

Re-imagining work-integrated learning through slow innovation in higher education

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Work-integrated learning (WIL) can foster the capabilities of students across diverse sites of practice. Amongst universities, the challenges and opportunities of designing these complex spaces of learning are continually unfolding. The pace of such innovation is often rapid, with careful thought sometimes not taken about how these changes will be sustained, or their impact upon all stakeholders in the rush of implementation. This theoretical paper explores how a more participatory, values-oriented approach can be understood through the introduction of the term 'slow innovation in higher education'. 'WIL Innovation Flow' is presented as a heuristic to frame the challenges, drivers, enablers and well-being which form such arrangements. Critiquing approaches to WIL, how new ideas are implemented and sustained, as well as broader implications invites a reflexive conversation about responsibilities and values. Increasing understanding of these holistic arrangements aims to enhance critical awareness of how WIL is re-imagined within contemporary higher education. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2012, 13(4), 239-253)

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WHAT IS THE RUSH?

Universities are continually exploring new ways to foster graduates who possess a broad range of personal, social and professional capabilities. One such approach is evident in the spread of work-integrated learning (WIL) practices which are gaining greater presence and propulsion within the higher education landscape. This is strongly signalled in the foregrounding of WIL as a 'new enterprise in higher education', a distinct change from its original 'cottage industry' roots (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). In its many guises, WIL spans fieldwork, clinical education, workplace learning, internships and service learning; as well as more recent forays into 'virtual professional experience' (Gregory, Dalgarno, Campbell, Reiners, Knox & Masters, 2011). An increase in student numbers, alongside greater expectations for such experiential learning from a range of university stakeholders, has led to this burgeoning of WIL practices. Its increased recognition as a national priority area is also evident in recent Australian Learning and Teaching Council awards and projects (Hunt, 2009). Such developments are opening up the discourses surrounding WIL. For example, Orrell (2011) highlights the 'new practices' stemming from this transition:

University leadership and management have major responsibilities to ensure that university governance accounts for resources, policies and infrastructure to support students, staff, industry partners and the diverse WIL contexts of social justice, cultural diversity, technological advancement and uptake, internationalisation and professional accreditation commitments. These should not confound WIL's institutional intentions and purposes, but should begin with a WIL educational philosophy. (p. 15)

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This context compelled the authors to cast a critically reflective lens on the innovation of WIL practices: the goal being to understand more about the contexts, intentions, approaches and interactions which constitute this rapidly growing area in higher education.

In response to the 'enterprise approach' (Cooper et al., 2010), this article will suggest that one way to critically reflect upon the recent expansion of WIL practices can be through increasing our understandings of innovation. Such provocations are not new, over fifty years ago an educationalist stated how: "the challenge to innovators is to examine the unstated premises and the comfortable routines of academic life" (Enarson, 1960, p. 496). In the acceleration of rapid changes which are contributing to the 'speeding up' of academia (Hartman & Darab, 2011), it is suggested there is a case for exploring how a different approach to innovation can help in decelerating these changes, allowing time to pause and reflect upon their wider repercussions. Taking this on board, the authors seek to enhance critical awareness of the relationship between WIL and the discourses and processes of innovation. If the dimensions of innovation are accepted as being process, product or invention, diffusion or adoption, and the value created by the innovation (Phills Jr., Deiglmeier & Miller 2008, p. 38), this forms one level of understanding innovation in relation to WIL. However, what the authors propose in this article is a more nuanced interpretation of innovations which foreground the unique challenges, drivers, enablers and implications of these associated practices. Such an engaged approach towards WIL signals a conversation about innovation which emphasises values and participation.

