CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Engaging with leadership development in Irish academic libraries: some reflections of the Future Leaders Programme (FLP)
Authors	Fallon, Helen;Maxwell, Jane;McCaffrey, Ciara;McMahon, Seamus
Publication date	2011-02
Original Citation	Fallon, H., Maxwell, J., McCaffrey, C., McMahon, S., 2011. Engaging with leadership development in Irish academic libraries: some reflections of the Future Leaders Programme (FLP). Australian Library Journal, 60(1), pp.8-20.
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://alia.org.au/publishing/alj/
Rights	Australian Library & Information Association
Download date	2026-11-17 12:48:22
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/271

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire
University College Cork, Ireland

Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Fallon, H., Maxwell, J., McCaffrey, C., McMahon, S., 2011. Engaging with leadership development in Irish academic libraries: some reflections of the Future Leaders Programme (FLP). *Australian Library Journal*, 60 (1), pp. 8-20.

CORA Cork Open Research Archive http://cora.ucc.ie

Engaging with leadership development in Irish academic libraries: some reflections of the Future Leaders Programme (FLP)

HELEN FALLON, **JANE MAXWELL, CIARA MCCAFFREY AND SEAMUS MCMAHON**

This paper has been double-blind peer reviewed to meet the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) HERDC requirements.

Four librarians from Irish university libraries completed the U.K. Future Leaders Programme (FLP) in 2010. In this article they recount their experience and assess the effect of the programme on their professional practice and the value for their institutions. The programme is explored in the context of the Irish higher education environment, which is facing significant challenges due to the demise of the Celtic Tiger economy. A brief review of the literature relating to structured programmes to prepare librarians for senior positions, is presented. The structure and content of the FLP and the learning methodologies, theories, tools and techniques used throughout are discussed. The article suggests that the programme has real value for both individuals and institutions and that it can play a significant role in succession planning and the leadership development of librarians.

Introduction

Is leadership innate or can it be learned? The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in the UK was founded on the premise that leadership can and must be taught. Its vision is that the practice of excellence in leadership in higher education should attract the same high esteem as excellence in research, teaching and learning.

The Future Leaders Programme (FLP) was developed in 2006 by the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, to address a perceived shortage of visionary library leaders. The programme is aimed at experienced college and university-based information and IT professionals, with proven management experience, in the UK and Ireland. It seeks to deepen the individual's awareness of themselves as leaders, to help them become more strategic leaders and ambassadors and to equip them to lead effectively in a changing higher-education environment. An average of twenty librarians and IT professionals participate in the UK-based programme each year, a small number of whom are from the Irish university sector.

The programme is supported by the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association

(UCISA), the British Library and, in Ireland, by the Committee on National and University Library Cooperation (CONUL).

Leadership programmes

In order to set a context for what follows, this section presents a brief overview of the literature relating to four formal leadership programmes for librarians – Frye, Horizon and American College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/Harvard and FLP. These four were chosen because they are well established, have attracted significant national and international participation and bear a number of similar characteristics; they are run over a period, primarily residential in nature, employ a hybrid mixture of training/learning methods and place an emphasis on self-discovery and developing participants' capacity to lead. Mason and Wetherbee (2004) identified twenty one library leadership programmes founded between 1996 and 2006. All but two of these are US-based and their focus is not primarily on senior staff.

The U.S. Frye Leadership Programme has been offered since 2000 to librarians, information technology staff and administrators. Fieldhouse (2004) and Gjelten and Fishel (2006) provide useful insights to the programme. Initially two weeks in duration, it aims to provide an opportunity to study, collaborate and discuss the critical issues facing higher education. It is aimed at those who are already leaders in their profession and seeks to further develop leadership skills, particularly in the area of advocacy. The programme emphasises the importance of librarians taking a leadership role within their institution, as well as focusing on the collaborative opportunities available to librarians and information technologists. In 2010 the Frye Institute took a one-year pause to develop a new programme. It is now of one-week duration.

Frye and FLP share a number of similarities: participants conduct a project in their institution, development is encouraged through honest self-assessment, learning is structured around seminar, classroom, lecture and group discussion models, extensive reading and homework are required, participants are asked to interview key leaders in their home institutions and an element of personal transformation is a desired outcome of both programmes. The programmes differ in duration – Frye provides an intense, relatively brief opportunity for participants to fully immerse themselves in their leadership development, while FLP extends over a full year, with many opportunities to revisit learning during the programme. During the Frye programme – generally early summer – project ideas and teams are formed. Over the summer, teams develop their projects individually and via two virtual meetings via web-conferencing during the summer. Participants are encouraged to present their project outcomes to the larger community through national conferences and publications. Both programmes share the same objectives – to develop the individuals' understanding of their leadership roles and abilities to inspire, advocate and implement fundamental collaborative change.

