How can we develop a leadership capability framework for non-profit Australian health and community care organisations?

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Abstract

Title: How can we develop a leadership capability framework for non-profit Australian health and community care organisations?

Keywords: leadership, capability, non-profit organisation, community care

Category of paper: Research paper

Purpose of the paper: To review the literature on leadership development in the for-profit sector and the Australian Public Sector in order to better understand how a leadership capability framework can be developed for the Australian non-profit sector.

Methodology: Literature review

Findings: There is a lack of research in leadership capability development in the health and community care sectors among NPOs in Australia.

Implications for theory: An investigation into leadership capability development in the non-profit sector focusing on organisations involved in health and community care would be a contribution to knowledge that would be beneficial to all NPOs that are providing services to the public in an environment where both the private and public sectors also play a role in the Australian society.

Value of the paper: This study is an important first step in creating a leadership capability framework for non-profit organisations who, along with for-profit and government organisations operating in the same sector, are key contributors to the social capital of Australia.

Number of pages: 14

Number of tables/figures: 3

Section headings: Introduction, leadership, managers and leaders, competency and capability, from competency to capability, leadership capability in the Australian Public Sector, emergence of non-profit organisations, developing leaders in the non-profit sector, conclusion, references
How can we develop a leadership capability framework for non-profit Australian health and community care organisations?

Introduction
Leadership is a topic that raises a great deal of interest as well as concern to organisations, communities and nations. There is a great deal of literature on the subject, e.g. a search using “leadership” as a keyword in Proquest 5000 database found 30,447 peer-reviewed articles. Despite this, “… leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomenon on earth” (Dainty & Anderson 1996, p. 116 – quoting Burns 1978), with no universal agreement on definitions, or what leadership involves. There is also confusion about which qualities are most necessary for leadership and whether such qualities are intrinsic or can be developed (Burns 1978). Yet leadership remains a potent focus of interest and debate because the quality of leadership can impact significantly on the quality of life of people at work or in the broader community (Van Maurik 2001).

An emerging area where the need for strong leadership is becoming more critical is in the non-profit sector. Both internationally and in Australia, non-profit organisations (NPOs) have grown tremendously in terms of assets and complexity and this has had a major effect on the roles and responsibilities of people who govern these organisations (Connelly, 2004). An Australian Bureau of Statistics study in 2000, as part of a global project, found that in 1999-2000 Australian NPOs contributed $20.8 billion or 3.3% of total GDP and employed 604,000 persons representing 6.8% of total employed persons in Australia (ABS 2000). Besides contributing to the Australian economy, NPOs play an important social and political role and constitute an important component of the ‘social capital’ of Australia. They are prominent in the health and welfare sectors in Australia, primarily through religious, community and charitable organisations.

However, there are concerns about management and leadership of NPOs. Senior managers in NPOs are expected to achieve the dual (and often opposing) goals of producing good financial results while meeting the organisation’s social aspirations, and are frequently bound by government regulations while at the same time being exposed to market forces. Competing ideologies add their own complexity; e.g. Raelin (2004, p. 5) suggests that ‘In the twenty-first century organization, we need to establish communities where everyone shares the experience of serving as a leader, not serially, but concurrently and collectively’ while others argue for strong, identifiable leaders (Zaleznik 1977; Kotter 2001; Bennis & Nanus 1985; Weiss & Molinaro 2005).

A review of the literature found that there is a lack of research into leadership development in NPOs in Australia, although there are useful lessons to be learned from work on leadership development in the for-profit sector and from the development of leadership competencies in the public service (APSC 2001), as many NPO leaders face similar challenges and also frequently have to work closely with the public service.

The main topics in the literature reviewed for this study were: leadership theories and the roles of managers compared to leaders; competency and capability; and developing leaders in Australian non-profit health and community organisations.
Leadership
Theories of leadership have developed over many years, with four main theoretical trends emerging, i.e. trait theory; behavioural theories; contingency theories and transformational or attribution leadership theories (van Maurik 2001).

