

# Distributive leadership across the academy: seduction and disenchantment

**Moira Cordiner**

University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania  
moira.cordiner@utas.edu.au

Many higher education (HE) institutions have become enamoured of a 'new' type of leadership, based on research of its success in schools. Distributed (or distributive) leadership (DL) promotes the idea that leadership should be distributed throughout an organisation rather than restricted to the individual at the top of a formal hierarchy. DL has been embraced enthusiastically by HE because it offers a seductive and persuasive discourse that is a powerfully appealing and winning combination of collegiality and managerialism with more participative leadership. As a consequence, it has been adopted in various forms around the world to implement change, with many governments funding its use. In the last few years, however, many DL authors have become disenchanting with, and more critical of, the seductive vision, claiming it: is a cloak to hide an increasing lack of consultation with staff; has serious practical challenges in implementation with formal leaders relinquishing some control to informal leaders; and is not clear what is distributed or what is an effective configuration of leadership practice. As part of a case study of DL at an Australian university, two environmental scans were conducted. The resulting data show that: interest in DL has not waned over 20 years of publications; and there are no agreed DL features, except involvement of the academic development unit, among 21 DL projects (national and international). Possible implications about DL are raised from these findings.

**Keywords:** distributive leadership, discourse, change agents

## Introduction

'The idea that leadership should be distributed, i.e. spread throughout an organisation rather than restricted to the individual at the top of a formal hierarchy' (Grint, 2005, p. 139) is an old one. Educational research into distributed leadership (DL), mostly based on institutional change in schools in the United Kingdom, and colleges in the United States, started appearing in the 1990s giving the impression DL was new (Thorpe, Gold, & Lawler, 2011). Because of many positive reports of success, the powerfully seductive and 'persuasive discourse ...that embeds collegiality and managerialism' (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009, p. 273), and the promotion of 'a more participative perspective on leadership' (Bolden & Petrov, 2014, p. 408), was embraced by HE.

Grint warns that DL is 'not a utopian alternative to (leadership)' but rather an alternative method (2005, p. 143). Others disagree that it is a *method* (italics added by the author), suggesting instead that DL is a *style* (Spillane, 2006); *concept* (Bento, 2011); *model* of change (Bolden, 2007); *strategy* (Triegaardt, 2013); or *framework* (Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, & Ryland, 2012; Timperley, 2005). This confusion of meanings and definitions means that DL is an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie, 1956), or '*a set of vague notions* flying in loose formation' (Churchland, 1989, p. 382-3), which are 'not capable of being reconciled into one

theory' (Bennett, Wise, Woods, & Harvey, 2003, p. 7). The key implication of this 'conceptual and empirical *muddle*' (Lakowski, 2008, p. 162) is that comparing implementation of DL in different institutions is challenging. For some authors, disenchantment has set in as they become more critical of DL. Gill, for example, claims it is 'a fashionable' leadership model that universities promote 'as a cloak to hide an increasing lack of consultation with staff' (Gill, 2008, paragraph 1). Bolden supports this view, observing that DL in HE 'has serious practical challenges in implementation especially with formal leaders letting go some control and authority to the informal leaders' (2007, p. 6).

This paper seeks to answer the question: what is it that universities desire when they state they are using DL? This is answered using a small subset of findings from a case study of DL at an Australian university (pseudonym Down Under University–DUU). DL is explored in two different ways and possible implications are suggested.

## **Methodology**

To place DL in the broader HE context, two environmental scans were conducted. The first used Google Scholar to compare publication trends from 1996 to 2014 for the phrases 'leadership in HE' and 'DL in HE', excluding articles or books on primary or secondary schools, and other non-HE contexts. The relative importance of DL was calculated using the percentage of DL publications compared to the total for 'leadership in HE' (table 1). The second scan situated the DUU project with 20 other projects (national and international) implementing changes to teaching, learning or assessment, including e-learning and e-scholarship. Projects were included from non-Western universities. Most took place between 2002 and 2015. To be included, the account of the selected project:

- stated that DL (of some description) was used or it could be inferred because other features of the project indicated this, such as mention of top-down and bottom-up and/or middle-out leadership (Cummings, Phillips, Tilbrook, & Lowe, 2005)
- had other features similar to DUU's but DL not stated or able to be inferred
- was a whole of university change project, except for a small group that wasn't as they had some features similar to DUU's
- had some features sufficiently different to warrant inclusion to inform the critique of DL at DUU.

