

Learning and leadership: Evaluation of an Australian rural leadership program

Wendy Madsen
Cathy O'Mullan
Helen Keen-Dyer
Central Queensland University

Leadership programs have been extensively promoted in rural communities in Australia. However, few have been evaluated. The results of the evaluation of a rural leadership program provided in this paper highlight the need for adult learning theories to be more overtly identified and utilised as the basis of planning and implementing leadership programs. Transformative learning theory and social learning theory were used to explain the impact the program had for participants and to provide insight into how similar programs could be enhanced.

Keywords: rural leadership; adult learning; non-formal learning

Introduction

Leadership has been hailed as an important element within communities in order to enhance local decision making and responsibility (Gray, Williams & Phillips, 2005) and to build community capacity, cohesiveness and community resilience (Walker & Salt, 2012; Wilson, 2012). As such, leadership programs, particularly in rural communities, have proliferated in Australia over the past 15 years. However, there has been little evaluation of these programs, either in terms of outcomes or regarding the educational principles that underpin the delivery of the programs. This paper examines the delivery of one rural leadership program in rural Queensland, Australia. Using a case based approach, the results provide an avenue of exploring why the participants found this program transformed their understanding of themselves and the way they can work in their communities. In particular, this paper locates these results within a framework of adult learning, drawing on transformative learning theory and social theory of learning, particular the idea of communities of practice. We argue that the effectiveness of this program depended on the success of the facilitator in embedding a number of key adult learning principles in the delivery of the program and use these principles to point to how the program could be enhanced.

Background

Rural leadership programs have been increasingly supported by governments in Australia as part of a shift in political ideology that encourages the development of local solutions to local problems, and thus promoted as part of a strategy for long term sustainability of rural communities (Buultjens, Ambrosoli & Dollery, 2012; Gray, Williams & Phillips, 2005). However, these programs have often fallen short of intended goals, particularly in regards to enhancing adaptive capacity of communities, a key feature in communities gaining the confidence and skills necessary to plan for and implement solutions for local problems (Davies, 2007; Davies, 2009). This relates to an emphasis that has been placed on developing individual skills and knowledge in those who have been identified, or who

identify themselves, as leaders as opposed to developing leadership qualities within the communities as a whole. These different approaches to leadership programs not only have significant implications to how leadership is developed in rural communities, but also draw on very different ways of learning.

Leadership programs, irrespective of whether they build adaptive capacity or contribute to individual skills and knowledge, provide an opportunity for adult learning. Those programs that aim to develop personal skills of participants, known as 'transactional leadership', tend to focus on issues such as problem solving and conflict management and developing grant writing skills. The rationale underlying these programs is that enhancing the skills of individual leaders will result in these people being able to provide solutions for organisational and local problems; a rationale that is based on leaders being 'experts' within their communities (de Guerre & Taylor, 2004; Gray, Williams & Phillips, 2005; Davies, 2007). Other programs take a more community based approach and look to develop personal skills that contribute towards building community networks and cohesiveness so the community as a whole can identify its own problems and solutions (Walker & Gray, 2009; Rasmussen, Armstrong & Chazdon, 2011; Clark & Gong, 2011; Allen & Lachapelle, 2012; Apaliyah et al., 2012; Easterling & Millesen, 2012; Keating & Gasteyer, 2012). There has been considerable debate within the literature regarding the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches to leadership training (Zagorsek, Dimovski & Skerlavaj, 2009; Clarke, 2013). However, regarding those programs designed for rural communities, those that emphasise leadership as a form of building community capacity, known as 'transformational leadership', appear to be more successful (Davies, 2007; Davies, 2009). Unfortunately, rural leadership programs in Australia, as elsewhere, have not been systematically and rigorously evaluated, with a number of researchers calling for more evaluation (Clark & Gong, 2011; Van De Valk & Costas, 2011). Furthermore, few leadership programs, particularly those that are focused on community development, seem to identify what learning principles have been used to guide the development of the programs.