Trait theory
This was based on studies of great leaders and postulated that leadership characteristics differed between leaders and non-leaders, although critics argued that someone does not become a leader just because he/she has a combination of traits (Stogdill 1948). Trait theory was an early development which gradually lost prominence. However, it experienced a resurgence towards the end of the 20th century, with Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) identifying six traits of leaders: drive; motivation to lead; honesty and integrity; self-confidence; cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business. Limitations of trait theory include that, while it may assist in the selection of people who could be successful as leaders, it does not clearly identify which traits are needed in specific situations nor how much of each trait is required to be a good leader. It also risks breeding an elitist conception of leadership, which may discourage people who feel that they do not have leadership traits from seeking leadership positions (Dubrin, Dalglish & Miller 2006).

Behavioural theories
These attempted to identify behaviours of effective and ineffective leaders and were based on transactional aspects of leadership. However, Robbins et al. (2003) argue that these theories could not prove that specific patterns of leadership resulted in successful performance. The focus of behaviour theorists on situational influences led to the contingency theories of leadership.

Contingency theories
These postulated that performance of a group was dependent on a leader’s preferred style, the capability and behaviour of followers and the extent to which the situation was favourable to the leader. Contingency theories were based on Fiedler’s (1967) contingency model, Hersey and Blanchard’s (1974) situational leadership model, Vroom and Yetton’s (1973) leader-participation model and House’s (1972) path-goal theory. Contingency theorists argued that there is no one best way of leadership as it depends on the situation. A leader who is highly successful in one situation might fail miserably in another. Research into leadership has provided support for contingency theories. However, contingency theories do not take into account the possibility that a leader could also change the situation.

Transformational leadership theories
While the contingency models described transactional leaders, a new form of leadership emerged that has been labelled “transformational leadership” (Bass 1985). Transformational leaders inspire followers to put aside their self-interest for the sake of the organisation. They also have a profound impact on their followers (Robbins et al. 2003). Bass and Avolio (1992) state that transformational leadership helps reduce turnover, increase productivity and leads to higher staff satisfaction. Transformational theories have also led to the view of the leader as a catalyst of change, as a strategic visionary and, in an age when networks and collaboration have become more important, to the idea of the “networked leader”.

Closely related to transformational theories are the “attribution theories” (McElroy 1982) and the notion of charismatic-visionary leaders. According to attribution theories, people attribute qualities such as intelligence, outgoing personality, strong verbal skills, aggressiveness,
understanding and industriousness to leaders. An effective leader is considered to be good at initiating structure and being considerate. Robbins et al. (2003, p. 498), quoting Conger and Kanungo (1988), identify self-confidence, vision, ability to articulate the vision, strong convictions about their vision, behaviour that is out of the ordinary, appearance as a change agent and environmental sensitivity as the dimensions of charismatic leaders. However, there are fears that unethical charismatic leaders could lead their organisations towards illegal or immoral ends (Dubrin, Dalglish & Miller 2006).

Despite their critics, the leadership theories above have each contributed to the current view of leadership in a variety of organisations. The capacity to transform or act as a change agent seems to be a key requirement for modern leaders to lead organisations in a turbulent environment.

Managers and leaders
A current debate in management literature is whether the manager is also a leader or only an implementer of a leader’s ideas. While some writers claim that managers should also be leaders, others argue that there is a difference between managers and leaders. Zaleznik (1977) claimed that while managers embrace process, look for stability and control and are natural problem solvers, leaders tolerate chaos and lack of structure and could delay closure until they understand the issues fully.

Kotter (2001) claimed that management is about coping with complexity to bring a degree of order and consistency while leadership is about dealing with change. He argued that while managers were involved with the traditional roles of planning, budgeting, organising, staffing, controlling and problem solving, leaders were concerned with establishing direction, aligning people and motivating and inspiring people.

Bennis and Nanus (1985, p. 21) suggest that ‘managers do things right, leaders do the right things’ and proposed that leaders should adopt four strategies to do the right things: focus people’s attention on a common vision; create a sense of meaning about work through extensive communication; build genuine trust through tireless advocacy of a set of principles; and finally have a strong belief or awareness of themselves.

Competency and capability
The claimed differences between managers and leaders might indicate that leaders are born and not made – supporting trait theory – but there is a counterargument that a manager can be developed to be a leader, with training in competency and capability.

