Academic professional development: Benefits of a pracademic experience

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Multiple benefits may be gained from academic staff undertaking pracademic experiences as part of their continuing professional development. A pracademic experience may increase collaborations between practitioners, academics and their tertiary institutions in terms of research and teaching. Academics can demonstrate the relevance, significance, and impact of their empirical research which then can support the practitioner's narrative to stakeholders. Teaching practices may improve as critical curriculum gaps are identified and the curriculum aligned with current professional practice.

This paper promotes the proposition that a pracademic experience may also assist an academic to model, scaffold and coach employability skills to students. To provide evidence of the potential benefits from these collaborations, a case study, based upon the author-academic's experiences transitioning into the role of an insolvency file accountant, is included within the paper. The various benefits derived by the academic, the host practitioner, and the academic's home university from engaging in the pracademic experience are discussed.

Keywords: Pracademic experience, academic, practitioner collaboration, employability skills

The purpose of this paper is twofold: first to propose that a pracademic experience may provide additional benefits than those currently documented in the literature. Specifically, the following proposition will be made: A pracademic experience may assist an academic to model, scaffold and coach employability skills to students in an environment where there are barriers to students engaging in WIL. Given WIL has historically been the principal means by which students acquire employability skills, the proposition is perceived as a welcome secondary benefit of a pracademic experience. The second purpose is to describe the benefits of the author's pracademic experience in terms of a case study.

To achieve both purposes the paper is divided into five parts. Part 1 is the Introduction. Part 2 provides the literature review to the paper. Within Part 2 the documented benefits derived by collaborating practitioners and academic staff undertaking a pracademic experience, are outlined. Then follows a discussion of three learning theories which support the proposition that engaging in a pracademic experience as a professional development activity may assist academic staff to support and supplement students' acquisition of employability skills through modelling, scaffolding and coaching employability skills gained through their pracademic experiences. A discussion of the nature of employability skills and the common challenges in running experiential learning programs such as internships and WIL courses, whose primary focus is to equip new graduates with employability skills follows thereafter. Part 3 provides a case study which contributes to the current "pracademic literature" by focusing on the author - academic engaging in professional development, transitioning into the role of a file accountant in a medium-sized insolvency practice over a 12- week period, and the multiple beneficiaries and benefits of such a pracademic experience. In these circumstances the author – academic's transition from academic to practitioner is contrary to the more traditional role transition of a practitioner into an academic and the contribution made by such pracademics, in disciplines such as public administration (Posner, 2009), practice management (Walker, 2010), conflict resolution

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(Susskind, 2013), and social work (Owens, 2016). The paper's limitations are considered in Part 4 with preliminary conclusions drawn in Part 5.

Academic staff engaged in research or teaching may gain multiple benefits from undertaking a pracademic experience as part of their continuing professional development. For those academic staff engaged in research, benefits may include recognizing and measuring the impact of their research by validating the practical application of their otherwise theoretical work. The benefits for those academic staff engaged in teaching may include improvements in teaching practices as there are opportunities for practitioners and academics to identify critical gaps in the teaching curriculum and develop curriculums which align with current professional practice.

However, the benefits of a pracademic experience are not limited to those benefits listed above, nor are the benefits only to be derived by the academic staff. Aside from contributing to the creation of a comprehensive and professionally aligned teaching curriculum, practitioners may benefit from identifying and defining researchable questions and collecting and analyzing data to measure the effectiveness of their interventions in their own practice. Given the multiple benefits and beneficiaries of a pracademic experience, it is appropriate at this time to define who is a pracademic and what is a pracademic experience?

Defining a Pracademic

There are various definitions given to the term pracademic. Pracademics may be narrowly described as persons who are dually recognized experts in both academic and professional practice (Panda, 2014). Volpe and Chandler (2011) similarly referred to pracademics as "faculty who are both scholars … as well as practitioners…" (p. 245). However, the term has been used more broadly, to refer to a blend of the practical with the academic (Owens, 2016) or to describe a teaching style that focuses on the practical application of academic theory and knowledge (McDonald & Mooney, 2011). The term pracademic is considered synonymous with that of "scholar practitioner". Kormanik et al., used the term "scholar practitioner" to describe "someone who is dedicated to generating new knowledge that is useful to practitioners … scholar practitioners are interpreters, speaking the languages of research, academic and practice" (Kormanik et al., 2009, p. 488). The contributions of pracademics appear in the literature of a variety of disciplines including public administration (Posner, 2009), practice management (Walker, 2010), political science (Murphy & Fulda, 2011), sustainable tourism (Dredge & Wray, 2012), conflict resolution (Susskind, 2013), and social work (Owens, 2016).

