



DIVERSITY PROVISION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHANGING PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

In recognition of the role of leadership in the equality and diversity agenda, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education states that:

'Diversity is a central component of the culture of an institution and leadership behaviour crucially influences and defines that culture' (p23, Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2005).

This IN PRACTICE outlines some of the initiatives across Higher Education supported by the Leadership Foundation. These focus both on improving understanding of the issues and on developing practical solutions to address them.

DRIVERS FOR CHANGE

The equality and diversity agenda is driven by many factors including:

- persisting inequalities relating to socioeconomic background, disability or chronic health conditions, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, age and sexual orientation
- continuing inequalities in Higher Education staff and student bodies despite several decades of research and policy on equality and diversity issues

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) has done much to support the sector in equality and diversity, particularly by drawing attention to equality legislation and developing policy. However, its remit does not include training and leadership development. A major goal of the Leadership Foundation is to equip current and future

leaders with the skills to deliver improvements in the sector, and it has identified the need for a practical approach, with an emphasis on moving from rhetoric to bringing about measurable change. To this end, the Leadership Foundation has developed a diversity strategy that will lead to:

- the active promotion of equality and diversity and a more open and inclusive culture
- the appointment of leaders at all levels that reflect the composition of the staff, student population and wider society that institutions serve

In light of these aims, the Leadership Foundation established its Diversity Advisory Group to prioritise and debate issues relating to its diversity programme.

THE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

The Leadership Foundation has commissioned several projects to understand some of the underlying issues surrounding the under-representation of women, people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds and disabled people in senior positions in Higher EDUCATION as follows:

THE IMPERATIVE FOR POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENTS – SPIN OR NECESSITY?

This study, undertaken by the Work Foundation and Iris Consulting, looked at seven Higher Education institutions that were identified by a range of stakeholders as showing good elements of equality and

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diversity practice. Among the key findings of this research were that:

- a number of institutions had developed advanced policies and procedures
- institutions with more advanced policies and procedures were successful in improving the recruitment of minority ethnic staff into both academic and academic support posts
- there was a failure to make senior and line managers accountable for developing staff in under-represented groups
- there was a marked difference between senior staff and those lower down the hierarchy as regards perceptions of institutional culture
- some institutions had instigated development programmes for female academic staff

The conclusion of the study was that more attention needs to be paid to improving the organisational climate. To create a positive working environment, structural issues, including policies and procedures, need to be addressed as well as cultural and 'person-centred' issues, where the latter refers to staff development activities such as coaching and mentoring.

For more information take a look at www.lfhe.ac.uk/diversity/irisreport.doc

SOME POTENTIAL INITIATIVES TO ADDRESS GENDER IMBALANCE IN HE/FE

The Centre for Public Policy and Management at Glasgow Caledonian University is undertaking this project in partnership with the Scottish Leadership Foundation and the Scottish Executive. The work is being carried out in three universities and colleges and looks at the reasons behind the gender imbalance in further and higher education management through the collation of quantitative and qualitative data. The project will explore a range of initiatives to address women's career development, including women's networks and mentoring.

More information is available at: www.lfhe.ac.uk/research/projects/research/projects/mctavishgender.html

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROJECT

This project at the University of Manchester arose out of concern over the under-representation of women in senior academic management and leadership positions at the university. Through staff development activities, a seminar programme, meetings with senior management and other activities, the project aims to:

- increase the numbers of women able to apply for senior management posts
- create a working environment where both men and women feel comfortable
- remove barriers that may prevent women being appointed to leadership and management roles

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Further information can be found at www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/equalityanddiversity/womenandmen

LF FELLOWSHIPS

In addition to projects, the Leadership Foundation awarded four of its 25 Fellowships to proposals with a diversity theme:

ENHANCING EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PROCEDURES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY

This Fellowship, awarded to Professor Teresa Rees, pro-vice-chancellor at Cardiff University, aimed to investigate and develop practical strategies to enable the university to move beyond compliance with anti-discriminatory legislation towards fostering an inclusive culture. A variety of methods was used to collate evidence, including gathering baseline data, establishing areas of good practice and participating in benchmarking exercises. Progress has been made in a number of areas, including identifying a network of lead equality and diversity contacts and raising the profile of various strands of equality through membership of local and national networks such as Stonewall Diversity Champions Cymru.



WIDER MANAGEMENT MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR WOMEN AND ETHNIC MINORITY MANAGERS IN PARTICULAR – IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR

The Wider Management Mentoring Programme at London South Bank University is one of a number of activities at the university designed to address the under-representation on the senior management team of minority groups including women and BME staff. The Fellowship, awarded to Dr Peter McCaffrey, pro-vice-chancellor, has established a mentoring scheme whose aims include:

- raising the profile of women and BME managers
- providing them with a safe environment in which to reflect on their leadership and management skills and to increase their personal and professional effectiveness

Sixteen individuals have been recruited to the programme and a number of lessons have been learned in setting it up. These include gaining a better appreciation of the logistical aspects (such as the time required for this initiative) and the need to be aware of the possible negative perceptions that management and staff may have towards the scheme.

CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

This Fellowship was awarded to Professor Uduak Archibong, chair in diversity/race equality at the University of Bradford. The university has seen improvements in the numbers of BME staff and students as a result of its strong commitment to improving equality and diversity. Its Corporate Plan states that improving diversity within the workforce and improving the working lives of staff contribute to positive student learning experiences. Nevertheless, increases in the numbers of BME staff and students have not been mirrored at senior levels.

This project pairs senior white leaders with BME personnel, with the aim of sharing perspectives on how to build roles as senior managers within the university and on the role and issues for BME staff working within the same environment. Problems encountered by the project included finding sufficient numbers of BME participants to pair with white staff. On the positive side, the project has led to the development of successful relationships among participating staff. Update meetings have enabled participants to share experiences and ask questions in an increasingly supportive environment.

EMBEDDING DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT AT THE LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL

This project was undertaken at the London Business School by Philip Willatt and focuses on raising levels of commitment to diversity among senior leaders, and preparing the way for key initiatives. The project involved several stages including a period of research in which one-to-one interviews were carried out with key internal stakeholders. Benchmarking of the school was carried out using US counterparts as comparisons. Most senior managers welcomed the project, though there was resistance among some managers to the idea of embedding the values of diversity in the school. This work

indicates that in order to successfully promote diversity, a clearer set of values needs to be developed to underpin these initiatives.

The LF Fellowships 2005/6 will form the key case studies of a book, edited by the Leadership Foundation's director of programme development, Professor Stephanie Marshall. The working title is Leadership Strategy in Higher Education and it is scheduled for publication by Routledge in early 2007.

THE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION: FINDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

This aspect of the Leadership Foundation's work has focused on the practical aspects of promoting equality and diversity, and involves institution-based and sector-wide projects as follows:

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS/UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK PROJECT ON BLACK AND ETHNIC MINORITY STAFF

The London School of Economics and the University of Warwick approached the Leadership Foundation to find out why BME staff were under-represented at senior levels within their organisations. The Leadership Foundation funded these institutions to run focus groups. Out of this work a collaborative programme on coaching developed, with aims including:

- generating the capacity of BME staff to be able to coach others
- establishing coaching partnerships between participating staff
- addressing career and personal development objectives
- offering high-quality, sustained support for incoming BME staff

The Leadership Foundation also plans to facilitate exchanges between this programme with similar work currently underway at the University of Coventry and London South Bank University.

DIVERSITY RESOURCES PROJECT

The Leadership Foundation identified a recurring need among equality and diversity practitioners for training tools. It was felt that a number of resources were in existence, but that these were not shared across the sector. As a result, the Leadership Foundation commissioned an independent research company, Knowledge Perspectives, to bring these resources together by:

- liaising with key stakeholders to identify resources and any gaps in provision
- compiling a report with these resources

The project examined 33 resources used to address equality and diversity issues among staff and students in Higher Education. The report (Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, 2006) identifies resources with wide-ranging aims, from overarching initiatives, such as Action on Access, that coordinate widening participation strategies, to hands-on projects, including Techdis, that aim to enhance provision for disabled students and staff through technology. The report concludes that though many resources exist, coverage is patchy, with the development of resources tending to reflect funding opportunities. The report recommends that any new resources need to be developed with a holistic approach to equality and diversity. The full report is available from the Leadership Foundation's marketing office (email info@lfhe.ac.uk) or online at www.lfhe.ac.uk/diversity/drp/report.pdf

The projects described in this paper employ a variety of approaches to improving equality and diversity in Higher Education institutions, particularly with regard to increasing the representation and improving the overall experiences of groups that are under-represented as leaders and managers. Strategies include:

- offering high quality, sustained support for incoming BME staff
- running focus groups or interviewing staff to obtain feedback on their work experiences and views on equality and diversity
- embedding diversity in strategic planning
- setting up programmes to support and develop potential leaders
- encouraging the exchange of ideas among staff from different cultures
- pooling and sharing resources across the sector

FUTURE PLANS AND CHALLENGES

A joint project is currently being developed with the University of Wolverhampton. With funding from Hefce's Leadership, Governance and Management Fund, the university has looked at where equal opportunity officers are located in Higher Education institutions, how they work and their career paths. The need for training materials for equal opportunity officers has been considered, both for new recruits and those already in post.

The Leadership Foundation has been invited to join the project. Expected outcomes, to be presented at a conference in November 2006, are:

- a guide for managers
- a guide for equal opportunity officers
- a self-assessment questionnaire for equal opportunity officers
- guidance for governors to support officers in their equal opportunity responsibilities

Major challenges for the sector in advancing the equality and diversity agenda will be those currently facing policymakers in establishing the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights. The new organisation will come into being in October 2007 and will bring together the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. A major challenge will be to develop a holistic approach to equality and diversity in view of the cross-cutting nature of inequality.

Higher education leaders and senior managers operate in a challenging environment with competing demands. Nevertheless, the case for advancing the equality and diversity agenda in the sector has never been stronger. Ongoing work funded by the Leadership Foundation offers practical tools which can be harnessed to foster greater equality and diversity to the benefit of all.

REFERENCES

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (2005). Annual Report 2004/5. London.

Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (2006). Diversity Resources Project. London.

