

JOY HIGGS

11. SURVIVAL AND RESILIENCE

This chapter highlights the challenges educational leaders face and the way they cope with these challenges. To survive and succeed as leaders requires personal strategies and resilience. The need for such coping mechanisms and personal dispositions is grounded in the nature and challenges of leadership.

For example, virtually all of the research and literature on faculty across the career stages identifies numerous challenges to professional success and personal well-being (Sorcinelli, 2008). “In their struggle to balance it all, the place that most academic women ... start is at the individual level, with a range of inspired, inventive and resourceful coping strategies. However, personal strategies are not enough” they need support from family, friends, networks and institutions (ibid, p. xv). The authors in this book would support this contention also.



The picture of women and leadership is one of considerable complexity in which women face a number of dilemmas (Middlehurst, 1997):

First, a central message is that the concept of leadership is strongly embedded in gender stereotypes. The language of leadership has masculine connotations, images of leaders are often male heroes (Great Men) and

N. Cherry and J. Higgs (Eds.), Women of Influence in Education: Practising Dilemmas and Contesting Spaces, 145–160. © 2017 Sense Publishers. All rights reserved.

HIGGS

popular contexts for leadership encompass traditionally masculine scenarios (Church, King, State and Army). Common perceptions of appropriate leadership behaviours also carry stereotypically masculine overtones of command and control, of autocracy and dominance, of personal power or charisma, decisiveness, initiative and courage. Second, the result of this embedding is that perceptions of leader appropriateness and leader effectiveness are difficult to disentangle from the stereotypes. ... Because management and leadership have for long been predominantly male enclaves, the picture of the ideal manager is grounded in masculine attributes. ... the general cycle of disadvantage (and challenges in performance) for women in relation to leadership opportunities remains unaltered (pp. 12-13).

Educational settings are contested spaces fraught with challenges and bombarded with constant and often conflicting changes. So how do educational leaders survive in this space; how do they remain resilient? And, even more how do they survive the challenges and consequences of leadership and sustain their leadership as the world shifts beneath their feet (for instance through policy changes and funding shakeups)? Part of this answer is learning to balance endeavours (risk taking, acting on visionary leadership initiatives, pursuing brave actions) with responsibilities (assigned roles, duties and consequences) in a way that is sound, defensible, responsible and sustainable. Anne Dickson (2000, p.1) speaks of the “extraordinary paradox” that is evident in women in management positions.

On one hand is the high level of academic or professional qualification and experience of these women, their intelligence, their talents, their commitment and their dedication; while on the other is a vivid picture of internal doubts, misgivings and anxieties stemming from an abiding, and sometimes disabling, lack of confidence. ... (The book deals with) how to develop a genuine belief in your own ability to communicate, to be effective, to manage your authority and weather the storms of working life with more confidence.

In her book “Women at Work: Strategies for Survival and Success”, Anne considers a range of strategies such as being assertive, speaking up, taking yourself seriously, dealing with feelings at work, coping when the answer is “no”, setting limits at work, being angry not aggressive, managing criticism, handling authority, giving criticism effectively, dealing with gender and culture of work and understanding “the value of crazy”. A number of women participants in our research have developed a range of ways of coping with work challenges, demonstrating resistance to work tribulations and learning good survival skills.

In this chapter the research participants’ voices and experiences “sing out” their resilience and survival in academic leadership in a rich array of quotes from their interviews. To highlight the raw, unvarnished emotions and experiences of these leading women their actual words are portrayed as the dominant voice below with my reflections as the author providing a metanarrative.

FINDING COURAGE

Taking on a leadership role and performing its challenging tasks requires courage, particularly for women. For, while courage may be an internal thing, it is manifest in action, decisions and, often, assertive behaviours that look admirable and leader-like in men, but can be criticised as being aggressive in women. How many times do people leave a problematic status quo situation in place rather than acting, through courage, to redress it?

