Session 6
DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP: WORKING TOGETHER TO RIDE THE WAVES: THE SELF ENABLING REFLECTIVE TOOL (ASERT).

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The contribution of the Higher Education sector to change in the complex and ambiguous environment in which it operates has led to many different models of leadership being trialled in the sector over the last decade. The importance of developing an appropriate model is indicated by numerous calls on the sector to provide leading edge change in order to graduate students with skills for industry (Employability skills for the future, 2002). At the same time the sector has had to accommodate reduced government financial support. While multiple theories abound about leadership outside the Higher Education sector, it is claimed that leadership in Higher Education is different as it exists in a highly specialised and professional, less hierarchical environment. This has led to much discussion about what constitutes leadership in Higher Education and how to build systematic, multi-facetted collaborative leadership capacity (Marshal 2006). Two principle concepts being explored are Institutional leadership – a structural model that focuses on how to develop the skills, traits and behaviours of individual leaders, and a distributed model that focuses on how activity theory (Engestrom, 1999) can be used to explain the interplay between subjects, objects and instruments, rules, community and division of labour (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Bryman, 2009; Harris, 2009). The object of this presentation is to explain how the Action Self Reflective Enabling Tool (ASERT) that has been developed from the experience of four Institutions in introducing a Distributed Leadership (DL) approach through projects funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, can be used to assist Higher Education institutions to evaluate their capacity to engage with a Distributed Leadership approach to build leadership capacity. The presentation will introduce the Distributed Leadership Matrix developed from reflections of participants in the four Distributed Leadership projects, before explaining the ASERT that has been developed as a means to identify action required to support a Distributed Leadership approach. The ASERT places emphasis on the importance of action by many people, from senior executives to academics and administrators actually delivering learning, working collectively across the institution for a Distributed Leadership approach.

Presenters Biography:
Professor Sandra Jones is both a discipline expert and a practitioner in leadership and an experienced leader in Learning and Teaching at RMIT. She has undertaken multi-levels leadership roles including as the University Director of Learning and Teaching, the Business College Director of Teaching Quality, the School of Management Deputy Head, a Program Director for both undergraduate and post graduate programs and a Course Co-ordinator. Professor Jones has been the Project leader in several Leadership Projects funded by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.