A collaboration between Harvard Unversity and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians was founded in 1999. The programme is run at Harvard and, like Frye, is one week in duration. Kalin (2008) – one of one hundred participants in the 2004 cohort – explains how the curriculum is built around the theory of reframing as outlined in Bolman and Deal (2003). The four frames are organisational goals, tasks and context; human resources; political factors and organisational culture. The concept of using multiple lenses to get a better sense of a situation is similar to the framing, advocating, illustrating, inquiry model by Torbert (2004), a core reading on the FLP programme. During the week at Harvard participants receive case studies to read outside class time. In study groups – with approximately seven participants – they discuss the case studies, offering solutions based on Bolman and Deal's four frames or lenses. Like the FLP the ACRL/Harvard Institute aims to get participants to examine their leadership style through a process of intense self-discovery. Participants complete questionnaires to identify personal leadership orientation. They are also required to chart their personal leadership commitment in the context of their organisation and to identify the competing interests and assumptions that need to be overcome in order for them to grow as leaders.

Australasia's Horizon Executive Leadership Programme also bears similarities to the FLP. It is a relatively new initiative having completed its first cycle in February 2009. Sayers and Talvé (2009) provide a useful overview of the programme from the commencement of planning in 2006 through to the graduation of the first cohort. Horizon is designed to prepare senior library and information managers for leadership positions. The catchment area is Australia and New Zealand, which presents challenges given the distance involved in participating in two residential workshops, one in Melbourne and one in Sydney. The programme is run by the not-for-profit CAVAL company. Like the FLP and Frye, there's a strong emphasis on strategic leadership and developing the capacity of participants to lead, network and collaborate strategically. In 2009, 12 senior library and information managers completed the programme. The main elements, spread over a four-month period, are two residential workshops – of three and two days duration, a project, a mentoring scheme and 4 coaching tele-workshops, alongside exposure to a number of practicing library and business leaders. Learning is supplemented via a range of online resources including Facebook.

The Aurora Foundation also offers librarians and staff from associated information sectors from Australia and New Zealand to explore leadership concepts and maximise their own potential, through a five-day formal programme which commenced in 1995. It bears some similarities to the Frye, Harvard, Horizon and FLP programmes, utilising some similar learning methodologies – a combination of experiential learning, group and individual exercises, and a mentoring programme. However the target group is quite different, with participants being early career librarians, who have a minimum of two years and

a maximum of seven years experience. Most participants in the four other programmes would have in excess of seven years experience and are required to be already in leadership postions.

Since the commencement of the FLP in 2006, some participants have documented their experiences in professional journals. Articles by Stevenson (2006) and Cox, Kilner and Young (2006) in *Sconul Focus* were intended to be the first two in a series of brief accounts of the experiences of the 2006-7 cohort; unfortunately the series was not completed. Both articles use the word 'extraordinary' to describe the course and both emphasize the delegates' sense of surprise not only at the intensity of the experience but also at the manner in which teaching is delivered and the amount of attention to self awareness, self discovery and self revelation. The fact that some of the 2009-10 cohort were similarly surprised at the nature of the course suggests that perhaps more details should be provided at the application stage. The programme timetable has changed since these articles were written, when there were two modules of 4 day's and 1 week's duration. Jolly, Chelin and Wilson (2008) offer a more discursive, fuller article covering the course as it currently is, describing the tools and stratagems module by module and giving three individual responses to the question 'what did we gain?' This is offset with a brief statement of context. Brewerton (2010), a participant in the 2009-2010 cohort, outlines distinctive features of the course, reiterates the structure and is eloquent on the issue of the personal insight that comes from undergoing what is agreed by all these writers to be an intensive year's work. All of the authors agree that learning to learn to lead rather than being taught leadership was deeply satisfying and that the conduits through which this learning was delivered were sophisticated in design with a solid theoretical and practical foundation.

Arnold, Nickel and Williams (2008) surveyed 230 participants in library leadership programmes. Their findings assert that these programmes have a vital role to play in creating the next generation of library leaders. However, their findings are based on feedback from participants. There is a need for systematic evaluation research of the FLP and other programmes, possibly using a control group or some other scientific method of evaluation.

The above overview aims to provide a context for the leadership programme described in this article, in terms of current similarly structured programmes aimed to develop senior librarians and information professionals.

Background/context

This section briefly outlines the current higher education climate in which the four authors of this article work.

