

**Concurrent Session A**  
**Monday 31 August**  
**10.50am – 11.40am**



**Session 5**  
**Developing Leadership Practice Through Mindfulness within the Tertiary Education Sector**  
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*Jonathon Hagger is a Faculty Administration Manager at Waiariki Institute of Technology where he has been employed for the past 10 years. Waiariki Institute of Technology is located in Rotorua, New Zealand. In 2014 Jonathon completed his Master's in Business Administration through the University of Waikato with his major research project focusing on how mindfulness can be used as a tool to develop leadership skills within the tertiary education sector. His professional interests include the development of leadership skill in the not for profit sector, mentoring and coaching for results and people development. Outside of the tertiary education environment his key interest is volunteering. Jonathon donates his time in to assisting others in particular through his passion for running including disabled athletes through the organisation Achilles International.*

Change is recognised as being a constant factor within the tertiary education sector with restructures, realignments and redundancies being the norm. As a result of such changes it has been demonstrated that employee engagement levels are reduced and stress levels can become unhealthy - often as a result of fewer employees being required to do more with less resulting in feelings of ongoing unease and tension.

Understanding the effects and changes resulting from the development of a mindfulness practise by persons in management positions within tertiary education organizations across Australasia was the purpose of the study. Through analysing the accounts of participants experiences with mindfulness, changes and gains made and concludes with the introduction of a conceptual framework which further enable persons to understand mindfulness and its applicability within a leadership context as it relates to the tertiary education sector.

Applied mindfulness is understood to incorporate three core components – the ability to engage fully in the present in the moment on a particular task (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004), being able to accept present circumstances without judgement (Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, & Sels, 2013), and the third being to “describe” which is “the immediate, non-judgemental labelling of observations, without conceptual analysis” (Dekeyser, Raes, Leijssen, Leysen, & Dewulf, 2008, p.1236). Mindful leaders described an increase in awareness of each of these three components.

Through developing a mindfulness practise, three key areas of development were identified in leadership skill and ability. Improvements were noticed in soft skill areas of management practise such as authenticity, increases in productivity through “flow” and a greater ability to demonstrate resilience in times of turbulence and change. When these components are practised together they enable a leader to bring a more balanced approach to situations they are faced with.

Using a qualitative research methodology semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of managers and leaders from various sized tertiary education organizations across New Zealand and Australia. Organizations ranged in size from small private training providers through to large scale Universities. The interviews were designed to explore the various aspects and changes that interviewees had undergone personally and sought to understand what wider effects occurred.

Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed using electronic analysis software with key themes emerging from the data.

Previous studies have focused primarily upon individualised and subjective development changes with less focus being upon the changes in the dynamics of relationships in management. Understanding the dynamic changes that occur as a result of mindfulness may assist future directions of research particularly in the area of leadership and management. This study puts forward a model for understanding mindfulness and its effects as they occur within management positions and while this study was specific to the tertiary education sector, the findings can be transferred across any management or leadership position across a wide range of settings.

It is evidenced through this study that various characteristics of management practise can be developed and enhanced affirming the findings of Opatokun, Hasim and Hassan (2013) that self-awareness, the setting of a positive example, transparency in relationships with others and balanced thinking are traits of good leadership and management which can be developed through mindfulness.