Sources were restricted to refereed journal articles; conference papers; official reports for government funding agencies, HE authorities, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and university bodies such as Senate, plus university websites. Each was roughly classified as small (6000-20,000 students), medium (21, 000- 45,000) or large (46,000-100,000) based on an Australian perspective, and its project mapped against features of the DUU project. For the purposes of this paper, the following are not presented: time allocated to the project, change agent label, selection requirements and training, and leadership characteristics.

## **Limitations**

For scan two, sources were often lacking in some key details, such as the university's size in terms of students and number of staff at the time of the project. In some instances, current data was used as historic data was unavailable, or there was no information available (NI) or the feature was not applicable (NA) to the project. Interpretation is also decontextualised by not situating it within the cultural and historical contexts of each university which could influence how change is perceived and implemented, e.g. whether the country's cultures influenced the power structures in the university, or the university is heavily research or

teaching-focussed. Despite these limitations, a snapshot of much variability in DL implementation is revealed.

## Results and discussion

### Scan 1

Table 1 shows that publications for DL comprise, for most years, over a third of publications about leadership in HE, and close to forty percent in 2005 and 2009. The maximum DL publications were in 2014, with a corresponding peak of 11900 for leadership in HE publications. These data indicate that interest in DL in HE has not waned, with yearly publications increasing nearly eight-fold for DL from 1996. The data does not reveal whether authors have come to a shared understanding of DL and how to implement it, or are expressing disenchantment with it. It does however illustrate convincingly that the DL discourse is sufficiently powerful to consistently seduce scholars into giving it their close attention.

**Table 1: Comparison of Google Scholar publication trends**

year	Total publications (leadership in HE)	DL in HE	% DL
1996	1410	490	35%
1997	1440	439	31%
1998	1750	519	30%
1999	1910	603	32%
2000	2290	749	33%
2001	2400	778	32%
2002	2800	881	32%
2003	3110	1010	33%
2004	3610	1160	32%
2005	4710	1800	38%
2006	5050	1780	35%
2007	5770	2080	36%
2008	6420	2220	35%
2009	7710	2990	39%
2010	7620	2410	32%
2011	9560	2990	31%
2012	11000	3190	29%
2013	11200	3520	31%
2014	11900	3890	33%

### Scan 2

Table 2 is a snapshot of the full scan. There are four groupings based on project type and all except four are about whole of university change taking place between 2002 and 2015.

#### *DL stated or could be inferred*

Sixty-two percent (asterisked) stated they used (some form of) DL, or it could be inferred based on mention of top-down and bottom-up leadership, or both of these plus middle-out leadership, indicating a distribution of leadership across different academic levels. For the remaining 38%, DL was not stated and/or it could not be inferred that it was. These data suggest that the practice of the DL discourse appears to have influenced some non-Western universities. One could perhaps infer that it is the nature of universities that is the common factor in the embrace of DL, not whether they are Western.

### *Size of university*

Five were 'small'; 67% (14) were 'medium'; and two were 'large'. In the 'medium' size category, 50% were implementing changes to assessment, of which DUU was one; 29% were implementing e-learning or e-scholarship; and 21% improvements to student experience and curriculum. D'Andrea and Gosling state that change (in learning and teaching) can be implemented collectively *only* in 'relatively *small* institutions with a specialist focus', (2005, p. 6) indicating the challenges the majority in the scan likely faced.

### *Academic level of change agent*

For 10 universities there was *much variability in terms of academic level of change agent* with eight using a range. Of these, Hong Kong Polytechnic University was unusual in that the majority were professors (level E - the highest) with power and authority. In contrast, two used change agents at academic A (the lowest) with no formal power or authority. Only two (Oxford Brooks and Leeds Beckett) promoted their change agents. In the case of Leeds Beckett, these positions were as permanent 'teaching fellows', but there is no information about what academic level they were, other than assuming it would have to be above A. No information was available for 52% of the sample. These data indicate that there was no common agreement amongst institutions about what was the ideal academic level for a change agent. Crow, Arnold, Reed and Shoho observed that 'differential power relationships privilege certain academic disciplines (and) faculty ranks, ... over others, resulting in some changes being ignored or devalued' (2012, p. 176-7). The possible negative fallout for a level A could be personal and professional as a result of dealing with powerful academics.

