

The University of New England

**Frontline players in Australian higher education: challenges
facing Heads of School in a regional university**

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Certification

I certify that I am the sole author and that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not being currently submitted for any other degrees.

I certify that to the best of my knowledge that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, partially obscured by the redaction box.

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Abstract

This study sought to identify the roles and responsibilities of Heads of School in a regional Australian University, and the factors that promote and inhibit the capacity of the Heads of School to perform their function effectively and efficiently. It is set in the context of rapid and pervasive changes in the strategic direction, operation and management of Australia's universities as they necessarily respond to fundamental changes in their political, social and economic environments.

The study employed a modified Delphi design for the collection and analysis of information. The Delphi method is a structured process for collecting and synthesizing ideas and opinions through a triangulation of interviews, discussions and questionnaires, interspersed with controlled feedback.

Findings of the study identified numerous major roles and responsibilities ascribed to Heads of School at the university, as well as the major factors that act to promote or inhibit their effectiveness. Also identified are a range of significant challenges for the university's middle management. Finally the current decision-making paradigm that led to the Heads of School position statement and operational realities is questioned.

Areas for future research are identified in the study including:

- The functioning of the current process driven paradigm for ascribing roles and responsibilities of Heads of School;
- The nature and implications of the various management 'styles' of Heads of School; and
- The relationship between time available for the role of Head of School and the level of creative management.

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