The argument advanced in this article queries the rush which sometimes accompanies innovation in higher education, evoked in Hartman and Darab's (2011) term of the 'speeding up' of academia. Clegg (2010) also revealed the 'fast time' pace invoked by policies and the enterprise model of higher education. Within the context of WIL, the haste with which some programs and decisions are implemented can often ignore the unique characteristics of an organisation, its specific student cohort, or the scope of administrative support required. Acknowledging this complexity of WIL mirrors the complexity of sometimes implicit roles and repercussions which characterise innovation. A report entitled *Hidden Innovation* by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) highlights how being innovative can span any number of roles, such as generator, developer, adapter, and supplier or transmitter. Also illustrated is the impact of hidden innovations: "Despite not being measured, hidden innovation often represents the innovation that matters – the innovation that most directly contributes to the real practice and performance of a sector" (2007, p. 4). Rather than trying to control or prescribe innovation in WIL practices, an invitation is offered to dialogue about hidden innovations, as well as critique unhidden innovations. This paper will explore how WIL can be co-created – that is, the participatory context and conditions which enable the flow of innovation. For example, Hunt (2009) highlights how "negotiation is key to running effective WIL programs" (p. 1). It is this negotiation which constitutes the values and responsibilities informed by a slower approach towards innovation and WIL.

A theoretical examination of how WIL is embodied in different contexts, how it is enacted, as well as how it is emerging, suggests a 'slow innovation' (Steen & Dhondt, 2010) approach. This signals a shift in the initial use of the term, from within the design sector, towards the context of Australian higher education. Such a framing of slow innovation has parallels with the slow movement in the food, design and travel sectors (Hayes-Conroy & Martin, 2010; Andrews, 2008; Fuad-Luke, 2009; Lumsdon & McGrath, 2011). The principles of this movement are strongly participatory and values-oriented, emphasising the uniqueness of a

situation, context and environment; decision-making which is morally and ethically oriented; as well as a critical reflection on the social and ecological implications of practices. The extent to which an organisational culture allows spaces for academics to choose between slow and speedy innovation will inevitably vary according to the ethos of a university. Within modernity, being an entrepreneurial university may be a necessity to survive; however, in Barnett's (2011) terms, there are options between 'soft entrepreneurialism', which emphasises creativity and the public good, and 'hard entrepreneurialism', which is driven purely by the market and profit. To enhance and shape discussions of innovation in higher education, the argument of this paper seeks to empower educators with a new vocabulary for articulating a more participatory and values-oriented approach towards WIL.

INNOVATION TALK

An initial question by many who are reading may be – *Why* do we need to bother talking about innovation? There are many competing pressures, practices and possibilities in contemporary higher education – massification, internationalisation, accountability, diversity, inclusion, new technologies, globalisation – and this makes innovation a seemingly ongoing necessity, rather than a considered choice. Barnett's (2000) evocation of an 'age of supercomplexity' highlights the multiple choices, pressures and opportunities which are informing this context. If innovation is occurring all around, sometimes with input and participation, at other times without, then what is the point of discussing it? The authors seek to contest this uncritical stance by inviting readers to stop, pause and participate in problematising the concept of innovation, specifically in relation to WIL. Discussion about the relationship between innovation and WIL is currently underexplored, and the authors wish to inform more critically reflective dialogue in this area.

Recently, there has been a shift from a boutique to an enterprise approach towards WIL (Cooper et al., 2010) which has increased pressure on traditional sites of work-placement, required staff and students to expand their practices, and stimulated innovations in WIL. For example, findings from a Canadian survey (Hoe Harwood, Reimer-Kirkham, Sawatzky, Terblanche, & Van Hofwegen, 2009) highlight the innovative clinical placements which are resulting from a shift away from traditional settings in order to meet nursing program demands. The premise of this paper is that there are contrasting ways in which educators can approach this new emphasis upon WIL: either critically, or uncritically. Critically engaging with innovation is about recognising the thought and participation of all stakeholders in the shaping of WIL practices. Exploring their role and voice in the formation of innovations becomes foregrounded, rather than simply accepting the imposition of an innovation. Subsequently, exploring the ways in which academics can more authentically engage with innovations in WIL becomes the focus of this paper. Such 'possibility thinking' (Craft, 2000) seeks to illustrate new ways to approach WIL.

