The Project is directed at cultural change which can reasonably be expected to take rather longer than the life of the Program to date. However, the above outcomes provide a strong inference that cultural changes are occurring and that the Project is meeting it’s purpose.
INTRODUCTION

Like any successful organisation change program, Women in Leadership throws up challenges and contains contradictions.

A CHALLENGE TO UNDERSTANDINGS OF EEO PROGRAMS

As noted in Section 6, Outcomes, the Project started as a staff development program for women, and is now one of the key strategies for organisational change in Edith Cowan University.

In the past few years, there has been a number of reviews of discrimination/EEO legislation and implementation strategies in all Australian jurisdictions. These reviews have in part, been a response to a concern that, for all the effort being put into EEO, there is often not a lot to show for it - a critique that could have been levelled at Edith Cowan University itself prior to Women in Leadership.

While it is true that from a "traditional EEO view", numbers and percentages may not have shown dramatic changes, (see Appendix 4) - nonetheless there is an increase in the voice of women in Edith Cowan University, and there is a good prospect that this increased voice will be reflected in employment profiles over the next few years. There is a further good prospect that changing employment profiles will not be as contentious, and that such resistance and backlash as may arise will be dealt with more constructively in comparison to many other institutions.

This has been achieved by developing a paradigm that has a much more strategic and deeper understanding of Leadership and women’s capacity to exercise it. Women in Leadership has gone further than “removing barriers” and modifying structure to create a “level playing field” so that women have equal access to employment opportunities.

It raises pertinent questions about “the nature of playing fields”, and thereby implicitly challenges the “formal equality model” of the legislation, which always assumes a male comparator (equal to whom?), and which must then bring in all the sameness/difference arguments about men and women.

In Women in Leadership, “equality with men” is not the central focus - “contribution” is. By deliberately stepping away from the numbers/targets driven “EEO Management Plan/Annual Report” model which flows from the legislation, Women in Leadership creates an environment that allows equity to be seen with more subtlety than simply “winning and losing”.

But this conceptualisation does not diminish “equity” as an issue. The outcomes achieved to date indicate that Women in Leadership is making progress in achieving long term gender equity.

The Capacities of Leadership Framework offers some powerful and challenging insights into “traditional EEO models”:

• the creation of a gender inclusive cultural environment is a necessary first step in enabling women to find and take their place in their institution;
• the formal “places” women take at the end of this step are likely to be different than simply “slotting in” to existing structures. This means that women are less likely to be perceived as “taking men’s jobs” as well as locating all positions in a more humane structure;


6. For further discussion on the ‘formal equality model’, see Regina Graycar & Jenny Morgan; The Hidden Gender of Law, Federation Press, Sydney 1991, especially Chapter 3 Recurring Themes.
• the analysis and mapping of strategic opportunities in the institution - so that small successes can form the foundation of larger successes - is more successful than more uniform approaches;
• striving for deeper, more inclusive and shared understandings of competence and leadership benefits both men and women, and opens practical possibilities. For example, “merit” does not mean requiring women to act as if they were an “honorary male”. It also opens the possibility that men need not be forever locked into structures and meanings that require them to suppress their personal selves as workers.
• a program that focuses on contribution provides demonstrable evidence that there are “bottom line” reasons for tapping into the skills of women workers - without women having to adopt for themselves an exclusively bottom line viewpoint.

In other words, the Women in Leadership Program has overcome one of the perennial “marketing” problems of EEO - it provides concrete evidence at a number of levels that there is “something in it for everyone”.

This also raises one of the apparent contradictions inherent in the Project.

A CONTRADICTION? - A WOMEN’S PROGRAM FOR GENDER INCLUSIVENESS

Women in Leadership is a Program for women, and yet its “target” is unashamedly the institution. The fact that it is a “women’s program” is of some concern to participants and non-participants, both men and women. Some women felt that a “women’s program” runs the risk of being marginalised (no longer the case at Edith Cowan University). Some felt that they were the targets of some hostility because they were “getting time off” to go to a women’s group (less the case now at Edith Cowan University - and the support group function assists in dealing with this).

