



UALL Work and Learning Network: Network News: March 2021

Welcome to the March edition of the newsletter.

Editorial

This month has seen the announcement about the gradual ending of the UK's Covid-19 lockdown being staged for a final return to more 'normal' conditions on the 21st of June 2021. It has been good to add names to the mailing list and to have colleagues sending in information to broadcast to the wider community. For the March spotlight we have some research that has been shared by Joanne Gosling, who has recently completed her PhD studies at the University of Greenwich. This research builds on the existing scholarship in this field of practice, and presents new findings within a business school context.

Spotlight

The Acquisition of Skills and Expertise for Higher Education - Work-Based Learning

Today's workforce faces a rapidly changing environment. The last 12 months alone have brought challenges unseen on this scale for many decades; individuals faced displacement caused by collapses in sectors based on changing consumer habits, not to mention those whose roles became redundant overnight by the closure of many companies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's fragile working environment, the increased age of retirement, the rapidity of changes in the economy coupled with consumer habits indicate that it is increasingly important for individuals to be equipped with skills that enable them to move from one sector to another without necessitating the need for lengthy retraining or upskilling. Moreover, the recent government agenda and growing demand for the integration of learning in a working environment also signals that less time will be spent in classrooms and lecture rooms. This study gives insight into how this conundrum can be unpicked and approached through skilful curriculum design and practices needed for the 21st century workforce.

The study investigated the use of Work Based Learning (WBL) within Business programmes in Higher Education (HE). It sought to answer whether it is possible for HE to implement effective and meaningful WBL. Firstly, the thesis proposes a new conceptual model of WBL. Secondly, at a time when HE faces claims that students are not sufficiently equipped for work (Powell, 2020; CIPD, 2015; Prospects, 2015) the thesis examines whether the programmes offered give students sufficient opportunities to gain the skills promised in the programme literature. It also examines whether students were aware of the skills they had developed. Finally, the study explores hidden factors that inhibit successful implementation of WBL in HE Business Schools.

A review of literature revealed limited research examining the use of WBL for acquiring skill and expertise within a business context. It illuminated a complex landscape with a considerable number of variances in the understanding of WBL, none of which considered how or whether expertise is acquired. The examination of a variety of models led to a new conceptual model that places seminal works within relevant areas of practice but that also incorporated Harry Collins (2014) work on expertise. This was followed by an exploration of the political landscape in which WBL exists. Using the conceptual model as a yardstick the study mapped five qualifications including Foundation Degrees and Apprenticeships to ascertain whether it was possible to implement meaningful WBL.

The use of Illuminative evaluation provided a suitable methodological approach for the study. It offered a framework within which the data gathered could be constructed to illustrate not only the original intentions of the programme but also the institutional milieu. The design considered data from programme documents for two Event Management programmes and a programme for Applied Professional Studies (WBL) . A total of 41 semi-structured interviews followed with staff and students across all three programmes. The findings were presented in the form of three comparative case studies.

Implications emerged for teaching, programme design including Degree Level Apprenticeships as well as initiatives and practices relating to Subject Level Teaching Educational Framework. The findings illuminated the impact of multiple understandings of WBL within faculty and the impact on the students' ability to acquire skills and expertise. The findings also suggest a need for tutors and lecturers to hold dual competency, that is where individuals have gained expertise through practising in the field of work as well as holding academic and scholarly expertise. Using work as a basis for study was effective in two of the three case studies presented. Despite the third study purporting to include WBL, the way that the programme was taught and the environment in which it was delivered resulted in an overwhelmingly theoretical offering.

The original work set out to identify whether it is possible for HE to successfully deliver WBL. During the data analysis phase more significant questions began to arise; not only

was the complexity of the way WBL was understood and practised unveiled, but also the impacts of the involvedness of an on-going sequence of government agendas and bureaucracies and the added complication of multiple understandings within a faculty and milieu that together impact the delivery of the programme.

On a final note, the amount of time available to deliver elements of a programme with a substantial amount of oversight from a qualified practitioner is also limited, and therefore inhibits effective implementation of WBL. This is evident where time given to acquiring expertise is often limited to hours over a semester or block. Although it is impractical to suggest an increase in teaching hours or the length of the teaching blocks, there is evidence from the study to suggest that more creative techniques and approaches to programme delivery can be one way of addressing the lack of hours afforded within an academic calendar.

Dr Joanne Gosling

Joanne is a Teaching Lead for Work-Based Curriculum in Higher Education; she specialises particularly in creative industries and business. She has been instrumental in the design and operations of industry work-based programmes for major employers. She has recently redesigned a fairly pedestrian work-based experiential programme for graduate students. She writes on Work-Based Learning, Emotional Intelligence, Reflective Practice and The Acquisition of Meta-Expertise.

Joannegosling63@gmail.com

[Applications of Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Students: 9781799864400: Business & Management Books | IGI Global \(igi-global.com\)](#)

**See more information about the book launch in upcoming events.*

Review - Lifelong Education Commission launch at ResPublica.