There are seven universities in the Republic of Ireland. There are also 14 Institutes of Technology focusing on applied research and a number of other further education institutions. Student numbers are relatively small by international standards. The Irish Higher Education Authority Statistics for 2008/2009 give undergraduate numbers in the university sector as 80,633 and postgraduate as 107,899. Overall postgraduate numbers increased by 8.8% between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, while undergraduate numbers increased by 2.7% between 2007/2008 and 2008/2009 (HEA, 2009). The substantial increase in postgraduate numbers is in keeping with government policy, where a move from a technology-importing, low-cost economy to a knowledge-based society with a high capacity for innovation is at the centre of Ireland's strategy for economic development. Following a period of significant expansion of the Irish higher education sector from the mid-nineties, the recent collapse of the building industry, which fuelled Ireland's rapid expansion, has led to major cutbacks in government investment in higher education. This has resulted in significant reductions in university budgets, demands from government for greater accountability and value for money and requirements for increased cooperation and collaboration across the higher-education sector. Other significant developments in the sector during the last decade include an emphasis on research-led teaching, the application of learner-centred approaches to teaching, the enhancing of the student experience, increased internationalization through partnerships and alliances with other universities and a diversification of funding sources.

Prior to the economic downturn Irish university libraries had a tradition of co-operation and adopted a consortial approach to staff training, library access, and tendering for journal and database purchasing. More recently the focus has been on securing government funding for collaborative projects. In 2010 the Libraries of NUI Maynooth, University College Dublin (UCD), Dublin City University (DCU) and Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) made a successful bid for project funding from the National Digital Learning Resources – Learning Innovation Community Support (NDLR LinCS) 2010 programme. The topic for this collaboration is bibliometrics. The project will result in small "Reusable Learning Objects" (RLOs) that can be selected and packaged in a number of ways for local use. An online tutorial on bibliometrics will also be produced. In October 2010 the Irish Minister for Education launched RIAN www.rian.ie, a portal to the publicly-funded research output of the seven universities and the DIT. Funding for this initiative came primarily from the Irish government's Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) for higher education, which underpinned the development of local repositories and the national portal. In 2010, the NUI Maynooth Library in collaboration with An Foras Feasa (Institute for Research in Irish Historical and Cultural Traditions), NUI Maynooth and National Institute for Regional and Spatial Analysis (NIRSA), NUI Maynooth was successful in a research bid for a National Audio-Visual Repository, led by the Royal Irish Academy (RIA), an all-Ireland, independent, academic body that promotes study and excellence in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. The NAVR research consortium, with

NUI Maynooth as a leading partner, will develop a Trusted Digital Repository (TDR) and access repository for the humanities and qualitative social sciences. With government stressing the new for cooperation between higher education institutions, and with further cuts to the national higher education budget anticipated, collaborative projects are likely to increase. In order to remain central to the higher education experience and to develop added-value services, university libraries need to position themselves strategically; to do this strong leadership is necessary. The calibre of the training offered by the Leadership Foundation has been recognised by Irish library directors and as of 2010, eight librarians from five of the seven universities in the Republic of Ireland have completed the Future Leaders Programme.

Before continuing with the discussion of the programme it may be instructive to note a cultural difference these four authors noted between the UK and Irish higher education library environment. There are significant differences between the industrial relations environments in Ireland and in the UK. Some staffing solutions and strategies apparently common in the UK would be very unusual in Ireland where, until recently, employers, trade unions and the government worked together as social partners signing off on national agreements with the effect of creating industrial relations harmony. This approach which worked well at a time of boom may not be as successful in the current economic climate.

The Future Leaders Programme

Acceptance to the course is by means of an application and a telephone interview. The application process requires a detailed outline of a leadership project to be managed by the applicant during the year. While it is not vital that the proposed change project be brought to fruition over the year, for the purposes of a successful initial application the project should be one that is likely to test the applicant's aspiration to lead beyond the boundaries of his or her functional responsibilities.

The course is presented in three modules, focusing respectively on the individual, the team and the organisation. Modules are delivered over the course of a year, during residential training sessions, each of three very full days' duration in February, July and November, with a capstone day to wrap up in March of the following year. The following sections briefly describe the modules, activity between modules and the Capstone day.

Module 1

Module 1 encourages the individual to examine him or herself, developing greater self-awareness and self-reflection in the context of his or her leadership style. Participants consider their professional identity, vision, values and leadership behaviours. Preparatory work for module 1 includes the completion of two surveys – the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile and the

McCann Window on Work Values tool. Other preparatory activities include reviewing a book on the topic of leadership to share with participants via a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and reviewing a movie in the context of leadership style and the issues it raises.

