



Higher Education Work-based Learning in a Changing World

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What is Work-based Learning in higher education

Definitions of WBL

A learning process which focuses university level critical thinking upon work (paid or unpaid), in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities, to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the university.

(Gibbs and Garnett 2007, p.411)

..... a substantial proportion that is concerned with higher-level skills and knowledge and with the development and use of broad, high-level capability that suggests that it has capacity to be recognised and enhanced through university involvement.

(Lester and Costley, 2010, p3)

— WBL has a focus upon higher education level knowledge including acquisition and application of work-based abilities and this distinguishes WBL from simple work experience. WBL is part of a theoretical and research-based university programme.

Workplace Learning

The international conference series for Workplace (WPL) learning researchers *Researching Work & Learning* is the world's longest, continuously running international research conference series serving the field of WPL www.rwlconferences.org

- WPL research is about how people learn at work e.g. Eraut, Sawchuk, Evans.
- WBL research into how curricular can be developed to support learning in at and through work such as Garnett, Talbot, Costley.
- WPL group are primarily researchers, rarely engage with pedagogic research of WBL.
- the WBL pedagogic researchers are primarily teachers and often draw upon WPL research
- nomenclature can be mixed and WBL authors may describe the research of WPL researchers as WBL in its broadest sense

Full-time and part time work-based learners

- Work-based modules studied by full-time students sometimes during work placement are dominated by disciplinary knowledge created in universities and applied in the workplace. WBL is a mechanism to enable them to compete effectively in the labour market and so enter the workplace. Pedagogic methods are placements, mentoring, internments and simulations. It is a form of pre-employment skills development. In Australia this is called **Work Integrated Learning**
- Full-time work-based learners engage with university WBL programmes often specifically designed with stakeholders to meet the knowledge and skill requirements of work. Learners gain formal qualifications for their non-formal and informal learning and/or update their professional skills and knowledge. The curriculum is negotiated and meets requirements of learner, stakeholder and HEI.
- A third type of WBL is where the learner is partly in the workplace and partly in a formal educational setting. This describes Apprenticeships where learners spend part of their time at work and part in the university.

Work-based knowledge across the curriculum

- WBL focuses on work (paid or unpaid) itself as a learning activity rather than being just a placement activity for the knowledge of the academy to be put into practice which is better described as what the Australians call Work Integrated Learning. This could be at the level of part of a subject or the whole degree program.
- A distinctive feature of WBL is the recognition of the potential of the activity, context and purposes of work to develop high level knowledge and abilities. The knowledge and abilities derived from work will often be informed by and interact with disciplinary knowledge but may not always fit neatly into subject discipline boundaries.

Work-based Learning as a field of study

- Portwood (2000) argued that work-based learning should be regarded as a ‘field of study’ in its own right, rather than just a ‘mode’ of study.
- This allows students to create their own individually negotiated programme,
- starting with accreditation of their learning from work,
- work itself becomes the subject, rather than traditional subject disciplines.
- See handout **Key Principles for Work-Based Learning in Higher Education** for a full list of how WBL in universities should be managed

Distinctive Work-based Learning

- At the heart of the distinctive WBL is the role of the external organisation as a partner with the university and the individual learner in the planning of learning activities which are responsive to the needs of a specific work situation. This contests the supremacy of the role of the university in curriculum design, delivery and validation of knowledge and suggests that authentic work-based learning should seek alignment with thinking and practice relating to knowledge creation and use in the workplace.
- WBL in higher education is underpinned by practice theory. Practice knowledge has been described as Mode 2 to distinguish it from Mode 1 subject discipline knowledge as it has multiple stakeholders, is often highly situated rather than universal and is created for the purposes of application rather than for its own sake (Gibbons et al., 1994). It is socially shared and constructed between practitioners within a specific community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).
- Aristotle's pre-Enlightenment concept of knowledge in particular the ideas of 'phronesis' have been broadly translated as knowledge containing principles for practical actions (Flyberg, 2001) and 'praxis' which can be translated as ethically based, intelligent, practical actions (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Friere, 1986).