A recent panel event presented and debated the past, present and the future for lifelong education with former Universities Minister Rt Hon Chris Skidmore MP. This engaged many of the current discussions that are now ongoing and would be of interest to those who have been a part of lifelong learning leadership and practice in the FE and HE sectors over the last decades of change.

The discussion is available on: <https://www.respublica.org.uk/event/lifelong-education-commission-launch/>

Panellists included:

- Chris Skidmore MP
- Prof. David Latchman, VC, Birkbeck University London
- Prof. Edward Peck, VC, Nottingham Trent University
- Phillip Blond, ResPublica (Chair)

See Chris Skidmore's full speech here:

<https://www.respublica.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Chris-Skidmore-Lifelong-Education-Commission-Launch-Speech.pdf>

Review and Keynotes from Doctoral Conference

The 7th International Conference on Professional & Practice-Based Doctorates was held on 'The Role of Practice in Doctoral Degrees' from the 23rd - 26th February 2021, which holds much interest for those working with doctoral and postgraduate programmes. There were many Zoom sessions, posters, and conversations from those assembled.

The keynotes included:

- Dr Liz Dempsey
- John Bramwell
- Dr Gill Houston
- Professor Harry Kelly
- Professor Davide Nicolini

Please access the recorded keynote presentations from:

<http://www.ukcge.ac.uk/events/icppd20-keynoteqa.aspx>

There is a reminder that there will be a Special Issue of *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*: The Role of Practice in Doctoral Degrees

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13596748.2020.1720178>

Guest Editors: Dr Pauline Armsby, Prof. Carol Costley and Dr Gordon Weller, Middlesex University.

Focus on T Levels

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) are actively promoting the launch and take-up of Higher Technical Qualifications (T Levels) at Level 4 &5. The IfATE explains:

“Designed with businesses and employers, T Levels are two-year, technical qualifications designed to give students the skills that industry needs. They bring classroom learning and an extended industry placement together, providing a mixture of:

- Technical knowledge and skills specific to their chosen industry or occupation
- An industry placement of at least 45 days in their chosen industry or occupation
- Relevant maths, English, and digital skills

T Levels are one of three major options for students to study at level 3. Alongside apprenticeships for those who wish to study and train for a specific occupation, and A levels for students who wish to continue academic education”.

‘What are T Levels?’ Available from: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/t-levels/t-levels-the-institutes-role-news-updates/what-are-t-levels/>

The next stage includes additional elements for higher levels of study:

“T Levels will also provide good preparation for degrees and other higher education courses in related subject areas, including the newly launched Higher Technical Qualifications, which are level 4 and 5 qualifications based on occupational standards. UCAS have announced that T Levels will attract tariff points in line with three A levels. As the qualification materials are made available, higher education providers are considering their entry requirements for the first T Level graduates that may be considering going onto a course of higher education in 2022.”

T Level Action Plan 2020 Available from:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/951488/T_Level_Action_Plan_2020_.pdf

More information on T Levels can be found on the following links:

<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/t-levels/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulatory-arrangements-for-the-awarding-of-vocational-and-technical-and-other-general-qualifications-in-2020-2021>

Upcoming Events

Transforming the learning experience with iPad: INVITATION

10:00AM, Wednesday 17th March 2021

“This solution has meant that we can make sure that even the complex challenges of the operational policing environment can become a rich source of professionally recognised learning.”

Presented by Professor Darryll Bravenboer, Director of Apprenticeships at Middlesex University

The LIVE webinar can be found on this link:

<https://uvac.ac.uk/transforming-the-learning-experience-with-ipad-invitation/>

Census 2021

The Census 2021 online form is due by the 21st March if you have not received your letter in the post. It was interesting to note this year the Census asked questions about qualifications for GCSEs, A Levels and apprenticeships as well as higher education:

<https://census.gov.uk/help/how-to-answer-questions/online-questions-help#qualifications-and-full-time-education>

From the Census 2021 website there seems to be a turn to describing education that is quite occupational in tone that perhaps is with a hint of 'learning in the past' for those in the UK who are more familiar with past models of apprenticeship. There are many in Britain who have a recollection of their own experience doing an apprenticeship. If anyone does have memories to share – please do let us know.

Book launch 29th April 2021 for *Applications of Work Integrated Learning Among Gen Z and Y Students*

Trevor Gerhardt (University of West London, UK) and Paulette J. Annon (London School of Economics, UK)

A new publication will be launched as part of a conference supported by the European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA) and Pearson College. This includes a chapter by Joanne Gosling and Paula Nottingham.

It is noted that: the conference will take place on 29th April 2021 at 09:00 - 12:00 (BST), and again at 17:00 - 20:00 (BST). The agenda will be duplicated to allow for participation from different time zones.

