REPORT: ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute: 2017

FROM: Associate Professor Michael Sankey
**   Director ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute**

TO: ACODE Executive

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Summary

The ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute was held at the Mantra Mooloolaba Resort on the Sunshine Coast between 21 – 24 August. Thirty nine participants were registered and attended representing 23 different institutions. The institutions included 13 Universities from Australian, three from New Zealand, one from Fiji, one from Sri Lanka, an Australian private provider, and one educational technology company. The Institute attracted three sponsors; Ako Aotearoa, Cengage and Desire 2 Learn. In addition to the Director, there were eight full-time and three part-time faculty engaged for the event.

The full-time faculty members included, Professors' Geoff Scott, Ian Solomonides, Shelley Kinash and Mike Kepple, Associate Professors' Philip Uys, Gordon Suddaby and Michael Sankey, along with Dr Stephen Marshall and Mr Ian Smissen. Faculty members were chosen on the basis of their knowledge, experience and expertise in the area of learning technologies leadership. In addition to their mentoring roles, each faculty member also gave a presentation aligned to the Institutes' theme.

The program also included presentations by a number of part-time Faculty (invited scholars), all recognised leaders in their respective areas of learning technologies leadership. The invited visitors were; Professors' Birgit Lohmann and Shirley Alexander, as well as Mr Peter Nikoletatos.

In addition to the formal presentations there was also a short presentation from each of the three sponsors, aligned with the theme for the event. Sponsor presentations were first trialled at the 2015 LTLI and modified slightly for this year's event. As vendors play an important role within the sector, it was again deemed important to provide participants with an opportunity to learn how vendors approach the promotion of their products and to learn how to interact with them.

As in previous years, the program was based on a 'Making the Case' scenario. Participants were arranged into six teams of six people (two groups had seven) and required to 'make the case' as per a set of guidelines and a project brief. To help them make a start with this, each team was assigned a faculty member, on a rotational basis, to guide and mentor the development of their cases.

We were again delighted that the University of the Sunshine Coast provided LTLI participants with an opportunity to be exposed to some of their new learning spaces and to hear from a range of their staff on what they are considering in building a new campus in the North Morten area.

Professor Alexander presenting in the University of the Sunshine Coast Virtualisation Studio

At the end of the day, the formal evaluation demonstrated that participants thoroughly enjoyed the activity and felt that it provided them with both valuable insights and an incredibly useful networking opportunity.

Reflections

Presentations

The quality of the Faculty and visiting presenters for this Institute was particularly strong and provided our participants with a professional development experience second to none. That leaders from within the sector would take five days out of their already busy schedule is a testament not only to them but to the high regard in which this institute is held within the sector. Their experience, expertise and advice was invaluable and the engaging and interactive approach of the presenters was excellent.

The topics covered a full range of factors impacting on learning technologies leadership within Australasia, all designed to inform how participants would make their 'case'. The presentations were:

Prof Birgit Lohmann	Taking the lead in adopting technological change through thought leadership
Prof Shirley Alexander	Flipping over the blended and physical space
Prof Geoff Scott	Making the right choices for your institution
Prof Shelley Kinash	Openness and Leading Change
Prof Ian Solomonides	Building staff capacity for tech enhanced learning
Mr Peter Nikoletatos	Looking ahead: Where is technology taking us?
A/Prof Philip Uys	What students are saying about TEL
Dr Stephen Marshall	Quality, Quality, Quality and benchmarking your practice
Prof Mike Keppell	Making a career out of this
A/Prof Gordon Suddaby	Presenting your case for change

All the presentations were extremely relevant and focused participants on the 'making the case' scenario. In addition, the trip to the University of the Sunshine Coast provided participants with the opportunity to hear first-hand from those involved in the development of a major infrastructure project to create a new campus with some state of the art learning facilities. Our thanks go to Ian Wright our ACODE rep and Kylie Readman the Director of C-Salt for making this visit possible.

For anyone interested in accessing any of the talks given during the LTLI, all the presentations are available on the ACODE LTLI site, under the 'making the case' button.

Faculty Roles

The presentations by the faculty members are integral to the Institute program, but it is the wider overall role of the Faculty members that is critical to the Institute's success. During the course of the event, during times of group work, each group had a faculty member working with them, and they also circulated around the groups providing additional insights. Their role was to act as guides and mentors to the various groups, playing the role of a critical friend, reflecting and challenging the group's ideas and plans. They helping the group

become a cohesive and collaborative unit, providing support through the group formation process, and ultimately supporting the development of the Case. To further help them do this, each faculty assumed a fictitious senior management role, which they carried out superbly. In addition to guided the groups through the development processes, they helped focus the group's attention on the importance of ensuring each member contributed to the outcome, ensuring each group didn't lose sight of their goal while retaining ownership of the process and the product.