In the early stages of the Collegial Groups some felt that processes would be less confronting if men were included (probably true, but most now see working through the “hard personal stuff” was essential to the Program’s effectiveness). Some felt that male colleagues would benefit from exposure to the democratic supportive processes of the Collegial groups. Participants commented that it was difficult enough to explore the link between the personal and the organisational - without having to address this difficulty in the presence of male colleagues.

The issue of single sex education is not new to Edith Cowan University with a long history in teacher training/education. Law Schools have the same debates around Feminist Legal Studies, institutions teaching MBA’s grapple with the problems of “mainstreaming” equity issues, as opposed to separate classes/subjects.

It is less a contradiction in the case of Women in Leadership - particularly the Collegial Groups - and most particularly in the initial stages of this long term project.

It seems plain foolish to pretend that women as a group do not have a different sense of self to that of men as a group. Linking the personal to the organisational is fundamental to the Framework - not an abstracted “ideal worker” image of self, but the personal/gendered self. This is the core of the collegiality that gives the Project its strength.

It makes some sense that, at this stage of the development of the Project within Edith Cowan University, the issues which middle managers have in common do not override/outweigh different gender-based perspectives.

For males, views range from a slightly petulant “we have been left out” response, through a desire “to get in on a slice of the action”, to a genuine engagement with the assumptions underlying and the principles informing the Capacities of Leadership Framework.

It is evident that the ambivalence about Women in Leadership being for women only has declined since the last evaluation. Senior staff commented that this is something on which their views have changed.

The increased acceptance of the Project, and recognition by senior staff that there is a market potential for Women in Leadership raises a challenge for Edith Cowan University as an institution.
ISSUES OF LEADERSHIP

Questions raised during a workshop - the answers to which would be more difficult to arrive at in a mixed sex group.

1. Why do we find it so difficult to state our needs?
2. How is it possible for women to move into status positions without compromising what is important?
3. Influence and power - are they the same or different? Are we good at one and not the other?
4. Why do men find it difficult to acknowledge contribution?
5. How can women get recognition of their contribution from men?
6. How do we break out of our social conditioning in relation to leadership ability?
7. How do women express their support and competition? How do men express their support and competition?
8. How can people set things up so both females and males win?
9. How can we get people's skills recognized as leadership skills?
10. Is the male definition of leadership different from female leadership?
11. What do we want leadership for? For power, for service, for direction? Power over/Power to?
12. Is there a lack of a moral and spiritual dimension in management?
13. Do you have to be in a position of power to be a leader?
14. How do we break the silence imposed by patriarchy - both the big picture and the details?
15. How do we get men to have this discussion?
16. Why are images of leadership associated with male traits?
17. How can we ensure that women get appropriate rewards?

Gender may be an issue that men and women have in common, but the lived experience of gender is different for men and women. (Collegial Group participant).
CHALLENGES TO THE MANAGEMENT OF EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

The success of the formal aspects of the Program, the concrete outcomes to which the Project has contributed, the increased interest in Women in Leadership in other institutions, and increased acceptance of Women in Leadership as a catalyst for positive change at Edith Cowan University presents both an opportunity and a challenge for the University. This challenge operates at two levels.

First, there is a challenge to Division and Faculty Heads. How best to ensure that the competencies developed by participants are utilised with the Division/Faculty? In other words, how, as managers, to get a "return" on the investment of time, "in kind" or financial support that supporting the participation of women staff members requires. More importantly, how can Division and Faculty Heads address structural and organisational issues in ways which are consistent with the Framework of Leadership Capacities, so that the contribution of all staff can be tapped. Women have negotiated a greater representation on a number of key committees, and participated in the review of merit etc, but there does not appear to be a planned institutional response. That is; Divisions and Faculties have reacted (frequently positively) to proposals made by Collegial Group Members, but there is little evidence of a pro-active engagement with the potential of the framework to improve organisational effectiveness.