Management and leadership competencies
Quinn (1988, p. 48) proposed eight managerial leadership roles and their key competencies in a framework called the “competing values framework” based on four management models – rational goal, internal process, human relations and open systems. This was further developed by Quinn et al. (1996), who integrated the four models of management into one that is frequently used in both management and leadership development (Table 1).
Table 1 – Quinn’s Competing Values Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of management</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rational goal</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1. Visioning, planning, goal-setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Designing and organising</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Managing across functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Producer</td>
<td>1. Working productively</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Fostering a productive work environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Managing time and stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal process</td>
<td>Monitor</td>
<td>1. Monitoring personal performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Managing collective performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Managing organisational performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>1. Managing projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Designing work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Managing across functions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human relations</td>
<td>Mentor</td>
<td>1. Understanding self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Communicating effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Developing subordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>1. Building teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Using participative decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Managing conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open systems</td>
<td>Innovator</td>
<td>1. Living with change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Thinking creatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Creating change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Broker</td>
<td>1. Building and maintaining a power base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Negotiating agreement and commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Presenting ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Quinn et al. 1996.

Garman and Johnson (2006) link competencies to outcome-related measures of knowledge, skills, abilities and traits or motives.

Tubbs and Schulz (2005) propose a set of fifty leadership competencies, subsumed under seven meta-competencies:
1. Understanding the big picture
2. Attitudes are everything
3. Leadership the driving force
4. Communication – the leader’s voice
5. Innovation and creativity
6. Leading change
7. Teamwork and fellowship.

Despite the attractiveness of competency frameworks, Conger and Ready (2004) argue that they have key drawbacks, including that competency models tend to be built around today’s high-performing leaders as benchmarks and may not be appropriate for the next generation of leaders. They conclude that ‘competencies are not obsolete but their use must be placed in perspective’ (Conger and Ready 2004, p. 46).

Hase and Tay (2004, p. 1) point out that standards and competencies only measure past performance and what is needed is a future orientation. They argue that while competency can help in managing rational linear systems, there is a need for capable people to deal with complex and uncertain environments that exist in the world today.

Managing the pressures of the turbulent external environment today calls for high levels of managerial skills and capabilities. Managers/leaders must develop and use a wide range of
skills in a most effective manner in order to achieve their organisation’s corporate objectives. Managers have to adopt a philosophy of lifelong learning and put it into practice by consistently updating their skills to meet current challenges, in both their external and internal environments. Training and development leading to effective competencies is not enough; managers have to be able to put these competencies into action by using their management capability.

From competency to capability
Weiss and Molinaro (2005) cite the development of leadership capacity to cope with a rapidly changing internal and external environment as being one of the most significant challenges facing business today, particularly in the areas of global competition, technological innovation, developing flexible organisations, building strong teams within organisations and responding to the various values and needs of employees.

The Boston Consulting Group Study (BCG 2005, p. 1) note the need for managers to “develop the confidence to manage multigenerational teams”, and to change strategic thinking from the input-based approaches of yesteryear to the output- and outcome-focused approaches required in the present and future. The changed make-up of the Australian workforce includes increasing numbers of mature workers, who have postponed their retirements and who have to work with colleagues from succeeding generations (i.e. Generations X and Y). Even the definition of what good leadership is can be tempered by the perspective of generation. Headington (2001) notes that Generation Xers view effective leaders as being sensitive to the needs of others, willing and able to involve others at all levels in decision making and willing to empower their workers to work more autonomously. This suggests that the ability to support and develop others is seen as being important to the effectiveness of leaders.

Senior managers have to develop very high levels of leadership capability, essentially based on traditional competency models liberally strengthened with the lessons of experience and even intuition. Thus ‘leadership capability’ can be thought of as the practical application of skills and knowledge, understanding and essential attributes or personal qualities (i.e. competencies), together with experience and lessons learned by the leaders themselves.

Dainty and Anderson (1996, p. 16) suggest that organisations are moving away from the generic competency approach to that of capability. They point out that transformational leadership is required to change, or transform, organisations, through influencing employees to perform at a level which exceeds expectations. In Australia, a great deal of work regarding leadership capability has been done in the public sector and this is also relevant to NPOs as many of them have taken on some of the welfare tasks which are usually a responsibility of the government.

Leadership capability in the Australian Public Sector
Much of the work done on leadership capability in Australia is centred around the Australian Public Service (APS), as evidenced in the Senior Executive Leadership Capability (SELC) Framework, which was launched in 1999 and endorsed by Australian Government Portfolio Secretaries in 2001 (APSC 2001).