Adult learning in non-formal settings has not had the attention in educational research of other sectors. However, there have been significant gains in understanding in the last four decades. Stephen Brookfield (1986) suggested adults learned as a result of a transaction between adults in which experiences are interpreted, skills and knowledge acquired and actions taken. He outlined six principles that underpinned adult learning: participation; respect; collaboration; praxis; critical reflection; and self-direction. These principles are apparent in a number of adult learning theories, although their emphasis varies: those from the cultural historical tradition; social embeddedness of learning theories; critical theory; communities of practice; political activism learning; and social constructionism (Illeris, 2007). While transformative learning is occasionally identified as providing the underlying theoretical foundation for leadership training (see, for example, de Guerre & Taylor, 2004; Madsen, 2010; Drago-Severson et al., 2011), it is clear transformational leadership programs draw heavily on social learning strategies of discourse, participation, reflection and cooperation even if the learning theories themselves are not overtly identified (Ellis & Scott, 2003; Miller & Kilpatrick, 2005; Kearney & Zuber-Skerritt, 2012).

While there has been much theorising within the field of adult learning, there seem to be fewer advances made regarding evaluation, particularly within non-formal settings. Brookfield (1986) suggested evaluation was not done well in adult learning programs because of a lack of time and resources and because few adult models of learning adequately accounted for evaluation; those that did tended to take a narrow quantitative approach, primarily self-reported questionnaires, based on predetermined objectives, a process in and of itself that does not sit comfortably with the majority of adult learning theories. Evaluations based on quantitative data are very prevalent in leadership programs, particularly those that have focused on developing transactional leadership skills as these can more readily be measured (Van De Valk & Constas, 2011), although mixed methodologies are becoming more apparent (Millitello & Benham, 2010; Clark & Gong, 2011). Incorporating more qualitative approaches to evaluation of leadership programs

is consistent with the more nebulous components of adult learning and transformational leadership alike; aspects such as cooperation, participation and trust.

In addition to a lack of extensive evaluation upon completion of programs, there has also been little attempt to try and capture the on-going outcomes of leadership programs for individuals, organisations or communities. Alice Black and Garee Earnest (2009) provide one of the few attempts to measure the immediate as well as the long-term outcomes of a leadership program. Based on social learning theory and a broad range of adult learning theories, the EvalULEAD framework put forward by Black and Earnest consider results that reflect episodic, developmental and transformative changes by using both observational and measurable data as well as more subjective data. If one of the outcomes of transformational leadership programs is the development of expanded social networks and civic consciousness and responsibility through taking on more roles and decision-making within the community (Apaliyah et al., 2012), then consideration of the impact of these programs one to two years afterwards, and beyond, needs much greater attention.

Case studies can offer a relevant way to evaluate leadership programs because of the emphasis placed on understanding the particularities of context (see for example Kearney & Zuber-Skerritt, 2012) as well as providing scope to include a range of data collection methods, thus taking a more naturalistic approach to evaluation (Brookfield, 1986). There is also the possibility to return to the community that provided the context at a later date to consider some of the long term impacts of the program, both on the individuals who participated as well as the broader community.

The case outlined in this paper relates to a leadership program designed and delivered by a local economic development consultant within a rural shire in Queensland, Australia. The shire consists of a number of small townships supported by mostly agriculture and pastoral industries, although coal mining is also an important economic provider in some parts. The township where the program was conducted is built on a flood plain and as such is prone to

flooding; it was significantly impacted by floods in the summer of 2010/2011. The program was funded by the local shire as part of community development activities used to promote social recovery of the region after these flood events. The program drew heavily on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) framework (Myers et al., 1998) as a means of providing insight into self for the participants. This framework has been used extensively in leadership development programs. However, Michael (2003) cautions against using the tool in a rigid fashion, particularly in a group setting where facilitators are unable to evaluate people individually. As such, in this program, the MBTI® was introduced as a tool to increase self-awareness as opposed to a framework to accurately assess personality types. The program also aimed to encourage participants to work within their own communities and to develop an understanding of leadership as part of a shared vision for their communities; as such, it aimed to develop transformational leadership. The program consisted of 10 full-day sessions, run monthly, and commenced in March 2012. Eighteen people from three rural towns attended the program.