Secondly, there are challenges at the institutional level. There is an opportunity to turn the fact that Edith Cowan University is the only university in Australia named after a woman, from a perceived "liability" to an asset. Women in Leadership presents an opportunity for Edith Cowan University to exploit a "market niche" in research and programs relating to organisational change, leadership and the role women in organisations.

The challenge lies, not in the Collegial Groups model - but in the Capacities of Leadership Framework which includes the demonstrable benefits of "practising what one preaches" and "linking the personal and the organisational" being essential and integral elements of that Framework. For this is one of the keys to the changing perceptions about themselves and the institution for Women in Leadership participants.

"Mainstreaming" the Program - let alone the Project, cannot in this case mean simply "absorbing it" into existing structures. If the University at the institutional level is to successfully "market" the Program - the institution, rather than the Women in Leadership Program will also have to "practice what it preaches" and "link the personal to the organisational".

This implies a close engagement with, and some institutional strategies for embracing the Capacities of Leadership Framework within the leadership of Edith Cowan as a whole. It implies that some strategies are required to ensure that male colleagues can accept - and act on that acceptance of - the importance that women place on valuing the link between personal and the organisational. Strategies will also be required so that men are enabled to acknowledge the personal implications of their working selves if that is a preferable way of working for them.

There is a difficulty in trying to implement a model and a process that operates horizontally or diagonally, but where all the structures are vertical. For the groups to survive we have to nourish the horizontal. (Management Group Member).

How Edith Cowan University meets this challenge over time, is the ultimate evaluative criterion.
Women in Leadership is an innovative Project which is, and will continue to be an important catalyst for the development of Edith Cowan University. The Project management processes and practices are consistent with the Capacities of Leadership Framework.

The Capacities of Leadership Framework is the most significant achievement of the Women in Leadership Project. The paradigm provides an insight into a world of work which is gender inclusive and which facilitates an understanding of the nature of leadership which enables all to contribute.

While recognising that there is a complex interplay of causalities, Women in Leadership has significantly contributed to the strong and concrete organisational development outcomes which benefit the University as a whole. Given that the strategic focus of the Project is on the culture of the organisation, the "actual" or "objective" degree of causality is not as relevant as the crucial fact that it is widely accepted that Women in Leadership has significantly contributed.

There is now a strong network of women with relevant skills and competencies which can contribute to the resolution of workplace issues. In particular, this network has achieved some success in strategically planning the emergence of a gender inclusive organisational culture.

One of the complexities of evaluating the Project is in the diffuseness of the impact of the Project. It is not just that Collegial Group graduates and members are involved in daily acts of leadership large and small which makes the impact diffuse. The respect that the women involved in the Project have for each other, their openness to work with colleagues and the sense of “purposeful belonging”, are a part of the Women in Leadership "sub-culture", and this is diffusing into the university as a whole.

This is a very subtle outcome, and the only “measurable evaluation criteria” are the perceptions of the participants and university staff generally. It is no less relevant because of this. In all staff development programs and activities, there is an implicit assumption that “developing” staff has a positive “spin-off” for the organisation. Women in Leadership makes that assumption explicit, and has kept a clear focus on making a difference in and to the organisation by enabling women to contribute to it’s development in ways which take their reality into account.

Another complexity derives from a concern that this report reinforces the autonomy which the Framework of Capacities of Leadership establishes for female (and male) workers, while at the same time does not generate resistance from those who still have concerns about “the role of women in the workplace”.

Over the longer term, it is not the measurable success of the formal elements of the Program, in terms of numbers attending the National Conference and Public Lecture Series and how well these were received, or even the number of women who have been “through” the Collegial Groups Program which are the appropriate evaluation criteria.

The key criterion is the progress Edith Cowan University continues to make in it’s development as an organisation which values diversity, has flexible and appropriate structures which taps and rewards the contributions of all its staff.