A key element of module 1 is learning the value of reflection; a central skill which participants develop throughout the programme is that of action enquiry. This is a powerful tool in assisting individuals to clearly identify their leadership style, their professional habits and the principles which underline both. The attendees are encouraged to raise both the quality of their thinking and of their questioning of themselves and others; it is here that the value of the group as a mini-laboratory becomes clear. The course facilitators question and guide the manner and efficacy of delegates' questioning of themselves and one another with the immediate effect of increased self-awareness and reflection. This is driven by the participants' wish to be useful to their learning colleagues.

Between modules

At the outset the group (twenty in the 2009/2010 cohort) is divided into three 'action learning sets', each with a facilitator, which meet a further three times within the year, each meeting lasting one day. During these meetings the group assist and challenge each other with probing questions, usually, but not necessarily, related to the delegates' change projects. The set also strives to improve their ability, as a group, to support each other and to develop mentoring skills. These learning sets also meet during the three residential modules. The regular reviewing by the group of the specific issues inherent in each individual's change project provides a platform for practicing the learning and theory being delivered in the lectures and presentations.

The full cohort is also divided into peer-coaching pairs or triads, with the expectation that frequent telephone or email contact will produce opportunities for the individuals to get support and feedback on their approach to dealing with leadership challenges they may encounter as the year progresses.

Filling in the gaps between and among the major elements of the course are exercises such as keeping a reflective journal, reading background material and accessing the VLE.

Module 2

The second module concentrates on team building and relationships. It requires participants to understand the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, the strategies required to build and maintain an effective team and to ensure it remains so in the face of change. Key elements in this module are the alignment of personal values with the demands of leadership, practicing the articulation of a

vision to inspire, motivate and bind a team, and acquiring strategies for dealing with conflict.

Preparatory work includes the completion of the first of two 360-degree feedback exercises. The individual completes the survey and asks a number of colleagues, direct reports and his or her line manager to complete the survey and assess the individual's leadership behaviours using a scoring system. Other preparatory work includes interviewing an inspirational leader, reflecting on a real-life conflict situation and conducting a team review.

Module 3

The third module is dedicated to learning how to lead organisations through change and is chiefly concerned with strategy, the way organisational culture works with or against change and the manner in which resistance presents itself. Participants consider the theories and metaphors around organisational change and explore case studies of major strategic change in organisations.

Preparatory work for module 3 includes the cohort working collaboratively on a PESTLE (political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, environmental) analysis and each individual undertaking a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis and where appropriate, a strategic plan for their own division.

Through these exercises, the participant is encouraged to look at their work in the context of the strategic plan of their institution, government policies, and social, economic and technological trends nationally and internationally. This approach encourages the participant to move beyond inward-looking and compartmentalised perspectives in planning service developments, and to align their departmental priorities with the strategic plan of their institution. This in turn results in fresh and practical considerations of how to match and prioritise resources against the wider strategic plan.

Capstone Day

The year is rounded off with a day-long meeting in which participants give a reflective report on the year. This follows the submission of a written report. The individual also presents a report on their leadership journey which includes a self-assessment of their leadership behaviours, strengths, weaknesses and future direction. The self-assessment is then probed and challenged by the individual's learning set in a supportive context, leading to candid feedback and further reflection. The self-assessment report at the end of the year provides a means for participants to evaluate the effects of the course on a personal and professional level.

The course is delivered in a manner designed to expose even the least reflective among the group to an impressively wide range of learning techniques and current strands of leadership theory. Less than half of the course delivery mechanism is in the form of the traditional reading list and lecture didacticism; the remainder is practical exercises, group work, self- and peer- assessment and interaction with the facilitators.

The purpose of this diversity needs no explication but the effect is immediate – every learning style likely to be met with within a group of 20 or so delegates is catered for, but comfort zones are not respected. From day one the delegate gets an instant and practical demonstration of the effects of doing things differently whether it be articulating one's vision publicly, or altering how one traditionally deals with confrontation. Experiential and transformative learning is ensured through action, reflection and feedback within a supportive atmosphere which itself impresses in the speed with which it manifests itself among a group of erstwhile strangers.

Financial and time issues

The FLP programme requires a high level of sustained commitment over a relatively long period of time. It is a model that will not suit everyone. The formal time commitment demands participation in the three modules (three days or more for each depending on travel logistics), and attendance at three action learning set meetings spread over the year. The preparatory workload is as heavy as the individual chooses to make it – the greater the investment the better the return. The financial investment is not insignificant. In the case of the Irish institutions, to date CONUL has provided a small subsidy to participating institutions. In 2010 this model changed and for the programme 2011, a bursary is awarded to one person on a competitive application process. Given that the three modules are residential, and considering the range of current scholarship covered and depth of the engagement with key leadership issues, in the authors' view it represents value-for-money. This is also the view of their managers.