Inviting dialogue about the relationship between innovation and WIL inevitably opens up varying interpretations of the term innovation. Innovation is a conundrum of a word, with many permutations which impact upon our conceptualisation and engagement with the process. A UK study of employee and organisational innovation highlighted:

Most of our interviewees suggest that the term 'innovation' is not helpful as it is interpreted differently in different organisations. Our results showed that organisations that clearly articulate what is meant by 'innovative working' are more

likely to be successful in their attempt to encourage innovative behaviours. (Patterson, Kerrin, Gatto-Roissard, & Coan, 2009, p. 12)

In beginning to unpack the term in relation to WIL, a social – rather than economic – stance towards innovation is taken. For the purposes of this paper, social innovation is defined as “[a] novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals” (Phills Jr et al., 2008, p. 36).

A social problem which is emerging is how the new spaces and processes across higher education can cope with creating authentic, functional and aspirational WIL programs. The social problem is characterised by its complexity, the new breadth and heterogeneity; its breadth is impacting upon staff and student practices, its hybridity is requiring new ways of conceptualising and enacting work-integrated learning:

What is new is the scale and diversity of student engagement in workplace and community based learning. This change has occurred because learning in and through workplace practice and community service is being driven by new strategic institutional imperatives and new motivations. This shift in locus in the drivers of curriculum initiation has created a new university paradigm in work integrated learning. (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 20)

The novel solution to this social problem involves increasing understanding of the challenges, drivers, enablers and well-being which comprise WIL; that is *WIL Innovation Flow* (discussed later in this paper). The value of this WIL approach is not only, or primarily, for the individual; it is also inclusive and mindful of repercussions for society, economy and the environment. Such a social perspective of innovation corresponds with foregrounding the mission of universities for public good; this requires us to critically explore the ‘heterogeneous qualities’ and ‘complex mixing’ of the common public/private distinction (Marginson, 2007, p. 310). This is not to erase the understanding that individuals attend university to gain an individual award or achievement (in the artefact of a degree), rather to emphasise that the ideas and capabilities which they have gained can maximise wellbeing beyond the personal. WIL initiatives which are designed from this perspective can foster ‘agentic learners’ (Billett, 2009) and ‘interactional professionals’ (Higgs & Hunt, 1999) who interdependently engage with, inform and shape their current and future ‘lifewide’ practices (Barnett, 2010; Jackson, 2011).

A significant reason for encouraging this dialogue about innovation in higher education is that it has strong implications for how the role of WIL stakeholders is conceptualised, as well as the purpose of higher education. The varying ways in which the organisation and expectations of students, administrators, academics, and WIL partners are prioritised will influence the practices which emerge. A quick-fix innovation which has been rushed into place cannot be particularly mindful of the negative repercussions that this could have upon any of the stakeholders. Recognising the complexity which informs the interrelationships amongst WIL stakeholders necessitates a more deliberative and nuanced approach. Such a participatory and values-oriented approach towards WIL resonates with the ontological turn in higher education (Dall’Alba & Barnacle, 2007); this marks a shift towards being and becoming, rather than just knowing. Whereas knowing may have historically been addressed through a linear, ‘technical-rational’ (Schön, 1983) approach – the complexity of being and becoming requires a more holistic approach. The former is an artificial baseline

understanding of competencies and utility, whereas the latter is a more authentic and integrated approach which acknowledges cultural formation, attributes and context (Hager & Beckett, 1995). Foregrounding the being and becoming of WIL stakeholders strongly acknowledges the interrelationship between the social and natural worlds; that is, how the practices of WIL impact upon society, the economy and the environment. This social-ecological perspective (Bookchin, 1982) recognises that WIL stakeholders have a voice not just as producers and consumers, but also as pro-active, ethical inhabitants of a world with finite physical resources and many social disparities. Utilising Winslett's (2010) approach, we seek to reconfigure "the boundaries of possibility generated by innovation talk" (p. 286) through not only making space for such dialogue between WIL stakeholders, but also making time. Stopping to think does not mean grinding to a halt; rather, these spaces for pause, thought and dialogue contribute towards growing understanding, insights and agency. These reflections inform not only approaches to WIL, they can also be used to infer which association of practices is being most valued in higher education.

