

**"Checkered" Journeying
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ABSTRACT

"Checkered" Journeying

The high hopes of EEO/Affirmative Action legislation in the '80's promised that by the millennium women would be achieving equal pay for equal work, would be in senior decision-making positions, would have family friendly workplaces and flexible working practices. The reality of actions from that promising legislation was reviewed by the previous EEO Officer for the University of Tasmania in the "Review of Equal Employment Opportunity for Women at the University of Tasmania 1992-1998, Direction for 1999-2002". Following receipt of this Review by Academic Senate and University Council in 1999, new strategies were endorsed to "Enable Women's Leadership in the University" and new focus is to be given to women's, and other equity group, issues to develop the University of Tasmania into one of Australia's leading universities. My journey into EEO in 1995 - 1997 and my recent return in mid-1999, will highlight some of the challenges faced, some strategies for achievement and reflection on "success" and "failure".

A workshop format of 1 hour, using the Women in Leadership Model copyrighted by Edith Cowan Uni to present personal journey, a perceived reality at the University of Tasmania, and provide opportunities for participant discussion, reflection and action planning on the four capacities of strategist, public voice, work and identity competence and creator of environments.

Introduction

In 1992, along with a number of other universities, the University of Tasmania introduced a Women in Leadership program with the consultant who was working with Edith Cowan University, Dr Pat Klink. In Tasmania, our program targeted academic women but a few general staff women were also invited to participate. All participants self-nominated and were supported by their Head of School to participate.

Slide 1: Leadership Model

The Dimensions of Leadership Model, copyrighted by Edith Cowan University in 1992, provided a theoretical foundation for the program:

Strategist: to know one's organisation, community, channels of communication.

Public Voice: to speak out on issues, be visible, manage silence.

Creator of Environments: to know the process for decision making, interpersonal relationships to know where we work best.

Self: to know one's own ethics, values, morality, competence.

Within one's University and society, one can understand one's status, identify their values, and work to achieve their goals.

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In 1999, the Executive Officer, EEO, presented a Review of EEO for Women at the University of Tasmania, 1992 – 1998. A copy is available on the University's website at <http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/eoo/eoo.html> The Review identified key eeo policies and programs undertaken at the University of Tasmania since 1992, the year the first data was available of the new University following the amalgamation of the old University of Tasmania with the Tasmanian Institute of Technology. The Review states that it did not attempt to analyse reasons as to women's position in the University or in society as a whole.

However, the Review stated in its overview that

“many outstanding staff have worked with dedication to contribute to knowledge, teaching and to the operation of the University. The University is a community whose members are related by strong bonds of interdependence. It is a community which provides support and encouragement to all its members and which rewards individual excellence.”

The Dimensions of Leadership Model, copyrighted by Edith Cowan University in 1992, reflects that a leader knows the context of the university within society and their place within that context. The Model provides a Framework of Leadership Capacities: self or work and identity competence, creator of environments, strategist and public voice.

Women in Leadership Model: University and Societal Context

A brief statement was just made regarding the University of Tasmania context – one where individual excellence is valued.

For myself, I came into the University and the Tasmanian community context, through a journey which originally was part of a working holiday from 1974 – 1977, when my husband completed his undergraduate study and I needed a break from full-time work, part-time study and trepidation that I would not complete my undergraduate work in a timely fashion. My original goal was to become a home economics teacher with ideals of teaching nutrition, child care and family development, home budgeting, and clothing construction and maintenance to girls of primarily low-income status to increase their capacity to raise their social and economic status within their community. However, by the time I completed my undergraduate degree and my children were in school, the home economics curriculum had shrunk to an introduction to cooking and sewing. The subject was being taught as if there was no capacity for groups of students that included boys to learn about nutrition and human development at grades 7 and 8. In evaluating my skills and experience – and the experiences of my husband in tertiary education employment, I accepted the challenge of a Dean and in 1989 applied for a position as Faculty Officer at the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology and was successful.

Later I as a participant in the University's 1992 commencing Women in Leadership program, I remember much discussion on the place of women in the University and the community – which at the time, we confined to Tasmania. I was then the senior administrative officer within the School of Nursing, one of the few cross-campus departments, both within the TSIT and now in the amalgamated University. My family of husband, two school-age sons and my mother migrated to Australia in 1984 when my husband accepted a lecturing position in the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education. We had previously lived in Tasmania and Victoria from 1974-1977 at the time of the teacher shortages. Our first son was born in Launceston in 1976, the year I completed a Diploma of Teaching.