Engagement

The overall success of the Institute lies with the level to which each participant, as an individual and in their groups, engages with the 'Making the Case' scenario. The realism of the case and its relevance to the participant's

academic and professional life is critical to the level of engagement. This year, it was again decided that the scenario should be based on a real world (though fictitious) example of the Federal Government wanting to establish a new University campus in the Ballan area outside Melbourne, on the way to Ballarat . To ensure realism, the scenario was circulated to faculty members prior to the Institute and the

faculty members were invited to tailor their presentations to reflect this scenario and to ensure it was reflective of the Australian Higher Education context. The contributions of faculty members to the scenario structure was a significant factor in enhancing participant engagement in the Making the Case deliberations. These contributions provided the nexus between the scenario and the 'real world'. This is important, as the Institute participants came from a wide range of roles and a significant number were not in a position to clearly see the big picture in their own organisations. Nonetheless, the scenario meant that the groups had to consider and address, in a logical and practical way, many of the 'real world' issues that impact on technology and leadership issues in their Institutions and more broadly.

It was clear from the feedback received through the evaluation instrument, from observations, and from feedback received from Faculty, that the overall quality of the presentations, fully engaged the participants and helped to make it a very successful, challenging and valuable event.

The final evaluation was completed by all the participants, and a summarised version of this evaluation is appended to this report. This survey supports the very positive feedback provided by participants on the final day of the Institute and reinforces the important contribution this institute makes to both the individuals involved and, as a consequence, the institutions they represent. This is not to say that the Institute can't be improved. It can, and later in this report I have identified key areas for improvement that I believe should be considered when developing the program for LTLI 2019.

Environment and Support

A major contributor to the success of the Institute is the support provided by Susan Brosnan, as the Executive Officer for the Institute, working closely with Karen Halley, the ACODE Executive Officer. Susan's experience and expertise in the planning process and managing the day-to-day organisational details contributing to a successful Institute experience for all was again invaluable. Her support for me as the Director was exemplary. She managed all the bookings, set up and managed the registration information, was responsible for the publicity and recruitment, liaised with the venue, faculty, visitors and participants and generally kept me, as Director, fully informed and on track throughout the build-up to the event. Karen's support role was also critical and extremely valuable, maintaining the critical liaison between the ACODE Executive, the President, Susan and myself. She also played a major role in a range of organisational details including overseeing the financial process.

I would again like to acknowledge the support and participation of our sponsors; Ako Aotearoa, Cengage and Desire 2 Learn. We were delighted to have the involvement of these organisations and I believe they have received commensurate benefits from their involvement.

The Mantra at Mooloolaba again proved to be an excellent venue for this event, with one slight reservation; the quality and availability of the internet connection that was again very poor, despite being assured it would be better this time. However, the catering, facilities and logistical support from the resort could not be faulted and the location is excellent. Participants were largely satisfied with their rooms. Although the resort provided good general support we are very thankful to Tim van Drimmelen for again providing excellent technical support. Despite some early reservations in relation to access, overall, Mooloolaba proved to be a convenient location, relatively easy to get to for most participants and it offers excellent surroundings and easy access to extremely pleasant surroundings.
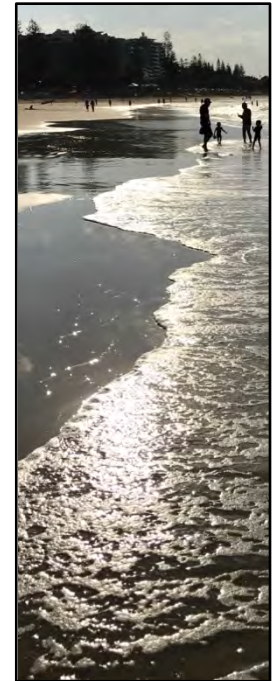
The Program

The 'Making the Case Scenario', as earlier noted, was relevant and realistic. The groups approached their task very seriously and worked extremely hard. All groups put in very long hours in developing their presentations. This was demonstrated in the quality of the actual group presentations and the supporting executive summaries which can be found on the 'making the case' website. The quality of the presentations was reflected in the difficulty that the Faculty had in deciding on a 'winner'.

Unfortunately there had to be a winner, but ultimately the decision was very close with the consensus among Faculty being that all groups performed extremely well.

The Wild Things, Winners for 2017

Deliberations

As has been the case in the preceding Institutes, the workload is extremely high for the participants. There is essentially an information overload from both the Faculty and visiting presenters. In addition, there are online resources provided to support both the making of the case and the presentations. While the high workload is intentional and it is designed to ensure that all teams have access to as much relevant information there way be other ways to transmit this material prior to the event.

It may be worth considering making a range of media elements that can provide key information that can be viewed, or listened to, prior to attending. In other words we need to practice what we preach in relation to a flipped delivery model.