There was this gifted learning program that the girls really thought of as a bit of a day off. And I started over time questioning the stringency of the programs and the challenge of the programs. It was not simple to challenge the status quo. I felt that elective choice too early was detrimental to children's overall learning and that we should really keep the program broad. We introduced a new program with interdisciplinary inquiry-based learning but it was a lot, a lot of change at once. I have a Head of Campus that is maximum ten years, always five years, and someone who had gone into the role had locked into the earlier configuration. And there were others who had locked into the program regardless of how good it was, not unlocking it to embrace changing directions. And so that has been a bit of a challenge to change it, and it has taken to the end of this second year, to actually have the person in the leadership role really understanding the intent and drawing on the resources of other key staff. So that certainly has been challenging especially when staff can't see the need to change – they can't see the writing on the wall. Feedback is pretty good and people can look at something really thoroughly and embrace change knowing it is the best way to go.

PERSEVERING

In a world where *easy* is rare, perseverance plays a key role in achieving our goals as leaders, and pursuing challenging tasks, whether self or system imposed. We may start small or slow, mentored or self-motivated. Through perseverance we proceed step by step. We cope and survive, don't give up and, hopefully, flourish.

You know I just keep going at it I suppose. There are times when there's a perseverance thing. And of course the way that academics have to earn their brownie points meant that I couldn't get people to work on anything that smacked of being applied. And this is applied research. And I knew that we wouldn't have time to keep up with the literature and do the research that was needed to give us the input that we needed in

HIGGS

order to design the best user interfaces. But somehow we needed to hang in there and make it work.

How do I sustain leadership roles? Well one (way) is the pragmatic, one is the interest. I enjoy the interest and one is that I think that it get's a little bit self-sustaining. Not addictive, that's the wrong word but it gets something where you know you just develop more of an interest in understanding, you know it's nice to see how everything's working. I guess I also quite like organising and managing staff. I don't mind taking that role on.

It is easier, it gets easier and easier because when you have done that half a dozen times people come to you and say, well what is your view of this, so you get invited to contribute as opposed to having to assert your contribution.

BEING RESILIENT

Strength is not the same as resilience. The first is overt power and can be used or abused. The second is endurance and an inner strength of character that holds you to your purpose when your power is low and you feel like giving up. When facing barriers and knockbacks resilience can be your last resort. Resilience is an essential strength and survival strategy in the face of the relentlessness of change that is constant, or chaotic or often so immobilising that it feels like drowning. There are times when resilience is about strength and agency, and other times when it is about having a place to just “hang in there”.



When I was a graduate student, the Prof in our department, he was simply arrogant. And he basically said – well you know, women who choose an academic career lose ten years if they have children. Just like that. And we had a very, very capable, very excellent researcher and team leader, who was Oxford educated, who did some fantastic work, never went beyond

(being a researcher). Yet at the end she did become a professor or an associate professor, but for years and years and years she was a senior lecturer. It took a long time for her to be recognised.

This unit has been set up in an incredibly ad hoc way with many different influences over time. but with no clear leadership. So that was actually why I was employed to take over the leadership. ... When I got here it was incredibly obvious that there had been lots of different voices about what the unit is about. And the way that the facility was set up was incredibly ad hoc, thrown together and hadn't got any of the services and support staff that it needed to be a functioning unit. Anyway, I tried to put all these things in place and was continuously road blocked. We couldn't have extra support staff. We couldn't have technicians or good equipment systems. We couldn't have the consumable budget that we needed to actually make sure the equipment worked, etc, etc, etc. ... And in the end there was a crisis meeting because the unit account was so in the red and I had just put all the things I needed into working order because otherwise there was going to be no functioning department. And at this meeting were the key stakeholders. I just explained my situation and said this has been an impossible situation for the last four years. You should have been given a budget to start with. And I already knew at this stage that the DVCR was on my side and he was relatively new into the position and he had been trying to data gather about why there was such a mess anyway. So I had already made him aware of the position but I don't think the Chief Financial Officer knew what the situation was. ... at this particular meeting when I presented my case by bringing everyone together, it was decided that from next year I will be having a budget.