Although the FLP places significant demands on the participants' institution, in my experience the return on this investment is manifold in terms of participants' acquisition of theories, tools and techniques that have real life application and greatly benefit the organisation. In the current Irish higher education environment the need for strong strategic leadership in the library sector is more important than ever. I believe the FLP can play a significant role in developing this.
Cathal McCauley, University Librarian, National University of Ireland Maynooth and CONUL member

We often pay lip service to the expression 'our staff are our greatest resource' and we also know that we need to leave our libraries in accomplished hands. I

believe our decision to put our time and money into the Future Leaders programme helps us put our words into action.

We have seen the designated FLP projects come to fruition with major positive impact for the Library. We have also seen the participants of the FLP approaching their roles with renewed enthusiasm, commitment and confidence. They have a greater appreciation for the 'BIG PICTURE'. In addition, there has been a motivation from them to others within the organisation, to 'think outside the box'! We can't overlook the participants' ability to influence others in the wider organisation. For Trinity College Library Dublin, it has been an excellent investment for the greater good of the participants and the Library.
Jessie Kurtz, Deputy Librarian, Trinity College Library, Dublin

Like many complex things, the Future Leaders Programme is more than the sum of its parts. The schedule, readings, exercises and group work are impressive and daunting to consider undertaking. But it is what happens between the lines, over dinner, during email and telephone conversations that cements and reinforces the whole and ensures that the committed attendee will come away with clear benefits and with more than was promised at the outset.

This short description of the programme cannot do justice to the benefit it confers on managers who have an opportunity to take a step back from their everyday professional responsibilities, to consider the principles which inform their actions, to experiment with the possible alternatives, and to sit with a group of like-minded professionals who make no demands other than to help and be helped.

Discussion

Whether the FLP achieves its goal of developing future leaders may be seen retrospectively over many years, possibly by monitoring the career progression of FLP alumni over a period. However, this would not take into account the value to the participants above and beyond the goal of promotion: there are less tangible outcomes, which may be more difficult to evaluate, such as increased effectiveness and the ability to impact positively on colleagues in current roles.

At the end of the course in group discussions on the capstone day, it was observed that almost all participants in the fourth cohort evaluated the course in a positive way and acknowledged the profound learning they had experienced during the programme. The following section relates specifically to the changes these four authors experienced.

Changes in our professional practice

The authors have all made significant changes in their professional practice as a direct result of their training experience. The principal areas where these changes have been noted are in relation to the formulation of vision, strategic

thinking, the practical distinction between leadership and management, dealing with conflict and managing change.

Formulation of vision

Prior to the programme, not all of the group had given significant or sufficient thought to the formulation of a vision for our libraries and institutions and of how this related to the overall organisational vision. The importance of developing and articulating a shared vision with stakeholder involvement was brought home to us. Through the course we learned that developing a vision for our service and for ourselves as leaders of that service was critical to our success as leaders.

I began to realise that I do have vision, or at least an underlying conviction about why I do what I do and what it means. My conviction is that the library is an important, dynamic, central element at the heart of the university and my purpose is to ensure its success and growth by sharing that conviction with library staff and the university community. One of the practices I now make use of is to explain this underlying conviction to my colleagues, to frame what we are doing and why we are doing it around this principle and to try to build a shared vision. (Extract from Capstone Day report)

Strategic thinking

A very significant development was the realisation that leaders at all levels needed their work to be informed more consistently by questions of strategy. Frequently this brought us outside our comfort zone, requiring us to develop relationships outside the library to expand our sphere of influence. We see the advantages and the necessity of collaborations and partnerships both across the university and nationally and internationally.

The course gave me the courage to move outside my comfort zone, which is the library and to get more involved in strategic initiatives in the University. The ability to understand the university's strategic goals and direction is critical to understanding the rationale behind major organizational change. I feel I'm more visible and am helping make the library more visible. (Journal extract).

Leadership versus management

The programme emphasised the difference between managing and leading at a strategic level. We realised that in order to provide strategic leadership, we needed to delegate more effectively, and trust our staff to get things done.

I've had to delegate more of the routine things and take a step back and re-evaluate what i'm doing. Sometimes that letting go has been difficult. The concept of the three learning zones was helpful in this – the comfort zone, the learning zone and the accurately-named Oh Hell! zone. I realise a significant

number of things I used to do kept me in the comfort zone. To work at a strategic level, I need to be able to move away from that and realise that it is in the O'hell! zone that the most learning takes place. (Journal extract).

Attentive listening

The value of active listening was emphasised throughout the course and there were many practical opportunities for this. Attentive listening, the probing questions, non-assumption making, the quest for partnership, and the release of all relevant information are all facets of communication which we have tried to work on during the year.