There is a general acceptance that Women in Leadership has changed the environment in which women work at Edith Cowan, and that the Project has contributed to changes in structural arrangements which have made a difference to the shape, structure and culture of the university.

What is now needed is a Strategic Plan to be developed which allows for consolidation of gains made, and strategies to be developed which formalise these gains into corporate structures, policies and procedures.
Appendix 1  FUNDING PROPOSAL FOR 1993

Objectives
Working from a strong Collegial groups Model the program has three objectives:
1. For individual women to actively apply and further develop leadership skills and knowledge acquired in 1992.
2. For women to facilitate collegial groups in their Faculty/Division in identifying organisational change strategies that will more effectively support the decision making process in the University.
3. To continue to build a strong and enduring collegial network which will be a continuing source of support for women and which will assist them to develop to their full potential as academic leaders.

Organisational Outcomes
The 1993 program aims to continue to progress towards outcomes stated in the 1992 project and to:
• develop a more skilled pool for academic leadership selection
• achieve equal opportunity and affirmative action objectives as stated in university policy; improve dialogue between colleagues;
• establish a collegial model of training that can be applied in a wider variety of staff development contexts;
• fulfil legislative requirements
• establish more representative decision making processes;

Individual Outcomes
The 1993 program will:
• give women the opportunity to apply leadership skills;
• assist in the development of individual career plans;
• provide strategies for leadership entry plans;
• identify personal and technical skills; and
• build self confidence for entering the leadership culture

Appendix 2  MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROJECT

1.1 The Women in Leadership 1993 Program Management Committee
Ms Jacqui Hutchinson (Co-ordinator) Deputy Director Human Resource Management Division
Dr Susan Robertson Head International Institute for Policy and Administrative Studies
Ms Wendy Newman Co-Ordinator Staff Training and Development
Ms Lis Pike Academic Staff Association
Dr Margaret Crowley Assoc. Prof., Education Policy and Administration Studies.
Ms Judy Dawes Secretary

1.2 Collegial Group Facilitators
Internal
Ms Betty McSkimming Accounting Services
Ms Anne Mitchell Science and Technology

Ms Sandy Browne  Student Services
Ms Mary Rawlinson  Property and Campus Services
External
Ms Marie Finlay Organisation Change Consultant & Storyteller
Ms Deborah Pearson Organisation Change Consultant and Socio-dramatist

1.3 The Women in Leadership Program Conference Planning Group
Dr Susan Robertson Co-Convener
Ms Wendy Newman Co-Convener
Ms Gail Thomas Library Services
Ms Linley Lord Manager EEO
Ms Joanne Barnett Enterprise Workshop
Ms Sandy Browne Student Services
Ms Michelle Nelson Wellness Officer
Appendix 3

WOMEN'S VOICES: CHALLENGING FOR THE FUTURE

December 1 - 3 1993

Conference Keynote Speakers

Opening Address: The Hon. Wendy Fatin

Introduction: Professor Roy Lourens, Vice Chancellor, Edith Cowan University

Speaker: Dr Patricia Brennan, President of the Movement for the Ordination of Women.

Keynote Address: Identity and Diversity: Lessons For Leadership
Speaker: Ms Mara West, Aboriginal Services Bureau, DEVET

Keynote Address: The Politics of Voice: Paradigms, Problems and Possibilities
Speaker: Dr Patti Lather, Ohio State University

The Conference Committee was keen to develop a program which reflected the ethos of the Women in Leadership Project to date, namely:

• To maximise participation by each participant;
• To enable optimal opportunity for networking;
• To encourage a 'safe' environment where issues of concern to women could be discussed and debated and new ideas could be developed; and,
• To provide for a wide variety of interest and expertise.
• Workshops and Paper Presentation sessions were developed around each of the Keynote addresses, as well as Focus Groups.

Appendix 4

CLASSIFICATION BY GENDER: ACADEMIC STAFF

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