BUILDING SUPPORT NETWORKS

Few of us can survive as leaders on our own. Having support networks of peers who are walking the same path as us and following the same challenges gives us the support of someone who knows what it is like to lead (in good times and bad) and someone who can share ways of coping and succeeding that have been learned from actual practice.

Support networks can also be the team we work with, including people who report to us. And, there is a great advantage of having networks and colleagues who are outside of our workplaces and our institution's communication space, and beyond the institution's power consequences. Having such people, trusted friends

HIGGS

and professional support and development companions is vital in enabling leaders to face, survive and celebrate the challenges that leadership poses.

There are no peers (for me) in the school. And, that is one of the difficulties. My peers are certainly other principals and so there is a mix of friendly support and I guess, to some extent, to a limited extent, perhaps, some degree of, I wouldn't say rivalry, but there is probably a more collegial support in relationship between principals and their associations through which those relationships can be explored.

There are many times when you need to be able to talk to someone you can trust not to let what you say go further. Having someone like that to talk to can make all the difference between survival and going under. It's useful if they are your peers – they know what it's like to do your job – but also that they are not involved in your work or influenced by what you do. They can be a good sounding board with no consequences.

For me, I needed to learn who I could talk with, among the other heads of school. Some would use what I said against me. Others would stand up for me. Sometimes I just knew I needed to keep quiet.

BEING PROACTIVE AND MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE

How often do we encounter reactions rather than responses, and reactionary people? What bravery is required to be proactive? Or is it foolhardiness? We may not know until much later.

Yes, I certainly put my hat in the ring too, and yes had my fair share of head-hunting. I think within any organisation if you feel that things aren't going the way you expected they would go – then I am one of those people, who instead of sitting there complaining about it, proactively engage with the leaders to actually find solutions and be that voice representing others. From that, the success of making an actual difference in how institutions advance and progress and enhance the environments in which people are working, and that doesn't mean that it's making the environments comfortable ... it's actually making such environments dynamic. Ensuring these people have a clear direction, and the outcomes can be very rewarding and that is really what has been a motivator is that a lot of people have. There's a lot of work that needs to be done in higher education; it's been a very shifting environment in both regulation requirements and performance demands and in many other areas as well as the changing fiscal contexts.

I think, you know, there is a real key to, developing adults who want to contribute to the education of young people and as we say grow remarkable people. And I think the world needs that.

So, in your little corner of the world, if you can make that sort of difference that is a higher goal that I find really exciting. And I like to do it in an environment where there is a playfulness and there is fun and you can show to some people that adults can collaborate really well and laugh together and have fun together and be challenged and still achieve great things in a way that brings joy. Because I think if young people can see that, it is worth growing up. Yeah, so you know, that element of creativity and fun is great. I think for me I would always want to be in a school where you could build a momentum to create new things all the time. I couldn't come into a place where the norm is to just keep it ticking over and keep the status quo. I think in today's day and age if you are status quo you are going backwards.

You know, we have that privileged position of influencing the next generation. We have the capacity to create a great environment. The feedback that I get from the staff is that, the stories that I tell or the context I give for what we are doing, really resonates with them. And so, you go wow, you are not just providing a livelihood for these people, you are making their work meaningful and purposeful. And joyful. That is a big tick in life I think, if you can do that for people. And they in turn do great things for the young people they have in front of them.

WORKING OUT HOW TO SUCCEED

Complex systems like academia pose many challenges not the least is trying to solve the puzzle of how to succeed. Perhaps this is situated problem solving. Perhaps it is learned wisdom. Perhaps it is collegiality and strength in numbers or friends in high places. Hopefully each of these strategies is remembered and brings future success that brings others along in shared accomplishment. And hopefully this success achieves a greater purpose than just personal reward.