I discovered through reading and reflecting on action inquiry that I need to advocate less and inquire more. I learnt that I didn't need to win points and that it was often enough to listen attentively, and to be confident enough to say "I don't know" without being indecisive. (Extract from final report from Capstone Day).

Conflict

Through the programme, conflict's role as a normal healthy part of growth and learning was elucidated. We learned to understand conflict as an opportunity for personal and organisational growth. Mastering the difficult conversations to which conflict gives rise has proved to be a key communication tool although one requiring a great deal of practice, patience and reflection.

I'm better at having difficult conversations at work. Dealing with conflict is still tricky but I'm better able to do it and I don't agonize before having a difficult conversations. I've also learned how to coach work colleagues informally in how to have difficult conversations. (Journal extract).

Change

Managing change, in a team or at organisational level, was a theme running throughout the programme, prompting each individual to consider changing his/her behaviours. The practice of reflecting on a proposed change project, predicting potential resistance, identifying technical versus adaptive change and identifying the hidden emotional losses that the change may necessitate are activities that we have integrated into our change management practices. Exploring our local organisational cultures and determining how they may inadvertently impede or progress change has also been useful in planning change projects, as has giving consideration to the constancy of change, be it strategic or operational, transformative or incremental.

Where before I considered a change project based on the benefits it would bring to the library, I now also consider changes based on their impact on the university and perhaps the sector. (Extract from final report for Capstone Day).

The authors found the programme went beyond typical management or leadership training courses involving the acquisition of a specific set of techniques or skills, which we all had experienced previously. This was a much deeper experience and has had significant impact on how we perceive ourselves, our colleagues and our organisations; how we experience our role as leaders, how we think and act as professional librarians and our impact on our institutions. What follows is a discussion of some of the programme's most significant learning tools and activities as experienced by this group of four participants.

Learning tools and activities

What follows is a brief description and discussion of the learning tools and activities utilised in the programme. These include 360 degree feedback, interviewing an inspiring leader, a change project, psychometric testing, readings and a reflective journal.

360 Degree Leadership Practice Inventory

This survey is conducted at the beginning and end of the programme and provides an opportunity for work colleagues, direct reports and the participant's line manager to assess leadership behaviours in the individual. Seeking this type of direct feedback from colleagues is a revealing experience, which is not part of the organisational culture in our institutions, and can be challenging. The opportunity for learning is significant but with it comes the risk of emotional discomfort, which itself may initiate a sharp and valuable learning process. The second time the inventory is completed by the same group, at the end of the year, provides a method of evaluating the impact of the programme as observed by the participant's colleagues. Ideally improvements should be seen in many areas. In reality, some participants scored differently in all areas but the pattern of their strengths and weaknesses remained the same, while others scored higher in previously weaker areas and lower in areas in which they previously did well. The 360 only records observed behaviours: it is possible that the participant practices leadership behaviours but that there are not visible. Seeing such a result graphically illustrated may be the impetus for discussion with professional peers and managers to explore why leadership behaviours are not being observed.

Interviewing an inspiring leader

Between modules 1 and 2, all participants had to identify and interview a leader. The specifications of this task were open and allowed participants to choose a leader based on their own criteria. The act of choosing which leader to interview was in itself a learning experience resulting in increased self-awareness about personal values and motivations. The interview was an opportunity to see

leadership skills personified (or not) and to match the theoretical learning from the programme against the practical reality of an individual leader who embodies those skills. Some chose inspiring community leaders, such as politicians, while others interviewed the most senior leaders in their university. A benefit to the latter approach was in providing an opportunity for the interviewer to make themselves known to the interviewee. A common denominator was that all interviewees demonstrated high self-esteem. All interviewees came across as reflective and open, and were less guarded than may have been expected given the sensitivities of their positions.

Change management projects

Part of the application to the Future Leaders Programme included the submission of a proposal for a change project which candidates would lead within their organisation and which could be used during the course of the year to test the tools, and learning acquired in the course. Projects have to be of significant and strategic benefit to the institution, involve the management of change, include varied stakeholders across university functions and provide an opportunity for the participants to stretch their leadership capability beyond their comfort zone. One delegate found the process of drawing up the project proposal to be a useful training in planning work requiring the identification of stakeholders and of strategic relationships. While some participants found the project to be a useful focus or hook for their learning over the year of the FLP, others found it too artificial noting that key learning takes place in the unpredictable events that arise in the working day. It was not uncommon for a participant to modify or switch project in the course of the programme. The project which the participant reported on at each action learning sets allowed learning peers to give feedback based on what they discovered from active listening and probing questions. Regardless of the practical outcome of the project for the individual, it is the existence as a consistent platform, over the year, upon which the action learning sets members could engage with each other, that gives rise to a familiarity which allows very frank questioning and critiquing to be offered and accepted.