Methodology

Part way through 2012, we were invited to evaluate the leadership program. As the program had already commenced, we considered an interpretive case based methodology would be the most appropriate. Furthermore, we were involved in two other research projects in one of the towns related to understanding community resilience in the wake of natural disasters, and using a case study approach allowed us to incorporate some of the contextual data from these other studies into this evaluation. Merriam (2009) argues case study is an appropriate approach for studies that: 1) relate to a particular situation, event or program; 2) draw on multiple sources of data; and 3) which involve complex phenomena best understood within the context of a particular situation.

Ethical clearance was obtained from CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. All attendees of the leadership program were invited to be a part of the study with sixteen of the eighteen agreeing to participate. Interviews with participants of

the program formed the main avenue of data collection. These were separately undertaken by both of the researchers and guided by a semi-structured series of questions related to how the program was run, what benefits participants gained, and what could be improved. The interviews were conducted on the last day of the program and were digitally recorded. Each interview lasted between 10 and 55 minutes, with the average being around 30 minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed independently by the researchers who then consulted to determine the overall themes.

Consistent with a case study approach, broader contextual data were also drawn upon, most of which was gathered as part of the two other research projects we were involved in; both related to community resilience in the township. These included both qualitative and quantitative data (interviews, focus groups, archival evidence, Photovoice themes, and survey). We also kept a reflective diary to record our own perspectives and thoughts.

Houghton et al. (2013) have outlined a number of strategies that can be used to enhance rigour in case studies, including: prolonged engagement; triangulation; peer debriefing; member checking; audit trail; reflexivity; and thick descriptions. Each of these strategies was used as part of this evaluation. The previous research work that had been undertaken, and from which we drew upon for this study, meant we had been visiting one of the communities involved for over 12 months and were well known, even though we were considered to be 'outsiders'. Being able to draw on other projects provided us with a broad range of contextual data and allowed us to situate the evaluation data within its context and provide opportunities to triangulate the data. We provided an initial report of the evaluation back to the facilitator who circulated to participants for checking and to provide them with an opportunity to question or challenge any aspects of our interpretation they felt were inappropriate or inaccurate. We undertook the thematic analysis independently through the use of NVivo (version 10) and then collaborated to identify data labels and themes. This element, along with keeping a reflective diary, provided an audit trail throughout the evaluation.

These processes also provided opportunities to reflect deeply on the data we had collected across all three projects, but particularly regarding this evaluation. Finally, we have provided thick descriptions in this paper, including extracts from the interviews, to illustrate how the themes were derived allowing readers to decide how transferable the insights gained from this project may be to other locations and situations.

Results

Sixteen, out of a possible eighteen, participants were interviewed. Three themes emerged from the thematic analysis: 1) self-development; 2) building social capital; and 3) workshop processes. The first two themes related strongly to community resilience and have been reported elsewhere (Madsen & O'Mullan, in press). This paper explores in more depth the final theme to better understand the curriculum and mechanics of the leadership program and how these may have contributed to the experiences of learning for the participants. Three separate but overlapping sub-themes featured in the theme: 1) motivation to be involved; 2) structure; and 3) impact of the facilitator. Each will be briefly explored separately.

The motivation to be involved in the leadership program varied from a desire to become more involved in the community to less certain positions such as keeping someone else company. One person thought the program was about learning how to get grants.

I just thought it sounded interesting (05).

I like to expand my horizons (10).

A bit more community orientated and to see who's out there (11).

A lot of people thought they might get a bit of an insight into keeping the committees running a bit more smoothly (12).

You do tend to find the people who have naturally come onto this course are the natural leaders in the community (13).