### *Number of change agents*

The number ranged from two, for one discipline in one School in a 'medium' size university – Macquarie University, to 61 for a 'small' university (Glasgow Caledonian). In two cases the only information available refers to one change agent per School, but the number of Schools in each is not stated, while numbers are variable for New Mexico State University. The literature is silent on relating the size of a university to the number of academic change agents required to effectively support implementation of whole of institutional change. The scan reveals no discernible pattern in the numbers of agents in relation to the size of the university or nature of the project. For those using DL, there is no consensus about the most effective guiding principles in regard to distributing change agents. The negative implications of insufficient agents include unmanageable workloads if staff numbers are huge; added challenges serving multiple campuses; no time for their research thus restricting promotion potential; and possible burnout.

### *Financial incentives*

Only one had no stated financial incentives but it appears that Leeds Beckett *did* provide funding because a number of external specialists inserviced staff over a prolonged period (Brown, 2011). The *majority (95%) of the universities had funding* for implementing the targeted change— provided solely by the *government* for three; by the *university* for 13; and was a combination of government and university in three instances. Only six gave incentive and recognition payments to the change agents— the highest was \$3000 from DUU. This money was to be spent on their own research, professional learning or attending conferences. These results illustrate that most universities in the scan don't reward their change agents to personally acknowledge their contribution. This could result in cynicism and disappointment, with fewer academics putting their hands up or accepting a future change role.

### *Time allocation*

Sixteen universities provided a time allocation for change agents to carry out their role. This varied from full-time (three) to part-time (six), to a mixture (three). For three universities, time was allocated but there were no details. At New Mexico State University, change agents could be either full or part-time. For Queensland University of Technology, one was appointed full-time while the other eight were 50% as change agents and 50% in their main academic role. For Oxford Brooks University, there were two types of change agents: full time champions and part-time technologists who had half a day per week. In contrast to the majority of universities (71%) that provided either a full or part-time allocation, DUU had an inconsistent approach. Time allocated to the role varied between 100% and 0% depending on who had been chosen. Time allocation is tied closely to number of change agents. Together these variables can have negative implications for agent workloads as noted above, leading to 'a pressured work environment with little time for reflection or collaboration' (Nagy, 2012, p. 172).

### *HOS and/or Associate Deans involvement*

These two positions, while common to many universities, are not universal. There was no information of involvement of the HOS in 52% of projects; or of the Associate Dean in 62%. Another possibility for their absence in accounts could be because the authors were not describing the power structures under which the change agents operated, e.g. PolyU, Macquarie, University of Western Australia. These limitations make it difficult to draw valid generalisations. What is clear is that four universities stated that they involved the *HOS and the Associate Dean* in their projects, whereas for DUU their involvement *varied from School to School*. For the remaining universities, six involved the HOS and another six involved the Associate Dean.

The University of Maryland in the US, is unique in this scan because all the *Heads of School and Associate Deans were the change agents*, not the academics 'at the coalface', which may relate to the size of the university – 90,000 students (mostly military or ex-military) on 27 campuses around the world. In sharp contrast to all the examples, the Chinese University of Hong Kong has a committee of eight (mostly Heads of Faculty) under the leadership of the Head of the ADU overseeing the work of the academics appointed as change agents. These data show that about half the sample have someone or group with power and authority in charge of change implementation. For this subsample, it appears that DL in action is the distribution of power and authority to those already in formal leadership roles.

### *ADU involved*

For all except one— Leeds Metropolitan—the ADU was involved in the projects. Perhaps their 50 change agents, promoted to full-time positions in this role, were already very highly experienced in learning and teaching, and did not need ADU support. These results provide convincing evidence that the ADU was considered essential by 20 universities, despite numerous challenges in the current research-oriented and ratings-focussed university context (e.g. Bovill & Mårtensson, 2014; Brew & Cahir, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

The results of two scans appear to indicate that, even after 20 years of data gathering and reflection, the love affair with DL is not over, despite numerous authors voicing warnings that it was doomed. DL is seductive because the word 'distributed' is magnetic and enticing, arousing hope and desire that this type of leadership will fulfil the universities' needs for a

type of leadership that is attractive to academics at all levels. DL is also seductive because it raises expectations to unrealistic levels. Scan one revealed that DL, in terms of publications, has staying power because academics are still either enamoured of DL, or sufficiently provoked to critique its deficiencies.