In addition, the feedback from participants suggested that the time allocated to them was a bit too short to do all they had to do. This is consistent with previous years, and some adjustments were made to front-load the speaking, providing more time nearer the end for group work. This is despite adding an additional half a day to the program since the 2015 LTLI. Towards the end of the program we did rearrange some of the sessions to allow groups longer sessions together, and this was mentioned in the feedback as being a good move by many participants. This method should be considered next time, along with other ways to provide more time together on making their case. In addition there were a number of other practical suggestions put forward in the feedback which I believe should be considered in developing the next iteration of the Institute, not the least being the notion of providing additional leadership principles and mentoring opportunities. Finally, it was noticeable that there was an imbalance in the gender representation among the faculty, something that should definitely be addressed for 2019.

Observations and recommendations for LTLI 2019

1. The decision was made for the 2017 LTLI to return to the five day program, bringing participants in on the Sunday afternoon, as opposed to Monday morning, as in 2015. This proved to be a good move, providing more time to address the 'making the case' task.
2. There was a number of comments relating to the 'sage on the stage' approach of some presenters, though less than in 2015, as faculty were generally better prepared. However, more could still be done in this regard, encouraging faculty to generate more interaction within the groups during their sessions.
3. There was some concern that the formal presentations took-up too much time, leaving insufficient time for group work. This is a familiar concern expressed at previous institutes, and not surprising given the pressure of the event. Further adjustments may still be considered.
4. Some additional focus could be given to the development of more explicit leadership skills. This was in part done during a 'fish bowl' activity, but this could be expanded in 2019.
5. The imbalance in the gender representation among the full-time faculty should definitely be addressed for 2019.
6. It is important to ensure that the program should remain intensive to encourage effective use of all group members in a division of labour and to give participants experience in working under strict time constraints.

My Perspective

As Director, I found the experience challenging, exciting and extremely rewarding. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole process and couldn't have been happier with the input, engagement and collegiality of the Faculty. But most of all, it was the commitment and enthusiasm of the participants that made the event the success it was. They worked extremely hard, were collaborative, fully involved, took the whole exercise very seriously and produced excellent outcomes. It will be important for ACODE to now follow-up with the promotion of an Alumni network with participants from this and previous iterations of the

Institute. The ACODE Learning Technologies Leadership Institute: 2017 was, in my view, a great success and I believe continues to make a significant contribution to the Australasian professional development landscape in technology enhanced learning and teaching.

Finally

It was clear from the group's feedback session on the last morning that the Institute had been successful. This is reinforced by comments from the groups including; "*For the first time I have participated in a truly immersive and authentic learning experience. I have learnt a lot and I feel transformed*"; "*Excellent program – it was very challenging and contributed to an amazing experience. THANKYOU!!*"; "*The teamwork that we had over the 5 days was invaluable and I would always go back to these people in the future*"; "*Big picture thinking, coming out of my comfort zone, the case was great also and the experience of the faculty*"; "*Loved the collaboration and shared knowledge*". This feedback is reinforced through the survey evaluation which is appended to this report.

The full LTLI cohort for 2017

I would like to thank the ACODE President, Stephen Marshall and his executive for the opportunity to direct the Institute and for the support and direction that they gave me prior to the event. I was delighted that we had the President present at the Institute as this sends a really good message about ACODEs commitment to the Institute.

Associate Professor, Michael Sankey

Director

Participant Evaluation

Thirty eight (38) of the 39 participants (97%) responded to this survey. The evaluation contained four questions and a summary of these data is provided below. The LTLI was certainly deemed as successful by the participants. The results point to some positive adjustments that could be made to future LTLIs if deemed appropriate.

Question 1

Please indicate the rating that best reflects your overall evaluation of the institute by selecting a response where 5 indicates that this was among the best educational offerings you have experienced and 1 would indicate that this was among the worst.
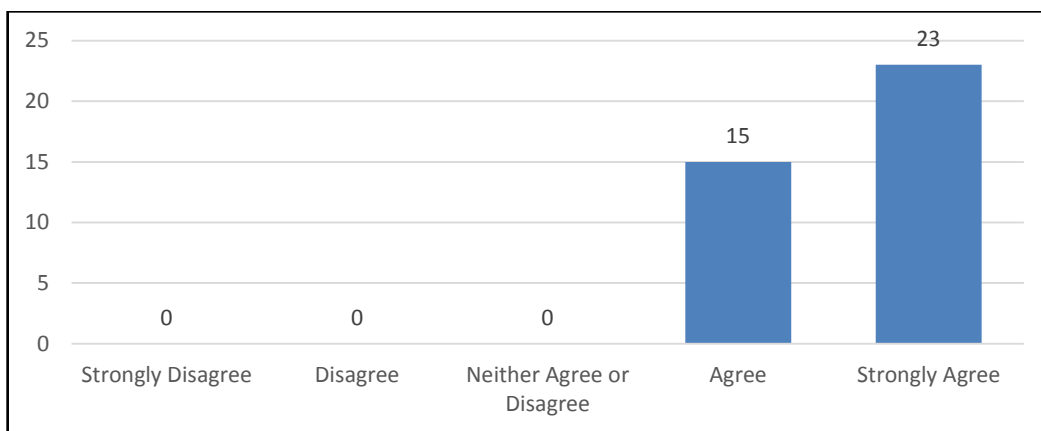
Summary: For 100% of attendees, the LTLI was either good, or among the best professional development activities that they had experienced. No one rated the LTLI poorly.