Some of you would remember that in those days, a woman was required to resign from their teaching post or their studentship when pregnant. I was not on a studentship and I intended to continue my study. As a home economics student, I had probably the only female department head and she supported me to stay in the course. She was able to find a teacher who would supervise me and a principal who would accept a pregnant student teacher. I commenced the 9 week practicum in June in the 6th month of pregnancy on condition that should the supervising teacher or the principal state that I was not fit to continue, or if on the School's receipt of student or parent complaint, I would terminate the practicum immediately. On completion of my practicum I continued attending classes until the day of delivery and returned immediately following confinement a fortnight later, bringing my carry basket with infant to the final 3 or 4 weeks of class. There was no childcare available at the college nor did I then have local family relations. It was 14 years later that I obtained full-time

employment at the TSIT and until about 1994 there was no on-campus childcare available for students or employees.

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REFLECTION 1:

Reflect on where you were when you joined the university sector for employment.

What knowledge did you bring with you about universities?

About the place of women within universities?

Is/was there a relationship between original goals for life work and eeo principles?

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Women in Leadership Model: Self and Creator of Environments

In the University's EEO Review, it is recorded that 25% of academic staff were women in 1992 and had increased to a high of 29% in 1996, but reduced to 28% in 1998. In 1992, only 1 woman was above the rank of Senior Lecturer – (the Professor of Nursing, from the TSIT). By 1998, 9 women were above Senior Lecturer or 8% of all academic staff above the rank of Senior Lecturer. At Senior Lecturer level in 1992, 21 were women or 11% of all senior lecturers. In 1998, 30 were women or 18% of all senior lecturers. In 1992, the University employed 118 women at lecturer level (34% of all lecturers). In 1998, 91 women were employed at Lecturer level (38% of all lecturers). During this period of decline, men also declined by 74 from 225 in 1992 to 151 in 1998.

Overall, there was a net decline of 12 female academics between 1992 and 1998, compared to a net decline of 107 male academics. This represents a 15% decline in overall academic numbers. The proportion of female academics declined by 6.1% compared to 18.6% of male academics.

An analysis was also completed for promotions during the period 1994-1998. Women constituted 29% of all successful applicants. However, the Review revealed a lower proportion of female Level B academics applied for promotion than male Level B academics and that the females were proportionately less successful than male Level B academics.

For general staff, in 1992 the University employed 3 female Executives (23% of all Executives) and in 1998 3 female staff above Level 10 (23% of all staff above Level 10). There was no change in the actual numbers of male and female staff employed as Executives or above Level 10 during this period. The classification system of 1992 was changed in 1994 and only the above statement can be an accurate comparison.

1994, 22% of all general staff employed at HEO Levels 7-9 were women, compared to 35% of all general staff at these levels being women in 1998. Female staff increased by 7 during the period, while male staff declined by 20. In 1994, 9% of female general staff were employed at HEO 7-9 and 10% in 1998. This compares to 30% of male general staff in 1994 and 28% in 1998.

In 1994, 43% of all general staff employed at HEO levels 5-6 were women, while in 1998 the proportion raised to 51%. The actual number of women increased by 42 while men increased by 9. In 1994, 17% of all female general staff were employed at HEO 5-6 and this increased to 26.5% in 1998. This compares to 29.5% of male general staff in 1994 and 36% of male staff in 1998.

In 1994, 72% of all general staff employed at Levels 0-4 were women compared with 73.4% in 1998. In 1994, 73.3% of all female general staff were employed at HEO levels 0-4 compared to 61.9% in 1998. This compares to 37.2% of male general staff employed at HEO Levels 0-4 in 1994 and 32.4% in 1998.

From the personal perspective, I commenced employment at the equivalent of HEO5 and through the 1993/4 reclassification was pegged at HEO7. The reclassification process involved each staff member rewriting their position description that their Head of School signed off or renegotiated. Staff could request their position to be reviewed for reclassification. To my recollection, no staff development or EEO programs were institutionally organised to assist staff with this process. Within the WUN:WIL program, this was a discussion topic, as well as in other forums of the University – however, it was an essentially individual initiative. Within School of Nursing, I organised the Careers Officer of the University's Student Services to lead a workshop on describing work, skills, levels of responsibility, and corporate knowledge to enable my staff to complete the exercise. We also used the South Australian Department of Labour's *A Window on Women's Skills* as a reference tool for describing work. As the supervisor of all but the Head's secretary, I then worked with them to finalise their position descriptions. I obtained the support of the Head that the reclassification committee should review all the position descriptions within the School and 4 of 7 were successful.