The project topics for the authors included developing an online catalogue for special collections, developing an electronic thesis submission strategy, remodelling frontline services, and developing formal staff development policies and procedures. Advancement of projects varied. Those that were completed successfully provided an effective mechanism for senior university management to see tangible results as an outcome of the FLP. However, some projects did not fit into the year-long schedule, while others were altered and in some cases hampered by larger organisational changes and shifting priorities.

Assessment and feedback tools

Prior to the commencement of the FLP, participants were required to complete two surveys – the Margerison-McCann Team Management Profile and the

McCann Window on Work Values. These were perceived as valuable. Each participant received a detailed report which gave recommendations on how to identify and maximise personal strengths and the strengths of others. The opportunity to discuss the team profile on a one-to-one basis with one of the course facilitators, and the detailed suggestions for actions in the report itself were invaluable. The profile gave the individual a dispassionate language in which to describe his/her strengths and areas in need of development.

The Window on Work Values tool provided participants with an opportunity to understand how their behaviours are driven by their work values, how a participant may have conflicting values which leads to inner turmoil and how opposing values affect relationships with colleagues. The information contained in these reports represented a mechanism which may be used every day, to inquire into how one's thoughts, behaviours and actions are affected by one's personality types and work values.

Recommended reading

An extensive reading list is provided with each module of the course. Participants approached reading in different ways. Some summarised and shared summaries while others did not find the extensive recommended reading to suit their learning styles. There was also a US bias to the recommended reading, which necessitated interpreting content in the context of UK and Irish cultures and deciding what to apply and what to discard. Titles which these four authors found useful include *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* by Robert E. Quinn (1996), *The Fundamentals of Leadership* by James M. Kouzes and Barry Posner (2007), *Leadership on the Line* by Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky (2002), *Difficult Conversations* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patten, and Sheila Heen (1999), *Stewardship* by Peter Block (1993), *Servant Leadership* by Robert K. Greenleaf (1977), and *Managing Difficult Conversations at work* by Sue Clark and Mel Myers (2007). The participants noted that the issue of gender in leadership was not reflected in the reading lists.

Guest speakers

Each of the three modules included guest speakers who presented a broad range of views on the current challenges, future trends and leadership issues relating to the changing nature of higher education. The guest speakers included Anne Jarvis, Librarian of Cambridge University; Dr. Celia Whitchurch of the Institute of Education, University of London and author of numerous publications on professional identities in higher education; Les Watson, educational adviser and formerly Pro Vice-Chancellor of Glasgow Caledonian University; Gilly Salmon, Professor of E-learning and Learning Technologies in Leicester University; Professor Kevin Scholes, former Head of Sheffield Hallam Business School and co-author of *Exploring Corporate Strategy*, and Ewart Wooldridge, CBE, Chief Executive of the UK Leadership Foundation. Topics included the

changing nature of student learners and teaching technologies, the financial constraints that universities face, real life case studies of successful organisational change and the growing competition among universities worldwide which is being facilitated by technological developments in distance learning. These external speakers provided insights on the wider institutional, sectoral, national and international factors that are increasingly challenging the higher education environment.

Reflective journal

An early recommendation of the programme was to keep a reflective diary for recording insights and daily experiences. A pre-set list of questions was provided as a prompt for those unused to this activity; however participants were free to structure their writing in whatever way they wished. Writing responses to questions such as 'What were the most significant events of the day?', 'When did I feel most alive?', 'What did I learn today?' 'How did I feel during the day?', 'Did I have any particularly meaningful conversations?', helped to put clarity on experiences and emotions. These questions and this structured journal keeping process is based on Smith (2006) *Keeping a Journal* helped those who did it develop their skills of reflection. Some participants found the diary to have been a rapid means of getting into a reflective and inquiring mode and to be of value particularly if done routinely and regularly. The act of writing assisted in gaining perspective on the day's events and in clarifying issues.

Other tools and methods

While the focus was on action learning, we were also exposed to a range of other tools and techniques including appreciative inquiry, force field analysis, stakeholder analysis, and the Johari window tool.

Conclusion

We would suggest that rather than saying that leadership can be acquired through participation in the FLP, that learning how to learn to lead is the lesson being offered. It is more than the acquisition of a set of skills. It is a long process, one that constantly reveals potential, and new strengths within ourselves and others. We acknowledged that we were already leading in many ways, and this programme helped us to strive to continue doing so with more skill. We recognise that there are many leadership styles which can be applied in different circumstances. We have a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of diversity in organisations, appreciating the richness that different personality types and ways of working bring. There is no one "off the shelf" leadership style. We learned to see our role as encouraging, facilitating, and supporting other people to develop as leaders.