Some felt that the program could have been better advertised and more overt in relation to what the program was about to encourage others to attend, although it was recognised that many in the community who would really benefit from attending the program did not necessarily see that need in themselves.

In regards to the structure of the program, there was recognition the program required a large time commitment on behalf of the participants and while that was likely to be an inhibitory factor for many, particularly those with young families who only have one day of the week to spend with their families, the timing of the sessions and the length of each of the sessions was considered necessary. *Cause you wouldn't be able to cram it, and I don't think cramming it, it doesn't sink in as much* (10). All agreed that the content was important. By spreading the content over a number of months, and having the workshops supplemented with written materials, participants had time to think about the content. *I really think if they were any closer together ... you'd sort of burn out, it might be too much* (12).

A second aspect to the structure of the workshops related to a focus on personal skills. A number of participants had undertaken leadership courses before, but felt this one was different.

Yeah, so they sort of, leadership courses out there are about getting the job done with the resources, but this is more personal. I think it works across everyday life as opposed to this incidence or said incidence (11).

Due to the personal focus of the program, the content needed to be balanced between learning about leadership, including understanding oneself through personal assessment tools such as the MBTIR as in this case, and time to reflect and experience the content. While some participants would have liked to have been involved in more experiential activities – *not so much of that just sitting... I'm not an inside person* (7) – most felt there was sufficient space for exploring the emotional aspects of topics being covered. *There was enough room in there for people to explore the consequences and that type of thing* (11). The program also gradually shifted over time from

information giving at the beginning towards more involvement and direction being provided by the participants, although some felt this aspect could have been greater.

In the initial stages there was too much talk (14).

I thought the program was really good in that it was flexible to what we requested, which whilst still maintaining the course, the direction of the course (13).

I think the people should have more input (16)

Finally, participants felt a large part of the success of the program related to the facilitator himself: his organisational skills and his mannerisms in the way he supported and prompted learning.

Always, always very organised in what he brings and the information he's got so yeah, he's good at being able to sort of get you together and go through the steps (8).

He obviously is not just a parrot man or anything like that as an instructor. He's talking from the heart, you know. He knows what he's saying (9).

He's really approachable (10).

He's been good because I have learned that if we've got a problem, he doesn't give you the answer... he makes it so that you have to solve the problem yourself (16).

But he acknowledged this little group and made us unique and he responded accordingly to the uniqueness of this particular group which was a good thing (17).

For this group, an important aspect of who the facilitator was involved him being from the local community – *the fact that he's somebody within the community I find of benefit (13)*. As one participant put it, *local people are very reluctant to get outside help (14)*. The facilitator's local employment and long-standing connection with that region meant participants recognised how genuine he was

in what he was teaching because they could witness the consistency between what he said and what he did.

Discussion

In the French countryside in the 16th century, Michel Montaigne mused about the difference between learning and wisdom (de Botton 2001). Learning he associated with the accumulation of facts and figures obtained within formal institutions. Wisdom, on the other hand, he believed related to making the most from everyday life; of living a worthwhile and meaningful life. This wisdom is gained when reflective adults come together with the intention to better themselves and their community. It is a wisdom that was recognised by the participants of the rural leadership program explored here, one that was generated not simply by the presence of particular people in the room, but one that was to a large extent planned for and tapped into intentionally. It may not have been executed perfectly at all times, but examination of the process and content of the workshop allows us to better replicate those aspects that worked well and to modify those aspects that could work better. It is with this in mind that we draw upon contemporary approaches to learning, and more specifically in this context, learning in non-formal settings as a way of better understanding the successes and opportunities of the rural leadership program.

The rural leadership program described above embodied the characteristics of non-formal learning, which is learning through a planned experience that does not necessarily lead to certification, nor is it necessarily evaluated, and if it is, is evaluated in a form that is different to formal approaches to learning (OECD, 2005). When viewed on a continuum, non-formal learning is positioned between formal learning, where you would expect a program of instruction, assessment and certification of some sort, and what is termed informal learning, which is as the result of daily activity (NCVER, 2009). From this non-formal learning position, the rural leadership program was able to avoid the potential pitfalls of the formal learning context (NCVER, 2009). These centre around the links of formal learning to qualification and certification such that

prescribed assessment, highly structured programs and pathways, highly systematised administrative process, and formal methods of instruction leave little flexibility in content or approach to delivery. However, the leadership program provided sufficient structure and support so as to maximise individual and, importantly, group-level knowledge development.

