

A Cadre of Women: an exciting new research project

In these challenging times of change, how will the sector recruit the very best leaders? By making sure that principals and governing bodies recruit from the full pool of talent in our organisations. This means ensuring that more women and more black and ethnic minorities apply for promotion and are successful.

This research project looks at gender factors in career progression with the aim of identifying the obstacles and the facilitators for women and developing a national picture of leadership and gender across the regions.

Why are women under-represented in the top jobs? And what does the sector need to do to increase the number of women senior leaders? Currently, while 64% of the FE workforce are women, only 36% of principals are women, and in some regions it is below 25%.

Make sure your views are heard!

We are most grateful for the support of our nine regional champions, each of whom is a principal from one of the nine LSC regions. In each region, the principal champion has agreed to convene a “regional symposium” to hear FE practitioners’ views about gender factors – these will take place during December and January.

At each symposium 50 or more participants will be invited to engage in discussions and complete an on-line survey. They will then be asked to engage a further ten colleagues back at their organisations to complete an on-line survey – in this way we expect to hear the views of several hundred people in the sector.

Although this research is targeted at encouraging more women to apply for senior leadership posts, we welcome male colleagues who have an interest in the aims of the project.

How to participate: for details of your local convenor, contact Paula Hallam, WLN Administrator, at phallam@ocvc.ac.uk .

Main research themes

We will be looking at participants’ perceptions of the obstacles and facilitators in career progression and also asking for examples of good practice. We will be asking about

individuals' personal experiences, about their views on how diversity can be achieved in the sector and what practical strategies might improve practice in the sector.

Background to project

This is an LSIS-funded practitioner research project, undertaken by Oxford and Cherwell Valley College on behalf of the WLN and in partnership with LSN and Protocol National. It has the support of the Network for Black Professionals and LLUK. It builds on the CEL/LSN research carried out for the WLN in 2007, "Gender-related factors in career progression".

The project aims to involve an increasing cadre of women in discussion and research, building a substantive body of research findings and practical recommendations for dissemination. Protocol National will produce a Good Practice Guide for the sector.

The duration of the project is from 1 October 2009 to 31 March 2010. Findings will be disseminated across the sector and celebrated at the WLN annual conference in June.

In parallel with this research, the LSN is undertaking a complimentary qualitative study into the motivating and inhibiting factors in career progression for people aspiring to be principals.

For more information

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