SLOW INNOVATION

If social innovation is providing a new way of imagining the *implications* of innovation, it is suggested that there is also a new way of imagining the *processes* of innovation. It is here the case is put forward for slow and steady, instead of superficial and swift, innovation within higher education. In the "speeding up of work and learning practices in academic institutions" (Hartman & Darab, 2011, p. 55) there should be a strong concern about what is often being lost within the rush of organisational change. The processes of innovation can be foregrounded as being an assemblage of slow, substantial and sustained growth; this is in contrast to a rushed, superficial turnover of innovation. This draws upon the increasingly prominent discourse surrounding 'slow science' (Stengers, 2011), 'slow scholarship' (Hartman & Darab, 2011), 'slow theory' (Andrews, 2008) and 'slow pedagogy' (Payne & Wattchow, 2009). 'Slow' is an approach which spends time considering each unique situation and context, the moral and ethical repercussions of choices, as well as being mindful of the social and ecological impact of actions; whereas the "cult of speed" (Honoré, 2004) may be quick-fire, easy-fix and often ignore broader implications, and an associated dialogue about values and responsibilities.

Steen and Dhondt (2010) draw upon their design background, as well as the pragmatism of educational philosopher John Dewey, to articulate the term 'slow innovation': "an alternative, complementary approach to innovation: an approach that provides room for exploration, reflection and learning, so that participants in an innovation process can constructively combine practice and theory and engage in joint learning and joint creation" (p. 2). We view this interpretation of slow innovation as strongly correlating with a participatory and values-oriented approach towards the practice of WIL in higher education. Therefore, it is suggested that the term 'slow innovation in higher education' will encompass: the unique and complex needs of WIL; ideas and artefacts which are being implemented in new ways; the co-creation required to facilitate and sustain this new approach; and, the systemic, social-ecological implications of these changes. To understand how slow innovation is arranged, it is important to illustrate the interweaving layers and levels of innovation: the macro-, meso- and micro-. This analytical optic of micro-, meso- and macro-levels is often utilised in complex, systemic studies (Liljenström & Svedin, 2005). Macro-level innovations are most evident in the public domain with broad social-ecological repercussions: such as social and environmental initiatives stemming from the government,

private and non-for-profit sectors. In contrast, meso-level innovation is at the institutional, organisational or community level, such as the university, faculty or school; for example, the strategic decision to authentically integrate formative assessment in traditionally summative assessment courses. Even more localised is the micro-level of innovation, which has teaching and learning implications for an immediate subject, or course scale: for example, the introduction of role-plays, or simulations. Although the micro-, meso- and macro-levels are interrelated, it is necessary to distinguish between them in identifying where WIL innovations are emerging, how they develop, and how they are received. These interconnections and interrelationships are what influence slow innovation in higher education. If there are identifiable achievements stemming from new WIL practices, then it is important to identify their unique characteristics, understand how they are sustained and discuss their value in accordance with the micro-, meso- and macro-levels. Separating these layers of innovation allows not only differentiation in regards to the scale of the innovation – but also a recognition that, whatever the scale, there needs to be a strong recognition of the well-being (a value or achievement) which this innovation has enabled. Individual and collective agency becomes transformed through these unfolding material and social structures; such arrangements inform the processes of ‘making our way through the world’ (Archer, 2007).

This interpretation of slow innovation in higher education stems from a holistic, yet grounded, approach towards WIL review, design, development and reflection. It is important to acknowledge that the term ‘slow-innovation’ may be interpreted in a pejorative manner, or in a negative light – in the sense of being cumbersome, or somehow drawn out, or ineffective. This perspective arises from a ‘technical-rational’ approach (Schön, 1983) which dismisses holistic, dialogic and critically reflective approaches. According to Parkins (2004), ‘slow’ is about being mindful, adding meaning and value, this is a “conscious negotiation” (p. 364), not a mindless acceptance. Similarly, Dewey (1910) explains in *How We Think* the value of concentrated thought:

... fanatic consistency is not our goal. Concentration does not mean fixity, nor a cramped arrest or paralysis of the flow of suggestion. It means variety and change of ideas combined into a *single steady trend towards a unified conclusion*. (italics in original, p. 40)

Recognising this flow of diversity and interchange of ideas can enhance how we foster the personal, social and professional capabilities of students within WIL. From this slow, reflective and deliberate perspective, enabling WIL innovations should consider all stakeholder perspectives and practices; it “requires an holistic approach taking account of all stakeholders beliefs and core values rather than a piecemeal departmental level or project-based method” (Simpson, 2011, p.8). The design of WIL must take into account these complex, multi-layered issues. WIL which successfully addresses these issues opens up pathways towards articulating, enabling and fostering slow innovation in higher education.