The SELC Framework formed the selection criteria and areas of development for the members of the APS Senior Executive Service. It established five core criteria considered to be essential for the delivery of high performance outcomes by the senior executives of the Australian Public Service (Table 2).
Table 2 – SELC Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Capabilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achieves results</td>
<td>1. Builds organisational capability and responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Marshals professional expertise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Steers and implements change and deals with uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Ensures closure and drivers on intended results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivates productive relationships</td>
<td>1. Nurtures internal and external relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Facilitates cooperation and partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Values individual differences an diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Guides, mentors and develops people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicates with influence</td>
<td>1. Communicates clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Listens, understands and adapts to audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Negotiates persuasively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplifies personal drive and integrity</td>
<td>1. Demonstrates public service professionalism and probity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Engages with risk and shows personal courage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Commits to action</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Displays resilience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Demonstrates self awareness and a commitment to personal development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shapes strategic thinking</td>
<td>1. Inspires a sense of purpose and direction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Focuses strategically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Harnesses information and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Shows judgment, intelligence and commonsense</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: APSC 2001

This standard model was later extended beyond the senior executives to include senior managers, and was renamed The Integrated Leadership System (ILS) (APSC 2004, p. 1) and was designed to ‘balance the relationship between leadership, managerial and technical skills’ required in the public service.

The framework is designed to be generic while at the same time providing flexibility, which is a departure from the prescriptive requirements of competency-based development models. It works on the basis that APS leaders need to have a combination of technical and management skills together with leadership capabilities, the actual mix depending upon the level of seniority and type of agency. The leadership component provides a strong focus on improved strategic thinking and achieving results through people. The ILS clearly recognises that leadership is different from management as shown by the identification and separation of different behaviours for each. The leadership capability model is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Integrated Leadership System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shapes strategic thinking</th>
<th>Leadership component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Inspires a sense of purpose and direction</td>
<td>Demonstrates and develops a vision and strategic direction for the branch/organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focuses strategically</td>
<td>Understand the organisation’s role within government and society, including the whole of government agenda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achieves results</th>
<th>Strives to achieve and encourage others to do the same</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensures closure and delivers on intended results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivates productive working relationships</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Values individual differences and diversity</td>
<td>Capitalises on the positive benefits that can be gained from diversity and harnesses different viewpoints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Guides, mentors and develops people</td>
<td>Offers support in times of high pressure and engages in activities to maintain morale</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: APSC 2004, p. 4

One shortcoming of the ILS, according to Cooper (2005, p. 1), is that ‘it says little about how leaders make sense of the world and the consequences of this “meaning making” process for behaviour’, nor is it able to assess which executives are capable of being developed along these lines. A tool which does include understanding how people have developed their capacity to make meaning of the world is the Leadership Development Framework (LDF) developed by Torbert et al. (2004). The LDF is based on measurement tools that have been researched and validated for more than 30 years, and is considered to provide effective and relevant development options.

In the LDF, the characteristics of leaders are placed under what are called six “meaning making stages” or “action-logics” – Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist and Strategist. With each of the classifications, the framework provides a list of behaviours and qualities demonstrated by leaders. Of this group, Individualists are identified as being creative, lateral thinkers who “think outside the box” and who would promote and manage innovation and change, both for the organisation and for individuals. Within the rigidities of public sector culture, some people find Individualists to be uncomfortable – even threatening – to work with, causing tensions and conflict among conventional leaders (Cooper 2005).

Leaders who might be considered as transformational leaders are classified as Strategists (Cooper, 2005, p. 3). Characteristics of Strategists include the behaviours associated with creating and sharing vision, and working with people to encourage them to make personal and organisational change. Being able to deal well with conflict identifies Strategists as being very effective change agents.

Cooper (2005, p. 9) stresses that meaning making, when combined with other leadership capabilities, ‘such as cognitive power, emotional intelligence, valuing the work role and skills and knowledge’, can complete the strategic thinking aspect identified in the ILS. Cooper argues that public sector leaders should be developing more of the capabilities of Individualists and Strategists, or Transformational Leaders, in order to cope with, and manage, the pressures of constant change from the turbulent external environment in which public sector organisations have to operate.

Although most of the literature available centres around development of individual leadership capability, Dunoon (2002) contends that the public sector would benefit more from a collective leadership approach rather than focusing on individual leadership capability. Dunoon suggests adopting a learning-centred approach based on creating the right conditions under which executives can work effectively together to create and share corporate vision, and to deal with organisational issues. By working together and developing a change culture, learning is achieved through action-based activities which are clearly work related and not just activities for their own sake.