Of these seven staff, 4 are still with the University and 3 have progressed in their careers, two retired or accepted redundancy packages and one has remained at the same reclassified level but through child rearing is fractionally appointed. Of those who have progressed, 2 have refused to participate in the WUN:WIL program as they believed that there is equal opportunity within the University – that women just need to get on with their business and they will progress if that is their goal. My participation in the WUN:WIL program enabled me to look for career paths within the University, to build networks and resources, to gain greater understanding of management practices, procedures and power structures within the University. I could see the need for supportive environments for staff – both male and female – to discuss policies, strategies, and visions in various forums. The WUN:WIL program provided one forum by

crossing boundaries of general and academic staff, departments, and campus. It also focused on the skills and experience of women, and these women supported each other to achieve career goals. I could see that to progress in the University, I needed to move into central administration. I had a broad range of experiences in financial and people management, technology, and a tolerance for change and difference in people that could strengthen the University's commitment to equal opportunity in and through a position in Human Resources or in Student Services. At HEO7, there are few opportunities for advancement and there was no culture of internal transfers/secondments.

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REFLECTION 2:

What are my networks?

What are my competencies?

What and where is my career goal?

How might I get there?

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Women in Leadership Model: Strategist and Public Voice

The Review of EEO for Women was produced at a strategic point in time. Strategic planning within the University had moved to a three-year cycle. The Executive Officer, EEO, having been on secondment for three years, needed to review outcomes and propose a new three-year plan. There was a new Vice-Chancellor. The new Deputy-Chancellor was female and there were now 9 Associate Professor/Professor women on staff. The University's Equal Opportunity Committee recommended an analysis and review of the University's EEO policies and initiatives, with some members recognising that it appeared little had been achieved and there was a window of opportunity for stronger action. On receiving the Review by the Equal Opportunity Committee, a Working Party was established to determine strategies for bringing to the University community's attention the Review and the recommended EEO Strategic Plan.

The Working Party was successful in achieving an introduction to the 1999 EEO Operational Plan by the Vice-Chancellor and broad distribution of the Review and Plan through Academic Senate, University Council and Deans and Heads of School and Section. The Vice-Chancellor stated "the number of female staff in senior positions remains disappointingly low and it is regrettable that in a number of respects demonstrated in the Review the University has lagged behind its Australian counterparts." They also recommended a launch of the Review and EEO Plan that was endorsed when revamped to include a broad equal opportunities forum combined with the launch in Tasmania of the AVCC's Promoting Women to Professor Action Plan.

A further report was requested by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor which compared other Australian university Women in Leadership initiatives with those at the University of

Tasmania and to provide specific strategies that might be achievable to increase the numbers of women in senior academic and senior administrative positions. This report entitled *Enabling Women's Leadership in the University* reviewed a number of Women in Leadership initiatives and presented a number of strategies for the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Four strategies were endorsed including the general equal opportunity forum, a restructured WUN:WIL program of informal discussion groups, and Faculty/Division EEO seminars. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor invited women at Academic level C and above and HEO8 and above to these discussion groups with a planning committee self-nominated primarily from women on the AVCC Senior Women's Register.

With the personal journey: when I heard the EEO Officer was taking a secondment in 1994, I asked about what was being done to fill the position. The response was that it was to be filled by the woman who had been coordinating the WUN:WIL program in late 1994. However, in early 1995, she approached me knowing I had inquired about the position. She had to resign due to family responsibilities and she wanted to recommend me as a replacement. I agreed and provided a CV. I didn't hear anything for a number of weeks and queried a senior member of Human Resources. I was told the position was still vacant, that they did not think that anyone was being considered and if I wanted the position that I should speak to the Director of HR. With trepidation, I did that day and a fortnight later I was seconded/temporarily transferred to the position and was at the Sydney "Chilly Climate" conference. I see myself as a quiet person who can advocate for others. I see myself as one who seeks to understand the political climate – "the game", the position of "players", the potential outcomes of action and inaction, accepting of responsibility, and committed to fair play. I saw the EEO position as one where one could meet, and hopefully influence, the decision makers, where one could advocate for the less-advantaged/powerful yet essential staff, where one could make the rhetoric of strategic plans, policies and enterprise agreements achieve the goals of the University and the community to produce graduates who had been treated fairly by staff who model fairness and are themselves treated fairly. I learned many things during that three year period which started as an 8 month secondment then extended another year, then 4 months then a further 8 months. During my annual leave to return to my substantive position, the position was declared redundant and I accepted redeployment to the restructured position of Staff Development Coordinator within HR. And then in July this year, I returned temporarily to the EEO position during a further restructure of HR. A few weeks ago, I was substantively appointed to the EEO position. I now anticipate developing my leadership capacities further, demonstrating greater confidence in the EEO role and advocating more strongly for equal opportunity and fairness for all.