From the participation perspective, the non-formal nature of the program served to encourage a range of participants, some of whom were not entirely sure as to why they signed up, although most came to the program with an attitude of wanting to become more actively involved in their community or to become more effective in their involvement. Alice Black and Garee Earnest (2009) have summarised some of the reasons why adults will become involved in any form of learning, but particularly in regards to leadership program involvement. These reasons include valuing the topic, fulfilling expectations for oneself and others, improving one's ability to service one's community, and for professional advancement. Such reasons are clearly reflected in those who attended the rural leadership program evaluated here, although do not necessarily account for those who were unsure at the beginning of their involvement. This motivation, coupled with the nature of the environment, set the scene for the program: how involved participants were willing to be in activities; and how open they were to new ideas and ways of thinking.

Wayne James and Patricia Maher (2004) argue understanding one's own learning style and gaining such insights into self opens the door to learning. With this in mind, the initial focus of the program was on enhancing awareness and understanding of oneself through the flexible use of the MBTI®. The use of this tool provided space for participants to reflect on their own thoughts, feelings and values, to consider from where these may have been derived, and to explore these with people from their own communities so they were able to gain a better understanding of their own social contexts and their place within those contexts. Self-reflection is evident in most adult learning theories, although perhaps none more so than transformative learning theories. The goal of transformative learning is to produce autonomous, socially responsible thinkers through

a process of becoming more aware of one's own assumptions and by challenging those assumptions (Grabove, 1997; Cranton, 2006; Donaldson, 2009). Critical discourse is central to this process. Promoting conversation amongst the participants was a key feature of the rural leadership program examined here. Participants consistently talked about how they were able to discuss issues with each other during the workshops and to draw on the wisdom and experiences of each other. In doing so, many found their views and perceptions of themselves, each other and how to work in their communities altered significantly.

As the program progressed, participants were encouraged to apply their new understanding to their work and volunteer activities, creating a 'ripple-effect' as participants drew upon new knowledge, skills and insights into themselves and the behaviours of others, and integrated that into their everyday participation in the world (Madsen & O'Mullan, *in press*). This resulted in people who had not previously seen themselves as having a role in their communities volunteering to be on various committees, while others found themselves recognising the strengths and potential in quieter members of their communities. Learning through participation in the lived world is highly relevant to adults (Wenger, 2000), particularly in the context of non-formal programs. Etienne Wenger's (2009) social theory of learning suggests learning is fundamentally a social phenomenon, and holds social participation as central to the process of learning and knowing. The social theory of learning discussed here is markedly different from many other learning theories, in particular the cognitive and behavioural schools of learning theory thought, where the central focus is on the transformation of cognitive structures and observable behaviour respectively (Merriam, Cafarella & Baumgartner, 2007). Even social learning theory, as originally conceived by Albert Bandura (1977), which takes social interactions into account within cognitive learning processes, is insufficient in adequately capturing and illuminating the richness and potentiality of learning through participation. Participation, in this context, is not haphazard; rather it is concerned with active engagement, in this case with the leadership program and with the group of participants gathered together throughout the program. The notion of positioning learning through

social participation, in a group of individuals that share a common interest, can be viewed through the Community of Practice (CoP) lens, which is synonymous with, and in fact a basic building block, of the social theory of learning.