WIL INNOVATION FLOW

The authors propose a heuristic for reframing WIL from a ‘slow innovation in higher education’ perspective. Suggesting this framework aims to highlight the alignment between generic phases of innovation, a specific style of innovation, and the complex layers which influence the practices of WIL in higher education. Massification of WIL within the Australian context is accelerating the pace with which new approaches to WIL are emerging.

To critically engage and reflect with this context, the proposed heuristic has two main intentions: firstly, to articulate the relationship between innovation, slow innovation in higher education and WIL; secondly, to spark discussions about the choices which inform the design, implementation, sustainability and repercussions of WIL. Positioning a participatory and values-oriented approach towards the decision-making process of WIL aligns with the perspective of 'slow innovation in higher education' proposed by the authors of this paper. Illustrated in Table 1 is the alignment between innovation, slow innovation and which is followed by a discussion of *WIL Innovation Flow*.

TABLE 1: WIL Innovation Flow

Innovation	Context	Impetus	Unfolding	Implication
Innovation elements (Phills Jr et al., 2008)	Processes	Product/ Invention	Diffusion/ adoption	Value
'Slow innovation' (Swirski & Simpson, 2012; after Steen&Dhondt, 2010)	Complexity	Ideas, artefacts	Co-creation	Social-ecology
WIL Innovation Flow	What are the challenges which are being addressed by this WIL innovation?	What are the drivers ? How are the practices of stakeholders evolving?	What are the enablers which will support and facilitate this WIL innovation? How will it be sustained amongst stakeholders?	What is the well-being which you are aiming for? What are the implications for stakeholders?
	What are the situations of stakeholders?			

The top line of the table outlines the traditional elements of innovation: processes, product/invention, diffusion/adoption and value (Phills Jr et al., 2008). In the middle line, this traditional process is aligned through a 'slow innovation in higher education' lens: complexity, ideas-artefacts, co-creation and social-ecology. Within the bottom line, the *WIL Innovation Flow* is articulated, based upon these dimensions of slow innovation. This heuristic illustrates how the flow of workplace learning can be imagined as a movement; the direction of this mobility is informed by the interweaving of context, impetus, unfolding and implication. The different dimensions of *WIL Innovation Flow* (challenges, drivers, enablers, well-being) and how they correspond with current examples of innovations in WIL are discussed in the following sections.

WIL Challenges

Slow innovation in higher education recognises the complex and diverse contexts which inform the flow of WIL innovation. This complexity is based upon recognising the processes of multiple contexts and diverse interrelationships which comprise contemporary higher education. To increase understanding of these complex challenges, there needs to be a

greater focus upon the unique situations and particular relations between stakeholders which constitute unique WIL practices. Subsequently, this requires a critically reflective approach towards WIL and innovation. As Steen and Dhondt (2010) suggest:

We propose another approach to innovation based on exploration, reflection and learning. Control, as enabler of a speed-obsessed perspective on innovation, cannot be at the forefront of such an approach. Instead, we propose that innovation processes should be recognised as dynamic, complex systems that cannot be effectively steered in detail. The number of actors, the number of interests and the relations between these are so numerous that these processes are complex systems. Furthermore, we propose that innovation processes contain a large number of relations that develop over time, some over a short term and others on a longer term, so that there is dynamic complexity. (p. 3)

In order to engage with the conception of slow innovation, there needs to be a broader acknowledgement of the complexities of WIL across all disciplines. For example, in the case of rural nursing shortages, Killam and Carter (2010) highlight the diversity of challenges associated with how urban nursing students experience rural clinical placements: political, environmental, community, nursing, educational, relational and personal. Acknowledging these challenges (the nuances and uniqueness of different locales, students, faculties, disciplines and universities) is pivotal to how corresponding WIL drivers fit, as well as how subsequent WIL enablers flow.