I've worked in teams where we have really kicked goals. That's a bit different I suppose, I mean working in a team and kicking a lot of goals and feeling excited about your outcome, that's a real success. And it takes some learning how to succeed like that.

And why do you think I'm successful? It's having things in train and having significant input from large numbers of the organisation, it is having very active and productive and engaged working teams that are not reluctantly doing it, they're

HIGGS

proactively and actively doing it. Making decisions and consulting in that process. And people are willing to embrace the change that's coming forward.

OK so the process is that, as a leader and manager, the first thing you have to be seen to be doing is developing the case as to why you need to change and you need to engage people in that dialogue as to intent and purpose of the change. To have people not be passive but active in the process you have to provide them with the opportunity to be active for them to have a voice. So there was a process put in place to enable people to independently and collectively have a voice in that process. Importantly it needs your ability to receive those messages from people and to act on them.

So one of your first things that always makes you successful is for you to at least give people some information as well as exemplars of what you might seek, that gives a basis from which to work from and some options within that. And then have them understand by the nature of the questions you ask of people, for their input into that.

Then you take on board that, and then the positions that you hold you need to then evaluate the merit of each of those and then redefine it in accordance with that. So the process of the next stage was in taking the feedback. We then convened a second group that looked at the merit of the different elements of feedback and how it might fit with a range of the options that came forward. So you will always influence, but it's not about winning and losing.

You need to learn to pick your fights ... absolutely clear have to be in there (for some) and let the other ones go. But you need to do that I suppose in a way, not just with each fight but across the board so that over a period of a couple of years, people will say oh give it to her because you'll get a reasonable opinion from her.

DEVELOPING STRATEGIES THAT CAN WORK WITH OTHER PEOPLE

Leaders aren't leaders without teams to work with. Similarly, decisions and strategies that seem right to us (as leaders), aren't right or best or even acceptable if they don't work with other people. This is one of the biggest challenges of leadership and it takes a great deal of learning, self-reflection, feedback and willingness to let go of our preferred options, and to create or fashion change jointly, sell or listen to proposed strategies, and instigate or sew seeds for change.

Look, I am a very big believer that if you want people to come along on an issue or a problem that you are working on and solving that first of all, you really have to bring them into the issue and help them have some ownership of the issue too. So, the issue that I am thinking about (over staffing), really I spent a number of months, you know, helping them, giving them a perspective of this issue because it was something that really was quite foreign to many of them.

So, it was really starting to share, you know, an issue that I was working on but I wanted to give them a bit more information because I could see a time in the future where I would need their input as well. So really, the first period of time was a, an exercise in helping to bring them up to speed but also with individuals, discussing it a little bit more so they could see how it was related to their work. I set out to create an environment for them to feel comfortable in and to help them gain an understanding and start buying in. This happened through our management team meetings where we have reports on various issues. Firstly I tabled it as an agenda item and I gave them a very brief overview. Then I gave an update in our management team meeting two weeks later. And that really went on for a good month and a half, where I kept it fairly low key to start with. Because I wanted them to buy. And each time I sort of I suppose exposed a bit more of the issue, wanting their feedback and observations, wanting their thoughts on it. So I was helping them to start thinking about the problem and I suppose after the first month and a half I was able to give them some more hard data on why it was an issue that we needed to address and some comparative data on where we needed to go to or where for this issue we should be sitting, in the marketplace. I probably spent a fair bit of time on because that was the time when I really got a bit of sort of push back, oh you know, no, not, some of them wanting to buy into it because they could start to see the implications if they did buy into it. That it would mean some change and change that they would have to be involved in which wasn't necessarily pleasant change. So we actually spent a fair bit of time on that.

A big part of the strategy was getting the facts together and communicating them with people and keeping people up to date on some little trends I was seeing in relation to some of the things we were working on. And so when we actually came at staffing time to say, no we realistically have to look at some of our class sizes, then people were prepared. They didn't

HIGGS

necessarily like it but they were prepared. This is basically a progressive strategy.