According to Wenger (2009) and Lave and Wenger (2002), CoPs are groups of individuals drawn together through a shared interest, issue, passion or desire, in order to deepen or change their knowledge and expertise. As a basic building block of the social theory of learning, CoPs are spaces characterised by mutual engagement and joint enterprise, and an environment for building shared and co-created meanings (Wenger, 2009). Here the emphasis is not so much on individuals, as in transformative learning theories, but on how adults interact with each other as part of collaborative learning. This is particularly important for rural leadership programs that are promoting transformational leadership; leadership that consists of forming new and stronger social networks and in generating learning opportunities for capacity building within communities (Davies, 2009). Learning how to learn together cannot be assumed to occur spontaneously when a group of adults come together, even if they have a shared purpose. A specific skills set is needed by individual players consisting of insight and understanding into self and others, tolerance, embracing diversity and valuing different life experiences, in order to effectively build relationships based on open communication and trust (Clark & Gong, 2011; Walker & Salt, 2012). Only when these feature in the CoP is this gathering likely to result in an environment that is conducive to effective co-learning experiences. It is for this reason the leadership program examined here spent considerable time developing such a skills set in the participants.

Against this backdrop of individual and collaborative learning experiences, participants in non-formal learning spaces, and in particular in a CoP, are clear about the role of the teacher or facilitator in the process of learning, particularly in regards to 'doing all the talking': it is not acceptable. The participants of the rural leadership program examined here were no different, and whilst they had expected some of the time would be spent in information-giving activities, found the group work and collaborative activities highly

beneficial and a far richer experience of learning. Indeed, some would have liked even more collaborative opportunities. Furthermore, the participants were not content to have the workshops simply delivered to them; they wanted to have some say in what was included, thereby sharing the responsibility and, therefore, ownership of the learning journey. As a result, the role of the 'teacher' in this context is quite distinct, and is clearly positioned as one of facilitating learning.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) discuss the degrees of participation in the CoP context and include a special place in the core of the group for the coordinator or facilitator. Within this view, the role of the facilitator is best occupied by someone who is well-respected and can function as a member of the community – that is, they have their own lived experience to share – and at the same time can play a role in supporting the development of knowledge. As was found in the rural leadership program, it was not the instruction that mattered as much to the participants, but whether the facilitator actually 'walked the talk'. That is, participants were interested in how genuine the facilitator was in his teaching and whether his teachings were also evident in his practice.

This conceptualisation of the facilitator as a member of the CoP has very real implications for the success of rural leadership programs and other similar types of programs that are delivered through rural and regional communities. So often the programs are devised in a capital city by experts, funded either through a government or large organisation, and 'delivered' according to a strict schedule whereby the facilitator drives or flies into communities for one or two days and is never seen of again. This is not to say there is no value in these types of programs, particularly in those communities that have limited services or resources. However, these facilitators are in a position to neither fully participate in, nor contribute to, a CoP in any meaningful sense and therefore cannot develop relationships with the participants beyond a very superficial level. As such, their ability to facilitate real learning according to the adult learning principles discussed above is significantly reduced.

Conclusion

Rural leadership programs have the potential to make a great deal of difference in local communities if they can harness the wisdom and learning within those communities. Transformational leadership programs in particular have been aiming to do just that, but they have not drawn sufficiently on adult learning theories to provide them with a strong theoretical – and one could argue, practical – foundation from which to implement their activities. The rural leadership program evaluated in this paper did not overtly identify an adult learning theory that guided its development and delivery, although it became clear that various principles of learning were important to the facilitator including: reflexivity and uncovering unquestioned assumptions about oneself and one's world; sharing experiences with others to promote learning from each other; building social networks that can be drawn on beyond the bounds of the program; respecting and valuing differences; gaining sufficient confidence in oneself to be able to identify and determine one's own learning directions. We have considered the experiences of the participants of this rural leadership program in the light of transformative learning and social theory of learning precepts as a way of further understanding these experiences. We suggest these theories can provide useful structures to support the development of transformational leadership within communities. While this evaluation reported on learning which occurred throughout the rural leadership program, it is recognised that the full impact of the program may only emerge in the months and years ahead. However, from this evaluation two aspects in particular stand out: the importance of developing self-understanding and reflection; and the value of Communities of Practice as a means of promoting collaborative learning and building community capacity. Understanding how these work can not only enhance the planning and development of leadership programs, but can be used to inform other programs offered in non-formal settings.