WIL Drivers

There are a diverse range of drivers which inform the impetus of slow innovation in higher education. These drivers are what initiate new WIL practices. For example, from the Canadian context, Hoe Harwood et al. (2009) highlight how seeking non-traditional nursing placements has produced a broad range of innovative clinical placements. Another illustration from field-work education describes the widespread impact of moving beyond traditional practices:

Fieldwork education is already adopting a wide range of non-traditional placement models that are pushing the boundaries of what have previously been regarded as appropriate placements. Diversity will continue to increase as health services reach out to new clients and hard-to-reach populations. Public health agendas to improve the health and wellbeing of populations will add an extra dimension to the provision of services for many professions and bring further diversity to placement provision. Rural and remote communities will benefit from advances in telemedicine, and students on placements where videoconferencing and Web-based technologies become the norm for receiving learning support will have valuable experience of their use. (McAllister, Bithell & Higgs 2010, p. 11)

Drivers of WIL innovation can be more than just physical artefacts, such as new technologies; drivers of innovation can also be conceptual, geographical, or organisational. Singularly, or in isolation, these drivers/ideas-artefacts may address a challenge, or problem. Yet, to fulfil the characteristics of being a slow innovation in higher education, how they are enabled and sustained, as well as the potential for well-being needs to be explored.

WIL Enablers

Innovation flow in WIL requires enablers (such as collaboration, resources, leadership) which integrate new ideas and artefacts towards the unfolding of WIL. These enablers enhance the co-creation, or participation, amongst diverse WIL stakeholders. Dominant perspectives often interpret traditional innovation as problem solving: that is, identifying a problem, finding a solution, solving it – end of story. In relation to workplace learning, this problem-solving approach encourages a short-term, limited and finite perspective. A major dimension of slow innovation is how innovation is enabled and sustained: this perspective is long-term, broad and dynamic. For example, the transformative learning which can arise from nursing students learning in correctional centres, international placements, parish settings, rural locales or aboriginal settings (Reimer-Kirkham, Van Hofwegen, & Hoe Harwood, 2005) relies upon a continual process of relationship building. Relationship building enables these authentic partnerships to emerge and be sustained. This process involves rethinking the daily practices which can inform our “feasible utopias” (Barnett, 2011, p. 4). For example, Simpson (2009) recognises a need for “a readily accessible resource (‘a one stop shop’) to support workplace learning, and multiple resources to support CSU [Charles Sturt University] staff and our workplace learning partners” (p. 14). Kezar (2011) also suggests the need for ownership and reflexivity as part of the innovation process, as opposed to ‘static innovation’ (p. 240).

A single individual may contribute towards and influence conditions for innovation to emerge. For example, “Research evidence clearly shows self efficacy for innovative working (a belief and confidence in one’s ability to innovate) is a major determinant for innovation behaviour” (Patterson et al., 2009, p. 5). However, it is people working at the boundaries of their practice together – co-creating – who maximise these conditions. The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) was established to transform the UK’s capacity for innovation; in their report ‘Everyday Innovation’ they highlight the importance of inspiration, support and ethos: “Leadership capability, organisational culture, and organisational values are among the most important organisational factors and initiatives that enhance innovative working” (Patterson et al., 2009, p. 3). An individual can create an innovation to a certain extent, whereas co-creation (people working together) influences how the innovation is sustained. This relates to a “de-centralised model of innovation diffusion” (Winslett, 2010, p. 296) and the prominent feature of a slow approach; engaging with the participatory voices of WIL stakeholders.

WIL Well-being

The potential for well-being, or the social-ecology of WIL, is a major dimension of innovation flow. This involves addressing the implications of challenges, drivers and enablers and asking: What is the interrelationship between WIL and the social and natural worlds? What are the repercussions? This aspect of the heuristic seeks to spark discussions about values, ethics and social responsibilities which, we argue, should inform arrangements of WIL. For example, in regards to social impact, a narrative inquiry by Reimer-Kirkham et al. (2005) highlights the critical awareness, engagement and social change which nursing students can learn from innovative clinical settings. If we aspire towards expanding non-traditional placements (such as correctional centres, international placements, parish settings, rural locales or aboriginal settings) an ongoing well-being question which should be asked is: In what ways are these host communities benefiting, or not, from such innovation? Hudson,