And then we set up a special staffing group that has some members of the management team on it, not everyone, but I spent time in our meetings when we were looking at staffing with them, really talking about well what are our options, are there different ways that we can do things. So once again, helping them to be part of those solutions. I just feel that if you allow people into the discussions you will get much greater ownership and they will take more responsibility for initiating the changes that need to take place as well.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Increasingly, globalised society is risk averse, particularly educational institutions being a mixture of altruistic (educational) endeavours and managed programs driven by accountability to stakeholders (especially governments and the public purse) and accountability with strong cost-efficiency and “proper behaviour” parameters. Leaders are risk managers which is generally translated as risk minimisers. How does this balance with creativity, adventurousness and good practice that is not just ensuring cost-efficiency and limiting bad press?

So it's important to understand how the system works and how to manage, minimise and if possible, avoid costly problems and risks.

As Principal you are sort of the conduit between the Board and the school. They are very aware of the fact that I do a lot in my role as Principal. It is not the regular kind of activity so I think that they find it quite useful when I am able to report at a more detailed level about things that are going on in the school and perhaps explain the rationale behind it more readily. I think if you are involved at that level instead of dealing with things at the end place, whether that is a discipline problem or a failure of some area of the school, you actually are in a preventative, pre-emptive position.

I think you can plan much more easily for what you want the outcome to be because you can get in at the bottom and say, okay we can improve this or we could do this differently and there is an immediacy about it too. Which I think the staff pick up on. So they will come to you more readily with an idea because they know you will be interested and you might actually implement it fairly quickly. And it is not going to go through a whole series of, you know, this, that and the other. And I guess the metaphor is having an open door.

LEARNING TO DEAL WITH THINGS THAT GO WRONG

If all of our endeavours have been easy and gone well, then how are we prepared for some inevitable failure or negativity. Through triumph over tribulations comes strength, resilience and wisdom that provides greater potential for future success. How do we juggle the risks the potential benefits and consequences of our leadership actions? We need to look behind the obvious, to discover intent to look beyond powerful messages to examine the breadth of underlying issues and ideas and to seek opportunities and new ways of working together. Sometimes too, we have to find new ways of feeling OK about our outcomes.

And it had been something we'd been working on for months, and a whole lot of stuff had been working fine, but we'd got to this particular spot where we really were stuck, and you know in some ways you could say it was a minor issue but I don't think it was because it was going into a policy and it was going to have a significant impact if it was allowed to go through in the way that it originally was. And I kept thinking, I can't let this go through because this is going to cause no end of problems if it goes through in its current form. So you could say it was both successful and unsuccessful. It wasn't successful in me getting exactly what I wanted, but the ultimate outcome was successful enough, in that it got rid of what I saw as the major risk and it didn't get us to the point where I would like us to be and in the future I would still hope we might get there, but it got us out of the major risk. So I suppose I often think any outcome has got success and lack of success factored into it almost. You don't always get a perfect success I suppose.

I was head of a particular discipline. I found the way the management structure was working was quite problematic. You know, the culture in that organisation wasn't conducive to forging good relationships, or encouraging leadership that was perhaps a bit innovative. So, I had a lot more struggles there in trying to bring about innovation and change because I found there were pressures from above, from sideways, from below, wherever, and, it was hard to bring people along.

How can we measure success? Perhaps we need to re-conceptualise it. Who says it went well? Who says it didn't? Perhaps the real benefits will not be known until a future time and place. When is it time to say enough is enough? Sometimes our goals will never be theirs. In the end we have to balance the costs, personal and public, and the benefits.

I was unsuccessful in keeping that centre going and there were a lot of people who were very emotionally upset about that. Some of them are still working here with me and I am still

HIGGS

collaborating with my Deputy Directors. One thing I pride myself on, every single one of them has a job. So my Deputy Director has a tenured position. Another woman I worked with as a research fellow has a part-time position. She is the one who needs to be a bit more strategic. All of the research assistants have finished their PhDs.