However, what is it that universities desire when they state they are using DL?. The results of scan two reveal that there is no practice or configuration of DL implementation that was shared across any of the universities, except for ADU involvement. These results beg some questions: Do we distribute power and authority to those 'at the coalface' rather than those already in formal roles? — not for half the sample. Do we care enough about our 'coalface' change agents to reward them for effort? —no, only six universities did. Do we reward our change agents with promotions that acknowledge the goodwill, time and energy they devoted to institutional change? — no, only two universities promoted their change agents.

Possible implications of the research include cynicism and resistance by 'coalface' academics, reluctant to be involved as informal leaders of teaching and learning initiatives, especially when they will be given little power and authority, no rewards or promotion. In conclusion, Kezar advocates the necessity to develop a distinctive HE model, 'otherwise mistakes in strategy, plus using concepts foreign to the values of the academy, will most likely fail to engage the very people who must bring about the change' (Kezar, 2001, pp. 7-8).

Table 2 Scan showing the DUU project and a selection from other universities

University	University, faculty, school	Academic staff as change agents	Academic level of change agent	Number of change agents	Financial incentive for/from university and/or for change agents	Time allocation for change agents	Head of School, Assoc Deans or equivalent involved with change agents	ADU	Reference
	U/F/S	yes/no			yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
<b>GROUP 1: ASSESSMENT</b>									
1. California State University Stanislaus, USA. SMALL	U	Y	C, D and E	3	Y -\$250 US per day for change agents	Y (full time in ADU)	N/NI	Y	<a href="https://www.csustan.edu/office-assessment/assessment-mentors">https://www.csustan.edu/office-assessment/assessment-mentors</a> . Accessed July 27, 2015
2. Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa. MEDIUM	U	Y	B or C	55 (by 2015)	Y - university funding for substitute lecturer and/or research assistant; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (1 day per week)	Y	Y	Hénard & Roseveare, 2012, p. 19-20; Scholtz, D. (ADU Teaching & Learning Coordinator), personal communication 27/2/15
3. Down Under University, Australia. MEDIUM *	U	Y	A-C	40	Y - university funding for the project; \$3000 bonus for at least 2 years involvement by change agent	yes and no (depending on agent)	yes and no (varied between Schools)	Y	author
4. Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). MEDIUM	U	Y	C-E	8 (in 2007) represent all faculties	Y- university funding for Schools; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (some time release but not specified)	NI	Y	Polyu's position and plans, nd; Guidelines for annual reports on OBA projects: Accessed August 3, 2015 from <a href="http://www.polyu.edu.hk/obe/05_4_03.php">http://www.polyu.edu.hk/obe/05_4_03.php</a>
5. New Mexico State University. MEDIUM	U	Y (each does own project)	any from graduate students to professors	variable	Y- \$50 (US) Barnes & Noble gift card for change agent	100% or part time	NI	Y	Office of Assessment (ADU). Retrieved July 27, 2015 from <a href="http://assessment.nmsu.edu/champions/">http://assessment.nmsu.edu/champions/</a> Stoval, S. (Executive Director of Accreditation), personal communication 31/7/15

University	University, faculty, school	Academic staff as change agents	Academic level of change agent	Number of change agents	Financial incentive for/from university and/or for change agents	Time allocation for change agents	Head of School, Assoc Deans or equivalent involved with change agents	ADU	Reference
	U/F/S	yes/no			yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
6. Macquarie University, Australia. MEDIUM *	S (one discipline in the school is the example)	Y	A	2	Y- Government Carrick Institute funding & from the university; No bonus \$ for change agents	NI	NI	Y	Nakazawa & Muir, 2009; Macquarie Teaching & Learning. Retrieved July 30, 2015, from <a href="https://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/evaluation/resources_evaluation/developing_unit/assess_achievement/">https://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/evaluation/resources_evaluation/developing_unit/assess_achievement/</a>
7. Queensland University of Technology, Australia. MEDIUM *	U	Y	B to D	9	Y- university funded 50% buy out of all except one change agent who was full time (the author); No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (50%)	NI/NI	Y	author's experience as one of the consultants; Mylonas & Whelan, 2004
8. RMIT University, Australia. LARGE *	S (3)	Y	NI	NI	Y -funding from Government to buy out teaching time or employ assistance for change agents; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (no details)	Y/NI	Y	Jones, 2014; RMIT Learning & Teaching Strategy 2007-2010. Retrieved July 30, 2015, from <a href="http://mams.rmit.edu.au/fhzh0sqvnz48.pdf">http://mams.rmit.edu.au/fhzh0sqvnz48.pdf</a>
9. The Chinese University of Hong Kong. SMALL	F	Y	NI	NI	Y -university funding for Faculty; No bonus \$ for change agents	NI	Committee of 8 from Schools under the leadership of head of ADU, Faculty head plus one HOS		Use of an outcomes-based approach in the Faculty of Science at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2007. Retrieved July 15, 2015, from <a href="http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/sci/OBA/intro/intro01.html">http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/sci/OBA/intro/intro01.html</a>