Weston, and Farmer (2011) illustrate the potentially broader benefits of such new interrelationships between people and place through “novel regional and rural longitudinal clinical clerkships” (p. 6). Increasing awareness of the impact of WIL practices upon all stakeholders foregrounds a holistic perspective of practice, or ‘ecologies of practices’ (Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson & Hardy, 2012). This similarly draws upon Barnett’s (2012) conceptualization of ‘ecological professionalism’; that is, an understanding of the complex dimensions and responsibilities of being a professional within a rapidly evolving society.

From this perspective, successful WIL practices at one university, cannot be quickly grafted onto another university’s program and be automatically guaranteed to succeed. As this paper’s *WIL Innovation Flow* illustrates, there are: embodied challenges (multidimensional processes/complexity); enacted processes (drivers/enablers), and; emerging immediate and long-term implications (well-being/social-ecology). The uniqueness of each institution, its staff, students, resources, experiences, ethos and vision comprise its social-ecology and inform its interpretation and implementation of WIL. This aspect foregrounds the ‘meshwork’ (DeLanda, 1998), or open system, of WIL practices. Considering the unique range of interrelationships which comprise the arrangements of WIL practice opens up dialogue about decision-making and roles; this informs the values-oriented and participatory dimensions of a slow approach to WIL.

CO-CREATING WIL

Co-creating WIL is the enactment of slow innovation in higher education. Co-creating is about academics, administrators, WIL partners and students working and creating together so as to improve the practices of WIL. Inviting dialogue, reflecting upon and improving WIL practices requires a multi-voiced partnership and ongoing dialogue amongst all stakeholders for the slow innovation process to be truly authentic. Making time for being inclusive and co-creating WIL, in contrast to being exclusive and imposing WIL, is the approach we wish to highlight. Through examples from the WIL literature, we have illustrated how the co-creation of WIL is already occurring to some level, with our strong intention being to invite other, unhidden or still hidden, innovations to join the discussion around slow innovation in higher education. Making time in the face of organisational pressures, making time for dialogue with WIL stakeholders, or making time for new WIL possibilities, these are all participatory spaces for critical reflection, new insights, and creativity to occur. In these ways, a slower, more considered arrangement of WIL is being created through rethinking our responsibilities as higher education organisations, valuing stakeholder voices, as well as considering the broader ethical implications of our choices and actions.

Pressures

There are a range of social, monetary and market pressures which exist in the higher education landscape. Barnett (2011) distinguishes between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ entrepreneurialism – and it is the latter, drawing upon the public good and creativity, which resonates with a slow innovation approach. Across universities, WIL is being faced with rapid, multiple contextual challenges: student diversification, resourcing pressures, staff workload expansion, internationalisation trends and pedagogical shifts. Academic development is emerging as a priority; for example: “Preparedness of fieldwork educators

for their teaching role is emerging as a significant issue" (Smith & Higgs, 2010, p. 31). Another dimension of WIL coming under increased pressure is placement shortages, which:

... are likely to continue as health services personnel come under more pressure to increase productivity ... Expanding placement capacity would be assisted by further research into the service contribution made by students on placements as well as the less tangible benefits to staff development and service quality. (McAllister et al., 2010, p. 11)

The multiple pressures related to workplace learning (the term utilized for WIL at Charles Sturt University) were highlighted in a study conducted through an Education for Practice Institute (EFPI) study. Key workplace learning topics were identified and discussed within an online debate format; these topics included: quality and authenticity in workplace learning; ensuring learning and good outcomes for students; issues of assessment; resourcing workplace learning; and, effective engagement with the professions (Trede, 2010). The heuristic proposed within this article, *WIL Innovation Flow*, is aimed at identifying how innovation can move in a considered (participatory) and deliberate (values-oriented) manner towards alleviating some of these pressures. Through identifying the challenges, drivers, enablers and wellbeing which characterize unique WIL practices, a lens is provided for educators to identify pressures upon WIL.