Emergence of non-profit organisations
Salamon (1994) identified an international upsurge of organised voluntary activity through the creation of private, non-profit or non-governmental organisations around the world, largely as a result of four global crises and two revolutionary changes which have diminished the power of the state and opened the way for increased voluntary action.

The four crises are:

• The crisis of the modern welfare state that is unable to fulfil its social obligations due to economic rationalism.

• The lack of development resulting from the dwindling average per capita income of many developing countries which were hit by the oil crisis of the ’70s. This has led to new forms of development through assisted self-reliance and participatory development that depend on grassroots enthusiasm.

• A global environmental crisis has also stimulated a global environmental degradation as poor countries suffer form land overuse. People are getting very frustrated with government efforts and trying to organise their own efforts.

• The failure of socialism has also contributed to the third sector by the creation of new organisations to satisfy unmet social and economic needs by establishing cooperative enterprises and non governmental organisations (NGOs).

The two revolutions have been the dramatic communications revolution, and consequent increase in education and literacy, and the recent global economic growth after the oil crisis.

The NPO sector has clearly become a major actor on the world scene, with an explosive growth in the leadership responsibilities at the helm of these organisations (Connelly 2004), resulting in increased expectation about the performance of these organisations from the public. NPOs are increasingly operating in an area where government and for-profit sectors also operate. Board members of NPOs are being called upon to solve complex business challenges faced by their organisations for which they are ill prepared. This means that they have to learn how senior managers in the for-profit sector deal with similar issues. However, Myers (2004) argues that any lessons or development programs adopted by non-profit organisations from the public and private sectors must be adapted to meet the special needs of the non-profit sector.

Brooks (2002, p. 259) ask some critical questions of the management of NPOs:
1. How can managers in NPOs break the cycle of micromanagement that inhibit these organisations from producing results?
2. How can managers of NPOs motivate people to work toward achieving the goals of their organisation?
3. How can we measure the performance of managers of NPOs?

It is argued that leadership of NPOs could be more complex than organisations in the for-profit sector and may be more akin to problems faced by public sector organisations, especially in the issues of complexity (Brooks 2002). Therefore, leadership development in the NPOs may have to look at leadership competencies and capability development in the public sector that has been reviewed earlier.

**Developing leaders in the non-profit sector**

There is a great deal of concern in the UK that management development in the non-profit sector lacks a consistent and sustained approach (Myers 2004). Reasons for this include the difficulty of identifying precisely what managers in this sector actually do which, in turn, makes it difficult to design effective and relevant management development programs to meet their needs (Myers, 2004).

According to Hoffman (1995), there are high levels of leadership talent in NPOs, and the pool of volunteers is alive and well. ‘The answer still lies in people caring about people and taking the time to relate to each other because they care passionately about the same things. Just as

money follows people, leadership emerges where needs are demonstrated effectively and people are clearly shown that they are needed and can be helpful’ (Hoffman 1995, p. 30).

Leadership in non-profit health and community care organisations
Key areas where NPOs contribute to the Australian economy and social welfare are the health and community care sectors, which also have to work side by side with for-profit and public sector organisations such as hospitals and aged care centres. This results in increased expectations from the public towards the governance and leadership of these organisations.

Conclusion
There appears to be a lack of research in Australia on leadership capability development in the health and community care sectors among NPOs. A review of articles in the journal Nonprofit Management and Leadership, from 1998 to 2005, found that the majority of papers dealing with leadership focused on leadership at the board or governance level. Bush (2002) points out that leadership impacts on effective non-profit management. He argues that an NPO’s leadership should have a clear sense of vision, clear mission and a set of objectives, but he does not discuss how these could be developed. Alexander et al. (2001) propose a leadership model for a community care network that it is collaborative and not based on authority and hierarchy. None of the papers reviewed discussed a leadership framework for NPOs, leadership competency and capability, or leadership requirements of Senior Operational Managers working in NPOs.

There is, therefore, a need to investigate leadership capability development in the non-profit sector, focusing on organisations involved in health and community care. The results of such a study will contribute to knowledge that would be beneficial to all NPOs that are providing services to the public in an environment where both the private and public sectors also play a role in Australian society.
References