The websites of Australia's higher education institutions were recently surveyed for pracademics within their staff members. Pracadamics were found within the following disciplines: conflict management (University of Tasmania, 2018; James Cook University, 2018); econometrics and business statistics (Monash University, 2018); entrepreneurship (University of Adelaide, 2018; Swinburne University, 2018); environment (University of Notre Dame, 2018; University of New England, 2018). Professor Noel Lindsay, Director of Entrepreneurship, Commercialization and Innovation Centre (ECIC, University of Adelaide, 2018) referred to the academic members of the ECIC as pracademics. Similarly, Australian Graduate School of Entrepreneurship (Swinburne University, 2018) referred to their teaching staff as pracademics. However, there was no evidence on any of the Higher Education institutions' websites of incentives such as a pracademic experience available to academic staff as part of their professional development.

Nevertheless, interest in offering and engaging in a pracademic experience may increase in popularity across the Higher Education sector. In 2015, an investigation of accounting education by O'Connell et

al., (2015) resulted in the publication of a report entitled: "Shaping the future of accounting in business education in Australia". Amongst the report's 17 recommendations was "Recommendation 3: Accounting academics to maintain contemporary knowledge of professional practice (O'Connell et al., 2015, p. 92)."

To facilitate this recommendation the report suggested providing study leave opportunities to academics for varying periods so as "to facilitate meaningful engagement with professional practice, to develop current knowledge, improve understandings of phenomenon, and to prepare enriched teaching resources" (O'Connell et al., 2015, p. 92).

Essentially, the report's authors were recommending academics engage in a pracademic experience.

Given the variety of definitions of pracademic, and the recommendation made by O'Connell et al., (2015), for the purposes of this paper, the term "pracademic experience" refers to academic staff taking on the role of a practitioner and experiencing professional practice as part of their continuing professional development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acknowledged Benefits of a Pracademic Experience

A pracademic experience increases the opportunities for collaboration between practitioners and academic staff engaged in research or teaching, to the mutual benefit of both parties (Powell, Winfield, Shatteman, & Trusty, 2018).

Engaged research

In 2011, Bushouse et al., (2011) recognized the mutual benefits of academic staff and practitioner collaboration by relying upon Ernest Boyer's (1996) view of the scholarship of engagement and relating it to the scholarship of Public Administration. Boyer (1996) challenged the then prevailing view of academic research by arguing that the discovery of knowledge alone was insufficient. Instead Boyer argued that academic research required the integration of knowledge through interdisciplinary research, its application to practice, and the sharing of such knowledge. Applying Boyer's view within the context of public administration, Bushouse et al. (2011) recognized the mutual benefits of scholar involvement in practice as "the scholar informs practice but also has a research agenda that is informed by practice" (p. i103).

In 2016, Powell et al., (2018) explored the boundaries of such scholarly research by undertaking research to "assess the contributions and benefits of practitioner and academic involvement in research, the value and challenges of the work, relationship building, and practices to build stronger relationships'' (p. 70). As part of their research, interview participants provided evidence of the mutual benefits of such pracademic collaboration. For the practitioner these benefits included: "framing researchable questions; using data-driven processes to develop and measure practitioner programs and interventions and providing practitioners with empirical evidence to support their narratives to stakeholders" (Powel et al., 2018, p. 70). For the academic, the benefits included: demonstrating the practical benefits of their research findings; giving practical validation of their theoretical work and gaining insights into how to maximize the impact of their research (Powel et al., 2018, p. 71). These same benefits have been documented by Zhang et al., (2015) under the name of "action research" whereby "researchers and practitioners scientifically evaluate important organizational issues using

scientific methods . . . provide a type of external validity and support for actions . . . and enable the sharing of insights that can benefit practitioners in other organizations as well as the research community" (p. 151).

Academic staff that can draw upon their wide solution repertoires can be a highly valuable resource for pragmatic and practical problem solving and project management (Huey & Mitchell, 2016; Walker, 2010). Thus, offering pracademic experiences to academic staff has the capacity to increase opportunities for consulting, research and technology transfer between the university and practitioners (Huey & Mitchell, 2016; Jancauskas et al., 1999; Walker, 2010). Seeking out such opportunities is a common goal of Australian universities since Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, in launching the National Innovation and Science Agenda, emphasized, increasing collaborations between business, universities, and the research sector as absolutely critical for Australian business to remain competitive (National Innovation & Science Agenda, 2015).

Engaged teaching

Bushouse et al., (2011) recognized that forging meaningful linkages between pracademics and practitioners also facilitates engaged teaching practices and "may make us more aware of critical gaps in our curriculum" (p. i107). Having undertaken a pracademic experience, academic staff have direct knowledge of fieldwork which helps them provide real-life education within the classroom (Powell et al., 2018). Such pracademic experiences may also allow staff to demonstrate required relevant professional experience for professional accreditation purposes (Mounce, Mauldin & Braun, 2004). Having undertaken a pracademic experience, academic staff may also enjoy increased levels of respect and creditability from their student cohort as students may perceive staff to be of a significantly higher quality than those staff members lacking relevant practical experience (Mounce, Mauldin, & Braun, 2004). Hosting a pracademic experience also provides "a mechanism by which practitioners (and professions) can contribute to curriculum development, keeping programs up to date and relevant to the real world" (Jancauskas et al., 1999, p. 2; Runkle, 2014).