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REFLECTION 3:

Have we assessed the outcomes of our EEO/AA programs across a significant period of time?

Can we say that our university is at the forefront of best practice?

What is it that must be done to achieve fairness for all at your university?

Do you have the strategic support/window and the opportunity for the voice of equity groups to be heard? How can you take advantage of the window or advocate for opportunities?

*Slide 7***Plan of Action**

The Review recommends strategies that must primarily be owned by the Faculties and Divisions. The Vice-Chancellor has stated that these are not “optional extras” and should “be seen as part and parcel of the Performance Appraisal Management procedures now in place in this University”. But essentially it has been left to those who during the period of the Review could have made changes but did not. I may need to pressure the Vice-Chancellor to ensure he includes eeo as a performance measure. The *Token Woman* Forum will be the first formal forum by the University since amalgamation to actually discuss equal opportunity and the issues that face the equity groups. This may be the first time that other equity groups within the University staff will be recognised. A Working Party has recently been established to develop a Racial Discrimination Action Plan, following the model of the Disability Action Plan endorsed by Council in 1998 and commenced implementation in 1999. A current study into position titles and selection outcomes is revealing some interesting data that will probably be confronting to a number of people. There is much work to be done.

For me? In 1995, I was told there was no need for the EEO position – the University could do without the position being filled. In 1997 as I was to return to my position in a school, I was told that I should be glad I wasn't staying in EEO as it was a dying field and held no opportunities. In mid-1999, when I stated that I was returning to EEO temporarily there was little encouragement that anything could be achieved, it was a waste of my talents. I have said in the past and I will continue to say, it would be best if there was no need for an EEO position and I will work to abolish it through performance indicators that document changes in behaviour which lead to equal opportunities, equal outcomes and fairness for all.

I'm involved in a number of working parties and consultations to address the lack of adequate EEO performance to date as quoted by the Vice-Chancellor when I commenced this talk. I'm striving to support individual staff through identification and recognition of those senior staff who are “on side” and for those staff to be raising the EEO banner in their Faculty and Divisional meetings. I am listening to staff at all levels and developing a greater capacity to have a public voice, to be strategic, to create environments for learning and change, and to be myself.

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REFLECTION 4.

What are your capacities which need developing for further effectiveness?

Identify some key performance measures to provide feedback that your work is achieving changes in behaviour?

What will be one indicator that will satisfy you in EEO work and enable you to confidently move on?

Conclusion

To conclude, the Women in Leadership Dimensions of Leadership Model provide a framework for looking at one's self and one's potential to affect change within an organisation, in this case a university, within its societal context. Reflecting on one's identity – knowing one's self – our values, one's competencies, developing and testing one's capacities as a strategist, creator and public voice – allows one to gain confidence, to increase one's understanding of the work environment and to act responsibly towards one's self and those around them.

The Review pointed out that despite these years of monitoring outcomes of EEO policies and practices, little had changed at the University of Tasmania to address issues of equal opportunity. Other research, not referenced in this paper, states that for the degree of change required, small achievements are significant and require a stronger, more strategic effort by senior management. For the University of Tasmania, it is timely that greater commitment by senior management and Council to building on these small achievements is now being made during a period of budget restraints and staff reprofiling, in a community which recently passed the strongest anti-discrimination legislation within Australia and with a reducing population base and low tertiary participation rate.

Kathy Mumford

25 November 1999

Handouts (available on the University of Tasmania Human Resources web page for EEO: <http://www.admin.utas.edu.au/hr/eo.html>):

The Women's University Network: Women in Leadership Program

WUN:WIL Leadership Model and Leadership Capacities

References available on the HR website: Review and Enabling Women Reports