So there is nobody in that centre; what I did is, we planned it for six months. We had a big review, an external review, great review with people from NSW. It was very good. So what I did with the team, the group in the centres, as I said, look we can keep going but it is taking a toll on me. I am unsuccessful in this environment. Or we can wrap it up. And so I knew I wanted to wrap it up but I actually brought people along with me and I think that, you know what it is, it is managing failure is what it is. So we wrapped it up.

During that six months everybody was able to get to transit and this is without the union. I mean we are all members of the union. I believe that it is really important to have that and I had union support for a number of issues that I were with the uni, around issues. And they were really supportive. But basically what we did was we closed the centre down. We were able to send emails out to a really large network of stakeholders.

We tied up all of our, you know, publications. Our grants got transferred to here. We had a big party. Some have finished their PhDs. Some are lecturers. And that has been really good. So you know what it was, it was like a point where I realised that I was unsuccessful. Continuing to fight it would have taken a personal toll on me and so what we did was we wrapped it up. And that is why here I have, I purposely negotiated a contract without a big management fuss.

LEARNING TO UNDERSTAND POLITICS, CHANGE AND CHANGE AGENCY

Organisations, including educational institutions, are one of the most amazing phenomena in modern society. They take a large number of people, structure them into manageable and functional groups and development management systems to enable tasks to be completed, communication systems to work effectively, products to be produced, the talents of people to be well utilised, marketing and outreach strategies to be implemented, and resources (people, finance and physical as well as virtual resources) to be utilised in accomplishing the mission, purpose and capital (emotional, financial, intellectual, systematic) to be produced. Throughout all of these enterprises, actions and mechanisms, lies the fundamental reality of different interests and perspectives, along with the factions, lobby groups and

political alliances this creates. Being an effective leader requires understanding how the organisation works (formally and informally), learning to work within that system, developing the ability to manage or cope with change as well as becoming an insightful and effective change agent.

There are times when you need to understand what's going on behind the scenes. You maybe haven't considered the ripple effect of your decision and what you should have to have done to make something successful. You just haven't thought about it and the implications of it. You haven't realised that sometimes the goalposts change in this world.

Sometimes when you start out, you think you have scoped out a project or that you know a challenge that you want to address. And you launch into it and all of a sudden the goalposts change or the rules change and you end up in some sort of some wicked problems. And you have to be able to then either reassess, change course, or reprioritise. And so sometimes you get to the end of it and you realise - well, that wasn't really that successful. Then you reflect - I definitely will or won't do that next time.

BUILDING A GOOD TEAM AROUND ME AND WORKING WELL TOGETHER

Building such teams can be fruitful and energising. Not only do such teams enable work to be accomplished, they also make working a positive experience.

Sometimes you just don't have the right people in the right seat. Because at the end of the day everything that you want to achieve you achieve with and through other people. So it is so critical to have the right people with the right aptitude and the right attitude. Sometimes, I look at my management team and I think wow, I have a stable of thoroughbreds. They have got such expertise, they are so dedicated, they are smart and committed.

In comparison another group I work with - they are a bit flighty. They have their different ideas and so you are constantly having to be working at nurturing and supporting them and the team. Because they won't just do what you tell them. They will question, they will have a robust discussion which is what you want but, you have to be able to sustain that. When I think of things that haven't worked as well or the jury is still out on whether they are working, it is because they are really challenging and there is a measure of ambiguity. And so I think you have to work with such people and say you have to trust me, that I know we are going to nail this problem or achieve this project but right now there is uncertainty and there is ambiguity

HIGGS

but I am really determined and we are going to persevere through this and have all the discussions and try to understand all the obstacles. And we are going to get there in the end. Because in that process people will get to know each other and you will develop good working relationships.

You have to be respectful but sometimes you have to really have direct adult discussions and I think that's important too. Actually, I think this is a real expectation that you need to have of them and their leadership. If you are really exercising leadership you have to be able to have these direct adult discussions. We have to be able to have enough trust there to put the issues on the table. We have to discuss the issues and work through the issues. That is what grownups do, you know.