Practices

Identifying challenges, drivers, enablers and wellbeing allows educators to critically reflect upon their WIL practices. Practices are not stagnant or set in stone; they are dynamic and deliberative. However, rather than rushing to superficially fix a problem, or quickly address a gap, slow innovation is a contextualised, holistic and participatory approach to these pressures. Steen and Dhondt (2010) propose:

... innovation processes should be organised—not managed—as if they are complex systems, that is, by creating conditions—not by control—and that this is a way to improve the likelihood of successful innovation. We believe that cook-book instructions or any sort of quick-fixes or one-size-fits-all will not help innovation. Rather, we should be thinking in terms of guiding principles which can help us maximize chances for innovations to happen. (p. 3)

Drawing upon Steen and Dhondt's (2010) notion of guiding principles can inform and enhance the conceptualisation of slow innovation within the higher education landscape. Stemming from this, the authors' heuristic for *WIL Innovation Flow* is a guide for critically reflecting upon the practice of WIL. It does not propose adherence to a set order, rather a range of lenses through which to increase awareness of the context, values, participation and repercussions of WIL interrelationships. Understanding these interrelationships is key to such an approach. According to Winslett (2010), there has been a shift from an individual towards a network model of innovation. Similarly, the practices of WIL are multidimensional and informed by many stakeholders. It follows that the sustainability and success of WIL would be better achieved through engagement and dialogue with all parties involved.

Possibilities

The possibilities of WIL in higher education can be viewed as both exciting and ominous in the scope of their possibilities and configurations. As innovative partnerships evolve to meet

diverse needs, such as between universities, the mining industry and indigenous Australians (Pearson & Daff, 2011), new and complex issues will need to be explored and debated. The authors suggest that a critically reflective and authentic approach to WIL can be enabled through slow innovation in higher education. This invites and considers practices which engage, trust and value the voices of all WIL stakeholders. Such an approach is one which: takes the time to critically reflect upon work-integrated learning, supports the enhancement of teaching and learning practices, and engages with all WIL stakeholders. Through "shifting discursive talks" (Winslett, 2010, p. 310) we hope to examine how hidden and unhidden innovations in WIL are embodied, enacted and emerge within higher education, so as to enhance such critical reflections of WIL in higher education. Through this authentic approach, WIL can enhance both staff and student capabilities to foster future interactional professionals (Higgs & Hunt, 1999).

INVITING SLOW INNOVATION TALK

A major element of slow innovation is how it enhances a systemic and reflective approach towards WIL across diverse sites of practice. This participatory approach can enhance the arrangement of WIL through considering the challenges, drivers, enablers and well-being which comprise the slow flow of innovation, rather than the rush of a quick-fix implementation. The authors strongly suggest 'slow innovation talk' as a term for articulating this participatory and values-oriented approach towards WIL. We seek to introduce and invite interdisciplinary dialogue and inquiry of slow innovation in higher education: the changing context and complexity of higher education; the impetus of ideas and artefacts which inform WIL trends and tensions; the sustainable unfolding of innovation amongst different disciplines; and, WIL practices which foster staff and student capabilities through a systemic understanding of social-ecological implications.

We strongly encourage further discussion of WIL practices in relation to slow innovation in higher education: what are the challenges, drivers, enablers and well-being which are characterising the experience, ideas, actions and expectations of those involved? To frame the discussions which may arise, it is important to recognise that slow innovation is not characterised simply by a novel way to address or solve a problem. Slow innovation critically reflects upon the nuances of its embodied context, the dynamics of how it is enacted, as well as the immediate and longer-term social and/or ecological implications which emerge. In this way, unique pathways and pluralistic practices towards a 'hybrid model' (Simpson, 2011) are being co-created, aligned with the purposes of an 'ecological university' (Barnett, 2011). So, why 'go *slow*'? We argue that making time to critically reflect upon the responsibilities of higher education, making time to enhance dialogue amongst stakeholders, making time to explore values can enhance the practices of WIL. Such an approach seeks to prioritise the time and space for participatory dialogue and values-oriented dialogue which can often be by-passed, quite uncritically, in the speed of change. Going slow is not a call for lethargy, or stagnation; it is an empowering call for a more reflective rhythm towards innovations in higher education.

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