Book your place(s): <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/work-integrated-learning-among-gen-z-and-y-conference-tickets-141279453649>

A description of the event from the Eventbrite can be found below:

Dr Gerhardt, a convenor of the ESREA Working Life and Learning Network, explains: "The key objective of the book is to propose Work Integrated Learning as a pedagogy in its own right based on actual case studies of practice and so define the

terms, concepts and practices from a global perspective and make the link to the application among Gen Y and Z students.”

He adds, “The conference will bring together practitioners from around the world to share from their experiences what new challenges GenY and Z will face as learners within the new ever-changing workplace.”

UALL Student Experience Network Events:

Please see descriptions of some upcoming sessions:

“The Universities’ Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) Student Experience Network invites you to a series of afternoon online sessions reflecting on the experiences of part time, mature and widening participation learners throughout their higher education journey. “

Creative Approaches: Lunchtime Sharing Sessions (Spring 2021)

Tuesday 27 April (12pm – 1.30pm): Mature Student Communities - Maintaining and Rebuilding.

Tuesday 18 May (12pm – 1.30pm): The Covid effect: the positives and negatives for the Student Experience.

Book your place(s): <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/universities-association-for-lifelong-learning-uall-8951617744>

Recently Published

Sai Loo has supported the Work and Learning network over the years and has presented at our annual conferences held in London. He asked that we bring to your attention the recent book he has published with co-author Brian Sutton.

Loo, S and Sutton, B (2021) *Informal Learning, Practitioner Inquiry and Occupational Education*. Abingdon, Routledge.

Sai has many other publications that might also be of interest. Please see this link and below: <https://iris.ucl.ac.uk/iris/browse/profile?upi=SYLOO79>

Other publications by Sai Loo:

Loo S 2020 *Professional Development of Teacher Educators in Further Education: Pathways, Knowledge, Identities and Vocationalism*. Abingdon, Routledge.

Loo S 2019 Further Education, Professional and Occupational Pedagogy: Knowledge and Experiences. Abingdon, Routledge.

Loo S 2019 (Ed) Multiple Dimensions of Teaching and Learning for Occupational Practice. Abingdon, Routledge.

Loo S 2019 Vocational Teachers' Knowledge, Experiences and Pedagogy. In McGrath S, Mulder M, Papier J, Suart R (Eds) Handbook of Vocational Education and Training: Developments in the Changing World of Work. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. ISBN-10: DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49789-1_22-1

Loo S 2019 Working and Learning from a Bernsteinian Perspective. In McGrath S, Mulder M, Papier J, Suart R (Eds) Handbook of Vocational Education and Training: Developments in the Changing World of Work. Cham, Switzerland: Springer. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-49789-1_57-1

Updated SEEC guidelines

SEEC, now formally a network of UALL, has updated its very helpful credit level descriptors. Please see the updated version and the call for consultation about this on the New Edition of SEEC Credit Level Descriptors - Consultation Open.

'SEEC's Credit Level Descriptors remain the most detailed descriptors for assessing levels of academic learning and are widely used by HE providers across the UK. A newly revised edition updates the context for their use to reflect changes in the sector since they last underwent review in 2016. You are invited to review the draft [SEEC Credit Level Descriptors 2021](#) and submit your comments and suggestions via the consultation at https://mdxl.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_bIJ2fkAlwdNAjsy. **The deadline for responses is Friday 19th March.**'

Ofsted Inspections for Apprenticeships

Ofsted is due to start its inspection routines for apprenticeships an April 2021. <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fevoices/55667-ofsted-to-inspect-level-6-and-7-apprenticeship-training-provision-from-1-april-2021>

The Westminster Education Forum plans a conference about the new framework for the 25th March 2021, booking is available from: <https://www.westminsterforumprojects.co.uk/conference/Next-steps-for-the-Ofsted-Inspection-Framework>

Call for papers

The Work-based Learning e-journal international [Work Based Learning e-Journal International | Home \(wblearning-ejournal.com\)](http://Work Based Learning e-Journal International | Home (wblearning-ejournal.com)) is accepting papers for the June 2021 issue. Papers can be considered in the refereed section or (subject to editorial decision) be included in the dialogue and debate section.

Send to c.costley@mdx.ac.uk

We look forward to receiving papers that might include but are not limited to the following themes:

- Work and learning inquiry design and methodologies
- Evaluation research of the field
- Transdisciplinarity and professional studies
- Work-based projects
- Accreditation issues, standards, quality assurance and quality enhancement issues
- Knowledge management and power relations
- Philosophical, cultural and educational developments in pedagogy
- Gender relationships, age, equality and ethnicity in work and learning
- Employer/stakeholder/community developments in professional practice
- Developing practices and changing knowledge regimes

Finally:

Please send any news to Paula Nottingham p.nottingham@mdx.ac.uk and we will make sure to put this in for April. We are interested in adding news and events you would like to share with a larger community, ongoing projects, new research, and case studies of practice. We would like to spotlight your work and your team, institution, and organisation.

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