The higher-education environment in Ireland is facing new challenges and is going through a period of deep change. We now face the challenge of leading staff who have experienced stringent pay cuts, something unheard of heretofore in the public service. No posts can be filled on a permanent basis and there is uncertainty around contracts and contract renewal. Each of our institutions is affected by a challenging industrial relations environment. Trying to maintain and develop new services at this time involves making radical decisions, having difficult conversations, restructuring, closer alignment with institutional and national objectives and reshaping our vision for the times we are in.

Sending employees on the course demands a significant investment of resources both in terms of finance and in terms staff time. Irish librarians attending UK-based courses can incur high costs. Nationally, from the perspective of CONUL (Consortium of National and University Libraries) and the funding it provides, there is recognition that the Future Leaders Programme provides powerful and long-lasting benefits for the profession, by cultivating a common leadership ethos and shared vision amongst the Irish institutions. The greater the number of people and institutions that can avail of this type of leadership development the greater the nationwide penetration and impact, thereby delivering a better return on investment. The development of a targeted strategy by CONUL, to build a cohort of future leaders would represent a strategic approach to succession planning on a national scale, raising the profile of the academic library and advancing the position of the academic library profession as a leadership force within higher education in Ireland. The establishment of a bursary for 2011 and the continuing commitment of individual CONUL librarians to support participants in the programme is a very positive move in this direction.

There is scope for exploring how to extend the benefits of the programme beyond the individuals who have participated in it and of addressing how to disseminate the learning to the wider profession. The authors would like to hope that by sharing their experiences, they have taken a step towards this.

References

Arnold, Jennifer, Nickel, Lisa T. & Williams, Lisa. “Creating the next generation of library leaders.” New Library World, 109, 9/10 (2008): 444-456.

Bolman, Lee G. and Terence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership.* 3rd. Ed. San Francisco: Wiley, 2003.

Brewerton, Antony. “Not your usual training programme.” *Engage* Autumn (2010): 12.

Cox, John, Kilner, Annie & Young, Dilys. “Taking steps that make you feel dizzy: personal reflections on module 1 of the Future Leaders programme.” *Sconul Focus 38* (2006): 26-29.

Fieldhouse, Maggie. “On becoming Fryed: a report from the Frye Leadership Institute.” *Sconul Focus*, 32 (2004): 16-18.

Gjelten, Dan and Fishel, Teresa “Developing leaders and transforming libraries: leadership institutes for librarians.” *College & Research Libraries News*, 67,7 (2006): 409-412.

Higher Education Authority Network (HEAnet). “Student Statistics” www.hea.ie (accessed 5 September 2010)

Jolly, Liz, Chelin, Jackie, Wilson, Neil. “Leadership – it’s a habit of mind.” *Library and Information Update* 9 (2008): 36-38.

Mason, Florence M. And Wetherbee, Louella. “Learning to Lead: An analysis of current training programs for library leadership.” *Library Trends*, 53,1 (2004): 187-217.

Sayers, Richard & Talvé, Annie. “Looking beyond the horizon: Founding an executive leadership program for senior library managers in Australasia,” *Library Management*, 30, 8/9 (2009): 509-522.

Smith, Mark J. *Writing and Keeping Journals* *www.infed.org/research/keeping_a_journal.htm* (accessed 1 November 2010)

Stevenson, Valerie, “Future Leaders Programme, March 2006-2007,” *Sconul Focus,* 37: 19-20

Helen Fallon is Deputy Librarian at the National University of Ireland Maynooth, Ireland. Her professional interests include academic writing, organisational change and development and libraries in developing countries. Helen.b.fallon@nuim.ie

Jane Maxwell is an Archivist working in the Manuscripts & Archives Research Library at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. Her professional interests include 18th Century Women’s letters. She has recently managed a project to put the Library’s manuscripts catalogue online. Her professional interests include Samuel Beckett and 18th century women’s history. She has published articles relating to the history of Trinity College Library Dublin and research sources for the history of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. maxwellj@tcd.ie

Ciara McCaffrey is is the Head of Administration in the Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick, located in the south west of Ireland. She is responsible for Human Resources, finance, management information, quality, legislative matters, communications and marketing. Ciara.McCaffrey@ul.ie

Seamus McMahon is Deputy Librarian at University College Cork, Cork, Ireland. His professional interests include staff development, library building design, organisational change, and innovative service delivery. He is currently Chairman of the national ANLTC Committee www.anltc.ie , a training cooperative between Irish University Libraries. s.mcmahon@ucc.ie