Question 2

What do you consider the most valuable aspects of the Institute program?

Summary: The key themes (in order) that emerged from the responses were:

- The quality of the faculty and their generosity in sharing their time and wisdom.
- The ability to work on 'The Case' as a team and sharing and learning from each other
- The quality of the networking opportunity
- The challenge of successfully working with a variety of new people

Question 3

Are there any opportunities to improve the institute?

Summary: The key themes (in order) that emerged from the responses were:

- The poor quality of the internet, causing additional stress, in an already stressful situation.

- Less faculty lecturing, more flipped approach allowing for group think and reflection.
- Longer periods of time (session times) to work as a group.
- The opportunity for mentoring during and after the event.
- More female representation on the faculty.

Question 4

Were there any sessions or topics that should have been given more emphasis in the program?

Summary: The key themes (in order) that emerged from the responses were:

- A bit more on key leadership skill building, in areas such as governance, quality and budgeting
- A bit more on the technologies themselves so one can make informed decisions in 'the case'
- Again mentoring and a greater gender representation was highlighted
- Looking at some of the challenges in today's higher education more broadly

Faculty Evaluation

Four of the eight Faculty (50%) provided feedback. The following provides key points from these responses.

Question 1

Now that you have had a chance to reflect on the activity for a week or so, how do you think it could be improved for next time?

- Agreement that it will be useful to confirm the faculty gender balance of those who actually attend the whole workshop, as distinct from one or two sessions.
- Provide a bit more focus on key challenges people have experienced either as a local leader or in trying to engage other leaders with desired changes – this might also be given more direct focus in the case by identifying as part of the briefing a profile of some tricky leaders.
- The making the case is a good device but could be more focussed, in terms of personal development, something that leads from the case/activities to a personal plan might be a way to go and is often a feature of leadership type programs.
- Be a bit more prescriptive in scheduling time with the faculty as 'consultations' (which the teams can chose to access or not).
- build "designing the learning technologies leadership structure and processes" into the case and as a requirement of the presentation.
- Provide a separate group presentation on their leadership development on the previous afternoon/on the last day could support this focus (but that might take a lot of time).
- Build a requirement to rotate the facilitators in the teams so that each team member get an opportunity (but still keeping their roles decided on), and the others having to adjust to the style of the facilitators (which is a real-world leadership issue).
- I think we need to remain focused on the role of the week as 'leadership development', I sense a little too much focus on 'the case' and not enough on the meta-cognitive reflection and specific personal goals. Perhaps we need to help them focus earlier on their own priorities and provide more reflective space.

Question 2

Do you feel the hour you had to present your information was sufficient, too long, or about right?

- Timing was about right.
- We should do the 'fishbowl' again.
- It might be worth, considering breaking input from each person into 2 x 30 minute sessions in a staged fashion
- If we were to ask folks in advance to identify one key change challenge they would like me to address then this could make what I say more relevant and custom-tailored to their needs.

Question 3

Appendix – Faculty Feedback

Are there topic areas that could have been covered, to help participants build their case, that we may not have covered very well or overlooked altogether?

- On working constructively as part of a team – this ties to the points made about how leadership in the group itself plays out.
- What makes for an effective network (in this regard the effective networking tips in the Making it Happen section of FLIPCurric might be of relevance
- Some more emphasis on knowledge/skills/values for leadership might be useful (although of course much of this was implied in the presentations)
- Governance around TEL e.g. to include policies; strategies; teams; committees; inter- and intra-organisational relationship building

Question 4

And finally, are there any general comments you would like to make?

- The faculty's presentation styles need to invite active learning (probably too much "lecturing")
- More time in the first 24 hours for the teams to sort out what they need doing in the "case"
- Great event, good location, keen to do it again. I wonder if the other teams might also be involved in the judging process – a peer assessment.
- Informal drinks on the first night to help people get to know one another is a good strategy
- It might be useful to ask the winning group this year to quickly give some written tips to the groups that follow on what they did to get the winning ratings. This could be done each time.