

# Clayton Research Seminar Series

An IBRG and SEIRnet Initiative

Department of Management

## Leadership needs in culturally heterogeneous workgroups: Highlights of findings from a research program

**Dr Remi Ayoko**

### **ABSTRACT**

Diversity is linked to various advantages (higher levels of creativity, problem solving and innovation), but also various disadvantages (poorer levels of cohesion and social integration). Studies in diversity also suggest that the potential benefits from diversity are rarely achieved. In the present research program, leadership is proposed as an intervening variable that sheds light on the relationship between diversity and outcomes. In particular, it is proposed that leaders who have the skills and capacity for effective conflict and emotions management are able to increase group cohesion and improve group processes and performance. Using a multi-method research design, the proposition is tested in three main studies. Data were collected from 50 students (Study 1), 45 respondents from two public sector organisations (Study 2) and 660 respondents in 122 workgroups from seven organisations (Study 3). We analysed data using both qualitative and quantitative analytical strategies. Highlights of the results indicate that the use of explanation is crucial for the stimulation of a productive conflict while avoidance was the main strategy leaders employed in managing conflict and its consequent emotions. Finally, leader intervention was an important factor in determining group members' reactions to conflict as well as group outcomes. Implications of the results are discussed.

### **Dr Remi Ayoko**

Remi Ayoko commenced work at UQ Business School in 2000. Prior to this, Remi had extensive teaching experience in tertiary institutions across three nations. Her initial qualifications (B A. Ed and M Ed. ESL) were in Education and Teaching English as a Second Language. In addition, she completed her MBA degree and PhD at the University of Queensland and teaches into the areas of Conflict Resolution & Negotiation, Research Methods, HRM and Managerial Skills and Communication. Remi is currently the co-ordinator of the Honours Program at the Ipswich campus. Her research interests include workplace diversity, conflict, emotions and leadership.

**Date:** Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006

**Time:** 11.00am – 12.30pm

**Venue:** Room E269, 2nd Floor  
Building 11 (Menzies Building)  
Clayton Campus

**RSVP:** Please confirm your attendance via email to [deborah.cowley@buseco.monash.edu.au](mailto:deborah.cowley@buseco.monash.edu.au) by COB Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2006



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