Threshold concepts for practice

Consider the following concepts :

- Embodied
- Experiential and participative
- Co-constructed
- Emergent
- Situated
- Engaged

Embodied

- Include feelings, emotions and desires as well as intellect and abilities
- Acknowledge emotions, confidence, reflection/reflexivity
- Value previous and current experience
- A wholistic approach

Experiential and participative learning

- Engage with the experience of learners
- Includes all experience not just work experience
- An active process of reflection, review and critical analysis
- in and on practice
- Simulations
- Learner-centred

Engaged

- Working with others in teams
- Taking an individual role within a team or community
- Relational skills

Situated

- Individual intelligence requires social and cultural understanding
- There are multiple perspectives needed for such understanding provided by context
- The interplay between student/s, the set of circumstances and their position within it and context (where, when, background)

Emergent

- Not everything can be planned in advance
- Learning is emergent and often unexpected
- Provision has to be made for learning
- Codification in the form of precise learning outcomes, assessment criteria needs to be carefully approached to include unexpected learning
- Reflection and reflexivity

Co-constructed

- Practice is usually co-constructed with others
- Opportunities for doing this in learning situations
- Co-construction of learning by teachers with learners and learners with learners
- Negotiated learning activities not solely designed and created by teachers

The Work-based Curriculum

- Build upon current experiential learning. Recognition of Prior Learning
Reflective assignments.
- Planning ahead for Professional practice. **Learning Agreements**
- Research and Development abilities **Research/Enquiry methods for practice**
- Work-based Projects **Undertake an enquiry project in a work context at appropriate level**

Features of work-based projects

- Develop, change or create a process or product in an external setting
- Underpinned by academic knowledge and critical thinking
- Contribute both to work and also meet academic standards at the right level
- Involve a tangible and useful outcome
- Ethical, sustainable,
- Often moves beyond disciplinary/course boundaries to meet the needs of workplace

Examples of Masters Projects

- **Developing a Design and Build Handbook for a Construction Company**
- **Preparing a College for Investors in People**
- **Establishing a Centre of Excellence for a Financial Services Organization**
- **Improving Healthcare Support for Refugee Families**

WBL project	Typical student project
Student is insider to problem/context	Student is outsider
Focus on work and learning for work	Focus on learning disciplinary knowledge
Setting defines what is required (in part)	Greater emphasis on supervisor to define standards
Practice drives use of theory	Theory privileged over practice typically
Primary abilities to be fostered: reflexivity, development	Variable abilities to be fostered, often critique and analysis
Draws on wide range of resources/ support within work organisation	Draws on resources/ support within educational institution
Embraces knowledge-in-practice	Knowledge-in-practice limited or non-existent
Time-limited by real world constraints	Time-limited by timetable and university deadlines
Driven by the exigencies of work usually interpreted widely	Driven by specified learning outcomes and interests of student and adviser
Paradigm/ methodology not necessarily evident	Works within defined paradigm/ methodology
Outcomes- mix of pragmatic/organisational and academic. Applied in real settings	Outcomes predominantly academic. Not normally applied in real settings
Student knows about existing context and knowledge boundaries	'Supervisor' has knowledge that is passed on to student

Dissemination of the value of the project

- Direct evidence from research is a compelling factor for all audiences
- Persuasion of the value of the project may be needed for those implementing recommendations
- The spread and sustainability of innovations is dependant on more than compelling research data (Greenhalgh et al 2004)
- The art of persuasion involves recognition that people make decisions based upon the character and credibility of those making the case for change/ improvement
- People are compelled by the findings of research and by , good sense, good will and excellence in moral character because people are also driven by their emotions (Aristotle 1995) – he did not say it in 1995....

Work-based assessment criteria

- Identification of and appropriate use of sources of knowledge and evidence
- Selection and justification of approaches
- Ethical understanding
- Analysis and synthesis of information and ideas
- Self appraisal and reflection on practice
- Action planning leading to effective and appropriate action
- Evaluation of information and ideas
- Application of learning
- Effective use of resources
- Effective communication
- Working and learning autonomously and with others

Knowledge and skills for effective teaching/advising/ facilitation

- A. Knowledge of work and context
- B. Learning consultancy skills
- C. Transdisciplinary awareness
- D. Enquiry approaches
- E. Reflexivity and reviewing skills

Boud and Costley (2008)

in 2020

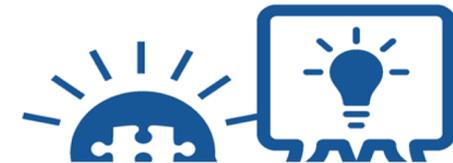
1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Critical Thinking
3. Creativity
4. People Management
5. Coordinating with Others
6. Emotional Intelligence
7. Judgment and Decision Making
8. Service Orientation
9. Negotiation
10. Cognitive Flexibility

Top 10 skills



in 2015

1. Complex Problem Solving
2. Coordinating with Others
3. People Management
4. Critical Thinking
5. Negotiation
6. Quality Control
7. Service Orientation
8. Judgment and Decision Making
9. Active Listening
10. Creativity



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