Work-integrated learning (WIL) and the HEQF

Penelope Engel-Hills, James Garraway, Cecilia Jacobs, Terry Volbrecht and Chris Winberg

NQF Research Conference:
2-4 June 2010
Overview

- Definitions
- Common misunderstandings
- Methodology of the position paper
- WIL Typology
- Reflections/Recommendations
Definition

Work-Integrated Learning’ (WIL) describes an approach to career-focused education that includes theoretical forms of learning that are appropriate for technical/professional qualifications, problem-based learning (PBL), project based learning (PJBL) and WPL. What distinguishes WIL is the emphasis on the integrative aspects of such learning. WIL could thus be described as an educational approach that aligns academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplaces.

A mechantronics lesson, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich.
Common misunderstandings

- Conflation of WIL with workplace learning;
- Conflation of WIL with experiential learning;
- Association of WIL with poor quality/easy option…

WIL is based on the principle that learning should be demonstrated to be appropriate for a qualification and should be assessed wherever it takes place or is provided.
Methodology

• Case studies
  - published in accredited journals;
  - or as part of unpublished honours, masters, or doctoral work

• Meta-analysis/ comparison

Building construction students on SL (a type of PJBL) from Carl October, HDHET portfolio, 2007 CPUT.
Type 1: work-directed theoretical learning

- Forms of knowledge (e.g., mathematics and physics in engineering programs) are sequenced in ways which meet both academic criteria and are applicable and relevant to the career-specific components (Barnett 2006).
- An example would be a subject called “Mathematical Foundations of Engineering” in contrast to the more traditional “Mathematics I”; i.e., directed theoretical learning.
Type 2: problem-based learning

- Pedagogy that encourages students to learn through the structured exploration of a research or practice-based problem (Savin-Baden & Major 2004);
- Students work in small, self-directed groups to define, carry out and reflect upon a task, which is usually a ‘real-life’ problem (Breslow et al. 2005).
- Inter-disciplinary;
- Carefully structured and sequenced ‘problems’ direct the students’ learning towards outcomes;
- Lecturer as curriculum coordinator;
- Lecturer as resource person.

Group/team work is associated with PBL.
Type 3: project-based learning

- PJBL combines PBL and experiential learning by bringing together intellectual inquiry, real-world problems, and student engagement in relevant and meaningful work (Barron et al. 1998);
- Service Learning is a form of PJBL that connects students with communities, service partners, and academic experts.

Civil engineering students’ service learning project, CPUT.
Type 4: workplace learning

- Practicum (a few weeks to a few years of practical experience at a site of professional practice);
- Can be strongly or weakly integrated into the formal learning programme;
- Workplace is present, both as a learning resource and as a benchmark of practice;
- Industrial placements, job-shadowing, internships, learnerships, etc….

Workplace learning is common in the health professions – tertiary hospitals have the infrastructure to support this.
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<tr>
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<th>Work-directed theoretical learning</th>
<th>Problem-based learning</th>
<th>Project-based learning</th>
<th>Workplace Learning</th>
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<td>Certificate</td>
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<td>✗ (time too short)</td>
<td>✗ (time too short)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>(combined with PJBL)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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Issues for reflection

- Do all qualifications have elements of WIL or “practice”?
- Is WIL the responsibility of industry/profession or higher education?
- Issues of infrastructure (case of the health sciences – “teaching hospital” – but no “teaching factories”…)
- Higher degrees in WIL – useful knowledge?