

Leadership Summit 2016 – Why we need transformational leadership

It was such a privilege to take time out from leading a College and spend the day talking about leadership with other further education leaders, both colleges and private training providers and the emerging leaders whom we had each nominated to bring with us.

It was sponsored by the Education & Training Foundation, beautifully hosted at Westminster Kingsway and facilitated by a very brave Principal, Andy Wilson who also had to contend with a two day Ofsted Inspection.



Shelagh Legrave
Principal and Chief Executive
Chichester College

The theme was transformational leadership. It wasn't about policy although Nick Boles, the Skills Minister gave up 30 mins to stress the priorities for Further Education, apprenticeships and technical & professional routes into employment. In my view it was the best speech I have heard from him. He started with a repudiation of Sir Michael Wilshaw's comments about children being better off in school than FE, making it clear that this was not Government policy and telling us how proud he was of the FE sector but, of course, it could do more.

We then absorbed ourselves in transformation. Julian Wilson talked about changing structures rather than offering less for less in a period of tight finances. His analogy of traffic lights and roundabouts, the latter offering choices and the former one way only, was a brilliant way to think differently about the opportunities to make economies through collaboration. Pat Carrington, Principal of Peterborough City College shared her pioneering multi agency approach to the city's Health & Wellbeing Board. I resonated with her use of Patrick Lencioni's book on 5 dysfunctions of a team which we have used with our senior team. Spending time with my allocated table, facilitated by Sir Geoff Hall on how to lead large and merged colleges gave us time to talk practically about the challenges and we were then able to ask a panel to respond to our question. Shakira Martin, Vice President NUS made sure we considered the student perspective – she was brilliant and such an advocate for our sector.

Dr David Hall opened our eyes to the challenge of first stage lateral thinking. It is so true that we are programmed to think about the second stage – taking information, processing it and making a decision. Our ability to think laterally is reduced once we become teenagers. It means we are less innovative and creative as a result. Using 6 thinking hats or superheroes is the answer! Open Spaces then gave us each the chance to discuss a subject of choice – 10 were nominated and again this focused on the practical day to day issues of leadership. Finally Munira Mirza, Deputy Mayor of

London for Culture & Culture reminded us of transformation in the Arts, using the Royal Opera House as a brilliant example. I well remember the fly-on-the-wall programme of 20 years ago -what a disaster. And yet through transformational leadership, entrepreneurship, improved governance and focusing on a core mission it is now an outstanding and internationally recognised cultural centre.

At a time when huge changes and opportunities are facing the further education sector, transformational leadership into the next incarnation is going to be key. What we heard and discussed is food for thought and reflection on how we can change our own and emerging leaders' practices to achieve that transformation.

Each leader was asked to bring an aspiring leader. Shelagh brought Julia Williams, Head of Learning for Service Industries. Julia writes:

'An inspirational day, great to speak and work in groups alongside other participants from FE. Insightful information gathered from a fabulous line up of speakers and responses from the panel to solve similar issues and concerns.'