University	University, faculty, school	Academic staff as change agents	Academic level of change agent	Number of change agents	Financial incentive for/from university and/or for change agents	Time allocation for change agents	Head of School, Assoc Deans or equivalent involved with change agents	ADU	Reference
	U/F/S	yes/no			yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
10. University of Maryland College (USA). VERY LARGE	U	Y (all senior academics & adjuncts)	C or higher	NI	NI	NA (project part of performance review)	Y - are also change agents	Y	Institutional Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes 2015. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from <a href="http://www.umuc.edu/outcomes/upload/ipra-student-learning-outcomes.pdf">http://www.umuc.edu/outcomes/upload/ipra-student-learning-outcomes.pdf</a> . University learning outcomes. Retrieved July 29, 2015, from <a href="http://www.umuc.edu/visitors/about/ipra/learning-outcomes.cfm">http://www.umuc.edu/visitors/about/ipra/learning-outcomes.cfm</a>
11. University of Western Sydney, Australia. MEDIUM	U	Y	B or C	1 per School (total NI)	Y- university funding; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (1 day/week)	NI/NI	Y	Campbell, 2008; Gill & Ross, 2010
<b>GROUP 2: E-LEARNING</b>									
12. Australian Catholic University, Australia. MEDIUM	U	Y	NI	6	Y - funding from Government Carrick Institute; No bonus \$ for change agents.	Y (50%)	Y/Y	Y	The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Ltd, 2008; Schneider, Applebee, & Perry, 2008
13. City University, London. SMALL *	U	Y	NI	1 per School (total NI)	Y - government funding; university awards change agents scholarships, sabbaticals or grants	NI	NI/NI	Y (change agents seconded for 1 year)	Holtham, 2005; City University, London. Retrieved August 19, 2015, from <a href="https://www.city.ac.uk/">https://www.city.ac.uk/</a>

University	University, faculty, school	Academic staff as change agents	Academic level of change agent	Number of change agents	Financial incentive for/from university and/or for change agents	Time allocation for change agents	Head of School, Assoc Deans or equivalent involved with change agents	ADU	Reference
	U/F/S	yes/no			yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
14. Charles Sturt University, Australia. MEDIUM *	U	Y	NI	26 over life of project (but only 6-8 per year)	Y - university funded buy out of 50% of current duties of change agent; No bonus \$ for change agent	Y (50%)	Y/NI	Y	Keppell, O'Dwyer, Lyon, & Childs, 2011
15. Oxford Brooks University, UK. MEDIUM *	U	Y	NI	16	Y -champions promoted from their academic positions to manage technologists (who did not receive bonus \$)	Y -100% for champions & 1/2 day per week for technologist	NI/NI	Y	Sharpe, Benfield, & Francis, 2006
16. University of York, UK. VERY SMALL *	U	Y	NI	22 in first stage projects. NI for stages 2 & 3	Y - university funded projects; No bonus \$ for change agents	NI	NI/NI	Y	Beastall & Walker, 2006
<b>GROUP 3: SCHOLARSHIP OF E-LEARNING</b>									
17. Glasgow Caledonian University, Scotland. SMALL *	U (but school based separate projects)	Y	B & C	61 in 43 projects (by 2012)	Y - £2K over 2 years per project for (i) scholar but no funding for (ii) associate	Y (5 hr per week) for (i); 3hr per week for (ii)	NI/NI	Y	Creanor, 2013; Glasgow Caledonian University. Retrieved August 19, 2015, from <a href="http://www.gcu.ac.uk/">http://www.gcu.ac.uk/</a>
18. University of Auckland, New Zealand. MEDIUM *	U	Y	NI (assume B as they were not senior)	10	Y - from Vice Chancellor; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (but NI)	Y/Y	Y	Gunn, 2007; University of Auckland. Retrieved August 19, 2015, from <a href="https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en.html">https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en.html</a>

