VET Leadership:
Context, Characteristics and Capabilities

Justin Brown
Background

- **Contributors:** ACER, LH Martin Institute, John Mitchell, Peter Noonan, 500+ VET leaders, 20+ RTOs
- **Timing:** 2009 (data collection); 2010 (workshops)
- **Objectives:** to investigate:
  - what leaders do
  - what influences and aspirations shape their role
  - what capabilities and competencies underpin effective performance
Method

- **Delivery**: Online; workshops
- **Structure**: Item response (likert scale) and open response
- **Sample frame**: Roles - positions - # of reports
  
  Definition: “…people in roles classified as senior managers to who other managers report” (Mulcahy, 2003)

- **Roles**: Director, CEO, CFO, GM, program managers/heads/directors, heads of school
Open response questions

1. Briefly, what are the three most challenging aspects of your current role?
2. What aspect of your current role do you find *most* significant?
3. Overall, what analogy best describes what it is like to be in your current leadership role?
4. Overall, what do you believe to be the *most* effective methods for developing the capabilities of leaders in roles like yours?
5. What is one key step you believe *your organisation* could take to improve the selection and development of leaders?
Significant and challenging aspects in current role

- Leading and managing change
- Environment – internal and external
- People - recruit, engage and revitalise
- New “corporate” or “business” skills
- Regulation and compliance
- Partnership building
- Time management
Analogies to describe current leadership role

• **Task**-oriented
  – jugglers, circus performers, entertainers

• **People**-oriented
  • football coaches, stage managers, shepherds, conductors, captains

• **Experience**-oriented
  • roller-coaster rides, car racing, rafting, surfing
Effective methods for developing leaders

- Mixed methods - informal & formal – work-based & PD programs
- Mentoring and shadowing
- Contextualised formal training
- Planning and self-reflection
- Professional development
- Professional and informal networks
Steps to improve the selection and development of leaders

• Acknowledge personal and intellectual capabilities of aspiring and emerging leaders
• Formalise (bring rigor to) the marginalised mentoring and succession training programs
• Review and substantiate selection and succession processes
• Secondment opportunities
• Contextualise with real-world situations
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