Resilient Leadership Networks: Developing and Maintaining E-Learning Curriculum Change in Universities

Professor Rick Cummings
Manager, Educational Development
Murdoch University, Australia
r.cummings@murdoch.edu.au

Abstract: Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, is one of Australia’s leading teaching universities. To maintain the high quality of its teaching it has undertaken a number of innovative technology-based teaching and learning strategic initiatives. In order to ensure these initiatives are successfully embedded in teaching practice, the university used federal funding to develop a network of curriculum change leaders. This distributed model of curriculum leadership has now coalesced into a more formalised network of faculty and central learning and teaching committees and a centrally supported network for enhancing the scholarship of teaching. The curriculum leadership network has taken responsibility for managing change in teaching and learning, in particular in policy development and embedding of practice related to online learning.

The most significant challenge to the success of this strategic approach is the rapidly evolving environment in Australian universities. Thus the resilience of the curriculum leadership network is a critical success factor. A deliberate strategy to enhance the resilience of the network has been developed and implemented. The strategy is based on resilience theory, where resilience is defined as the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence in the face of adversity or, more poetically, both the capacity to be bent without breaking and the capacity, once bent, to spring back. The presentation will outline how Murdoch University has developed this network and enhanced its resilience, thus dramatically improving its influence. Lessons for enhancing curriculum leadership in higher education are identified and discussed.