References:

- Allen, R. & Lachapelle, P. (2012) 'Can leadership development act as a rural poverty alleviation strategy?' *Community Development*, 43:1, February, 95-112.
- Apaliyah, G., Martin, K., Gasteyer, S., Keating, K. & Pigg, K. (2012) 'Community leadership development education: promoting civic engagement through human and social capital', *Community Development*, 43:1, February, 31-48.
- Bandura, A. (1977) *Social learning theory*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Black, A. & Earnest, G. (2009) 'Measuring the outcomes of leadership development programs', *Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies*, 16:2, September, 184-196.
- Brookfield, S. (1986) *Understanding and facilitating adult learning*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Buultjens, J., Ambrosoli, K. & Dollery, B. (2012) 'The establishment of regional development Australia committees in Australia: issues and initiatives for the future', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, 18:2, 182-205.
- Clark, P. & Gong, T. (2011) 'Developing leadership competencies to promote the community development of the Mississippi Delta Region', *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 6:2, 143-154.
- Clarke, S. (2013) 'Safety leadership: a meta-analytic review of transformational and transactional leadership styles as antecedents of safety behaviour', *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology*, 86, March, 22-49..
- Cranton, P. (2006) *Understanding and promoting transformative learning: a guide for educators of adults*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Davies, A. (2007) 'Organic or orchestrated: the nature of leadership in rural Australia', *Rural Society*, 17:2, October, 139-154.
- Davies, A. (2009) 'Understanding local leadership in building the capacity of rural communities in Australia', *Geographical Research*, 47:4, December, 380-389.
- de Botton, A. (2001) *The consolations of philosophy*, London: Penguin Books.
- de Guerre, D. & Taylor, M. (2004) 'Graduate leadership education in a socio-ecological perspective: working at the paradigmatic interface' in E. O'Sullivan & M. Taylor (eds.) *Learning towards an ecological consciousness: selective transformative practices*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 65-83

- Donaldson, J. (2009) 'Fostering transformative learning in leadership development' in J. Mezirow & E. Taylor (eds.) *Transformative learning in practice: insights from community, workplace and higher education*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 67-77.
- Drago-Severson, E., Asghar, A., Blum-DeStefano, J. & Roloff Welch, J. (2011) 'Conceptual changes in aspiring school leaders: lessons from a university classroom', *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, 6:4, April 83-131.
- Easterling, D. & Millesen, J. (2012) 'Diversifying civic leadership: what it takes to move from 'new places' to adaptive problem solving', *National Civic Review*, 10:2, Summer 20-26.
- Ellis, L. & Scott, S. (2003) 'Community education as citizen organising for democratic accountability', *Studies in Continuing Education*, 25:2, November, 253-268.
- Grabove, V. (1997) 'The many facets of transformative learning theory and practice' in P. Cranton (ed.) *Transformative learning in action: insights from practice*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 89-96.
- Gray, I., Williams, R. & Phillips, E. (2005) 'Rural community and leadership in the management of natural resources: tensions between theory and practice', *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, 7:2, December, 125-139.
- Houghton, C., Casey, D., Shaw, D. & Murphy, K. (2013) 'Rigour in qualitative case-study research', *Nurse Researcher*, 20:4, March, 12-17.
- Illeris, K. (2007) *How we learn: learning and non-learning in school and beyond*, London: Routledge.
- James, W. & Maher, P. (2004) 'Understanding and using learning styles' in M. Galbraith (ed.) *Adult learning methods: a guide for effective instruction*, Malabar: Krieger Publishing Company, 119-139.
- Kearney, J. & Zuber-Skerritt, O. (2012) 'From learning organisation to learning community: sustainability through lifelong learning', *The Learning Organisation*, 19:5, 400-413.
- Keating, K. & Gasteyer, S. (2012) 'The role of cultural capital in the development of community leadership: toward an integrated program model', *Community Development*, 43:2, March, 147-168.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (2002) 'Legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice' in R. Harrison, F. Reeve, A. Hanson & J. Clarke (eds.) *Supported Lifelong Learning*, London: RoutledgeFalmer, 111-126.
- Madsen, S. (2010) 'Leadership development in the United Arab Emirates: the transformational learning experiences of women', *Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies*, 17:1, February, 100-110.