University	University, faculty, school	Academic staff as change agents	Academic level of change agent	Number of change agents	Financial incentive for/from university and/or for change agents	Time allocation for change agents	Head of School, Assoc Deans or equivalent involved with change agents	ADU	Reference
	U/F/S	yes/no			yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	yes/no	
<b>GROUP 4: CURRICULUM &amp; TEACHING REFORM</b>									
19. La Trobe University, Australia. MEDIUM *	U	Y	A	10 (for 4 Schools)	Y- Government funding; yearly university funding for Schools; annual performance funding for high staff involvement; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (100%)	Y/Y	Y	Johnson, Bird, Fyffe, & Yench, 2012; Design for learning: Curriculum review and renewal at La Trobe University, White Paper, 2009. Retrieved April 10, 2012, from <a href="http://www.latrobe.edu.au/about/downloads/DFL-booklet.pdf">http://www.latrobe.edu.au/about/downloads/DFL-booklet.pdf</a>
20. Leeds Metropolitan (now Leeds Beckett) University, UK. MEDIUM *	U	Y	NI	50 (for 6 faculties)	NA	Y- 100% (permanent promoted to position)	NI/Y	N	Brown, 2011
21. Murdoch University, Australia. MEDIUM *	U (but school based separate projects)	Y	NI (not in formal role so assume B)	14 from 9 of 17 schools	Y -Government funding for project to buy out some of change agents' time; No bonus \$ for change agents	Y (1 day/week)	NI/NI	Y	Cummings, Roberts, & Schibeci, 2008

## References

- Beastall, L., & Walker, R. (2006). Effecting institutional change through e-learning: An implementation model for VLE (virtual learning environment) deployment at the University of York. *Journal of Organisational Transformation and Social Change*, 3(3), 285–299.
- Bennett, N., Wise, C., Woods, P., & Harvey, J. (2003). *Distributed Leadership*. Retrieved from [www.ncsl.org.uk/literaturereviews](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/literaturereviews).
- Bento, F. (2011). A discussion about power relations and the concept of distributed leadership in higher education institutions. *The Open Education Journal*, 4(1), 17–23.
- Bolden, R. (2007). Distributed leadership. University of Exeter. Retrieved from <https://business-school.exeter.ac.uk/documents/papers/management/2007/0702.pdf>
- Bolden, R., & Petrov, G. (2014). Hybrid configurations of leadership in higher education employer management. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 36(4), 408–417.
- Bolden, R., Petrov, G., & Gosling, J. (2009). Distributed leadership in higher education: Rhetoric and reality. *Discussion Papers in Management Paper Number 07/19*. University of Exeter.
- Bovill, C., & Mårtensson, K. (2014). The challenge of sustaining academic development work. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 19(4), 263–267.
- Brew, A., & Cahir, J. (2013). Achieving sustainability in learning and teaching initiatives. *International Journal for Academic Development*, (October), 1–12.
- Brown, S. (2011). Bringing about positive change in the higher education student experience: a case study. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 19(3), 195–207.
- Campbell, S. (2008). Assessment reform as a stimulus for quality improvement in university learning and teaching: An Australian case study. In *Outcomes of higher education conference: Quality relevance and impact. IMHE Programme on Institutional Management of Higher Education*. Paris, France.
- Churchland, P. (1989). *Neurophilosophy: Towards a Unified Science of the Mind/Brian*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Creanor, L. (2013). Raising the profile: An institutional case study of embedding scholarship and innovation through distributive leadership. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 1–11.
- Crow, G., Arnold, N., Reed, C., & Shoho, A. (2012). The complexity of leveraging university program change. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 7(2), 172–194.
- Cummings, R., Phillips, R., Tilbrook, R., & Lowe, K. (2005). Middle out approaches to reform of university teaching and learning: Champions striding between the “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 6(1), 1–18.
- Cummings, R., Roberts, S., & Schibeci, R. (2008). *Enhancing the student educational experience through school-based curriculum improvement leaders: A report for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council*. Sydney, Australia.
- D’Andrea, V., & Gosling, D. (2005). *Improving teaching and learning: A whole institution approach*. Maidenhead, Berkshire, England: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.
- Gallie, W. (1956). Essentially contested concepts. In *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (pp. 167–8).
- Gill, B., & Ross, R. (2010). Assessing capacity and readiness to implement a fundamental change in learning and teaching practice. In *Reshaping Higher Education, HERDSA conference, July*. Melbourne, Australia.
- Gill, J. (2008). Distributed leadership model gives “illusion” of consultation. Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/401985.article>
- Grint, K. (2005). *Leadership: Limits and possibilities*. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK.: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gunn, C. (2007). E-scholarship: a model to lead strategic change. In *Proceedings Ascilite*. Singapore.
- Hénard, F., & Roseveare, D. (2012). *Fostering quality teaching in higher education: Policies and practices*. Retrieved from [www.oecd.org/edu/imhe](http://www.oecd.org/edu/imhe)
- Holtham, C. (2005). Teaching and learning champions: An institutional perspective from the UK. In *25th Annual Conference. Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, June*. University of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Retrieved from [https://www.mcmaster.ca/sthe/3M.council/Clive Holtham.pdf](https://www.mcmaster.ca/sthe/3M.council/Clive%20Holtham.pdf)
- Johnson, E., Bird, F., Fyffe, J., & Yench, E. (2012). Champions or helpers: Leadership in curriculum reform in science. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 9(3).
- Jones, S. (2014). Distributed leadership: A critical analysis. *Leadership*, 10(2), 129–141.
- Jones, S., Lefoe, G., Harvey, M., & Ryland, K. (2012). Distributed leadership: A collaborative framework for academics, executives and professionals in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 34(1), 67–78.
- Keppell, M., O’Dwyer, C., Lyon, B., & Childs, M. (2011). Transforming distance education curricula through distributive leadership. *ALT\_J Research in Learning Technology*, 18(3), 165–178.
- Kezar, A. (2001). *Understanding and facilitating organisational change in the 21st century: Recent research*