LEARNING HOW TO BE ME AS A LEADER

In life and work we follow our own journeys. How much are these pathways harmonious, compatible, tolerable, and mutually supportive? Some paths may be beyond us, intolerable or prestigious but at the same time incompatible with who we are – too compromising. Some choices seem to be beyond us but by some miracle of stamina, imagination and courage we rise to the occasion.

It's just the sort of so much a part of me that I can't (do it differently) you know. And sometimes I think I need to kind of toughen some of that up. I don't know. It's an interesting one because when I think that you can be who you are within it. Not everybody likes everything – so you know you're always going to have times when your behaviour rubs people up the wrong way and other times when people will like it as a model.

And on the whole I suppose I would say my behaviour has stood me in good stead. If I think it's been non-threatening. To be supportive, to be willing to compromise when you need to. All that's very gendered in many ways. But it's also I guess from my point of view, it doesn't seem to have held me back in my career anyway. It's probably given me enhanced opportunities at times.

I worked in these syndicate groups. If I was chairing the meeting I would go and sit in the middle of the table and you know, some of them were so uncomfortable with it. You know, it was such a little thing. But they thought I was supposed to sit at the head of the table. And because I was middle of the table I was actually picking up different sorts of things. It is quite interesting but it made them profoundly uncomfortable.

And we kept sort of having these peer reviews and they kept reading back to me, feeding back to me could I stop doing it. They didn't like it, you know. I was rocking the boat.

It's rather old fashioned, of course, when they think there needs to be a master, and then everybody else is underneath. I found this very divisive. People didn't like collaborating. It was a really competitive environment. And that has been extremely interesting because I encouraged quite a different style of participation. Where it has come to is we are putting in a grant and it has become a lot more collaborative. Although it has not been very easy.

And I know that is a very minor thing but it is trying to change the environment and I work better laterally or down. I am very poor at working up. I am very weak at doing that. I have done two years of sort of lateral stuff here and I said look, I want more of a leadership role now, next year. I have finished that research.

And now I am really keen to get up and going. Not so much administrative but leadership for early career, mid career researchers, mentoring. Particularly women. The work I have done with the junior women whether it is either mentoring informally or informally, I haven't done a formal one. I have mentored with people, you know, in my research team. The students, the women are very un-strategic.

As a leader
am I:
a rebel,
a party liner
a states-person
a lucky sod?

Beyond what I feel
and what I am comfortable with,
what does my leadership style
mean for those I lead?
Can I live with the effect
I engender?

What will I think of me
at the end of this job?

HIGGS

CONCLUSION

To survive and be resilient in educational leadership requires character and balance. The women in this project had many stories to tell about these accomplishments and sometimes the real achievement was coming back from, or through failure, to keep on going. We each have tales to tell and questions to ask ourselves about how we have coped or flourished and what we might do next time.

Maïke Ingrid Philipsen (2009) argues that “making it work” in successful educational careers and leadership involves recognising what really does count and reconciling this with our own values and priorities. Such people, she argues “have enablers in their lives that help them be successful, and they employ a wide array of coping strategies to deal with barriers to what they should consider a successful balance of their personal and professional lives” (p. 109). Such is our challenge.

REFERENCES

- Dickson, A. (2000). *Women at work: Strategies for survival and success*. London: Kogan Page.
- Middlehurst, R. (1997). Leadership, women and higher education. In H. Egging (Ed.), *Women as leaders and managers in higher education* (pp. 3-16). Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- Philipsen, M. I. (2009). *Challenges of the faculty career for women*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Sorcinielli, M. D. (2009). Foreword. In M.I. Philipsen, *Challenges of the faculty career for women: Success and sacrifice* (pp. xiii-xvi). San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons.

Joy Higgs AM PhD
Strategic Research Professor in Professional Practice
Charles Sturt University