- Madsen, W. & O'Mullan, C. in press. 'Knowing me, knowing you: exploring the effects of a rural leadership program on community resilience', *Rural Society*.
- Merriam, S. (2009) *Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Merriam, S., Cafarella, R. & Baumgartner, L. (2007) *Learning in adulthood: a comprehensive guide*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Michael, J. (2003) 'Using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator as a tool for leadership development? Apply with caution', *Journal of Leadership and Organisational Studies*, 10:1, Summer, 68-81.
- Miller, P. & Kilpatrick, S. (2005) 'How community development programmes can foster re-engagement with learning in disadvantaged communities: leadership as process', *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 37:1, Spring, 18-30.
- Millitello, M. & Benham, M. (2010) 'Sorting out collective leadership: how Q-methodology can be used to evaluate leadership development', *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21:4, August, 620-632.
- Myers, I., McCauley, M., Quenk, N. & Hammer, A., (ed.) (1998) *MBTI Manual: A guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, Mountain View: CPP.
- NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research). (2009) *Informal learning at a glance*, <http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2140.html>
- OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperative Development). (2005) *The role of the National Qualifications System in promoting lifelong learning: report from thematic Group 2 – standards and quality assurance in qualifications with special reference to the recognition of non-formal and informal learning*, <http://www.oecd.org/education/country-studies/34376318.pdf>
- Rasmussen, C., Armstrong, J. & Chazdon, S. (2011) 'Bridging Brown County: captivating social capital as a means to community change', *Journal of Leadership Education*, 10:1, Winter, 63-82.
- Van De Valk, L. & Constanas, M. (2011) 'A methodological review of research on leadership development and social capital: is there a cause and effect relationship', *Adult Education Quarterly: A Journal of Research and Theory*, 6:1, February, 73-90.
- Walker, J. & Gray, B. (2009) 'Community voices: a leadership program making a difference in rural underserved counties in North Carolina', *Journal of Extension*, 47:6, December, 1-11.

- Walker, B. & Salt, D. (2012) *Resilience practice: building capacity to absorb disturbance and maintain function*, Washington: Island Press.
- Wenger, E. (2000) 'Communities of practice and social learning systems', *Organization*, 7:2, 225-246.
- Wenger, E. (2009) 'A social theory of learning' in K. Illeris (ed.) *Contemporary theories of learning: learning theorists ... In their own words*, London: Routledge, 209-218.
- Wenger, E., McDermott, R. & Snyder, W. (2002) *Cultivating communities of practice*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Wilson, G. (2012) *Community resilience and environmental transitions*, London: Routledge.
- Zagorsek, H., Dimovski, V. & Skerlavaj, M. (2009) 'Transactional and transformational leadership impacts on organisational learning', *Journal of East European Management Studies*, 2, June, 144-165.

About the authors

Wendy Madsen is a Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion in the School of Human, Health and Social Sciences at Central Queensland University. Wendy's research interests are in the history of health, health promotion, community resilience, and participatory health research.

Email: w.madsen@cqu.edu.au

Cathy O'Mullan is a Lecturer in Health Promotion in the School of Human, Health and Social Sciences, Central Queensland University. Cathy's research interests are working with marginalised populations, community resilience, and health promotion.

Email: c.omullan@cqu.edu.au

Helen Keen-Dyer is a Lecturer in Academic Professional Development in Learning and Teaching Services, Central Queensland University. Her research interests are Adult Learning and curriculum development

Email: h.keendyer@cqu.edu.au