- and conceptualisations*. Washington, DC. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED457711.pdf>
- Lakomski, G. (2008). Functionally adequate but causally idle: w(h)ither distributed leadership? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(2), 159–171.
- Mylonas, A., & Whelan, K. (2004). The journey to a criterion-referenced assessment university: Part 1. In *Australian Association for Research in Education Conference* (pp. 1–12). Melbourne, Australia.
- Nagy, J. (2012). Coalface academic leadership in Australian higher education: Discretionary power through empowerment. In I. Duyar & A. Normore (Eds.), *Discretionary behaviour and performance in educational organisations: The missing link in educational leadership and management* (pp. 169–196). Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd.
- Nakazawa, K., & Muir, H. (2009). Implementing change in assessment practice through participatory action research: Trial through distributive leadership model. *The International Journal of the Humanities*, 6(10), 37–44.
- Schneider, A., Applebee, A., & Perry, J. (2008). Leading from within: Distributing leadership to enhance eLearning at Australian Catholic University. In *Hello! Where are you in the landscape of educational technology? Proceedings ascilite conference* (pp. 895–899). Melbourne.
- Sharpe, R., Benfield, G., & Francis, R. (2006). Implementing a university e-learning strategy: Levers for change within academic schools. *Alt-J, Research in Learning Technology*, 14(2), 135–151.
- Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- The Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education Ltd. (2008). *Development of distributed institutional capacity in online learning and teaching project: Final project report*.
- Thorpe, R., Gold, J., & Lawler, J. (2011). Locating distributed leadership. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 13(3), 239–250.
- Timperley, H. (2005). Distributed leadership: developing theory from practice. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 37(4), 395–420.
- Triegaardt, P. (2013). *The role of distributive leadership as strategy to ensure effective schools: A comparative case study within selected South African schools*. University of South Africa. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10500/13101>

Copyright © 2016 Moira Cordiner. The author assigns to HERDSA and educational non-profit institutions a non-exclusive license to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The authors also grant a non-exclusive license to HERDSA to publish this document in full on the World Wide Web (prime site and mirrors) and within the portable electronic format HERDSA 2016 conference proceedings. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the authors.