These benefits of engaged research and teaching derived from a pracademic experience are not restricted to the discipline of public administration, but extend to engineering (Whelan, 2017) albeit under the name "Academic WIL" as well as tourism (Dredge & Wray, 2012). Whelan (2017) affirmed the above identified benefits to his teaching of undertaking an academic WIL placement. By incorporating experiences from his placement into lectures and tutorials and referencing such inclusions with "When I was working with the DPI (Department of Primary Industries) earlier this year…" (Whelan, 2017, p. 182) he validated the currency and content he presented and the authenticity of the tasks he assessed.

An Unacknowledged Benefit of a Pracademic Experience

Supplementing WIL and students' acquisition of employability skills – a theoretical approach

Similarly, the benefits of a relevant, professional, current, and authentic curriculum are not necessarily restricted to teaching technical content but may more generally extend to teaching employability skills. As there is no universally accepted definition, employability skills have been referred to as generic, core, professional, or non-technical skills, thus including: working effectively with others, communicating effectively, self-awareness, thinking critically, analyzing data and using technology, problem-solving, developing initiative and enterprise, self-management, social responsibility and accountability, and developing professionalism (Dacre, Pool, & Sewell, 2007; Jackson, 2013).

Given their acknowledged breadth, employability skills enable employees to effectively and efficiently perform and innovate in the workplace. Graduates who demonstrate such employability skills are highly valued and sought after by employers. It is common to find amongst Australian universities a strategic focus on graduates acquiring employability skills to support students' readiness for and transition to work. This is particularly relevant to graduates who are working in occupations, where their university qualifications are most likely to translate directly to a specific job or role, especially where qualifications are a requirement for employment.

Employability skills may be acquired by students undertaking what is described as experiential learning opportunities and/or completing authentic assessment items (Freudenberg, Brimble & Cameron, 2011). Torrance describes the term "authentic assessment" in the following way: "the basic implication of the term seems to be that the assessment tasks designed for students should be more practical, realistic, and challenging than what one might call "traditional paper and pencil tests" (Torrance, 1995, p. 1). Bosco and Ferns (2014) measure the authenticity of an assessment task depending upon how authentic the assessment task is to professional practice and how proximate to the workplace the student is, when completing the assessment task.

Experiential learning involves students obtaining first-hand experience outside of the traditional academic classroom setting by completing an internship, in conjunction with / or separately enrolling in a work-integrated learning program (WIL), digital or virtual WIL, or going on a field trip. A core aim of WIL is to better prepare undergraduates for workforce entry by increasing their confidence in their workplace capabilities (Billet, 2011a; Clinton & Thomas, 2011; Jackson, 2013) demonstrating to students the nature and standard of industry-required skills (Gamble, Patrick, & Peach 2010; Jackson, 2013) and the world of work (Jackson, 2013; Wilton, 2012).

However, there are challenges associated with running experiential learning opportunities such as WIL programs or internships which are well documented by the literature (Choy & Delahaye,2011; Jackson, 2015; McLennan & Keating, 2008). These challenges can be categorized as follows: shortage of available placements or students; poor quality of host-employer supervision; high cost and students not meeting the host employer's required performance standards. Of the four challenges, this discussion paper focuses on the last challenge and the possibility of a pracademic experience addressing this challenge.

Jackson (2013) largely attributes the final challenge to "inadequacies in placement as well as course content, structure and design" (p. 14). Jackson (2013) makes the point that continuing exposure to and practice of the required employability skills is essential for student productivity on WIL placements, yet these skills can only be acquired over time and not just in the course incorporating WIL. Jackson (2013) emphasizes the importance of undergraduate courses which effectively prepare and support students in their WIL experience as a means of achieving best practice.

Thus, this paper puts forward the proposition that academics, who have engaged in a pracademic experience as part of their continuing professional development, may provide a supplemental source of teaching employability skills to students, by creating experiential learning activities and authentic assessment items based upon their pracademic experiences. The following theoretical argument based upon three theories of learning transfer – andragogy; cognitive apprenticeship model and practice theory is made to support the above proposition.

Andragogy as opposed to pedagogy is the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Merriam, 2001, p. 5). The situation of academic staff engaging in a pracademic experience displays all six core principles of andragogy which apply to all adult learning situations (Knowles et al., 2005). Namely, academic

staff engaging in a pracademic experience (1) understand the need to learn from the professional practice experience; (2) are self-directing when engaging in the professional practice experience; (3) already possess a large variety of experiences and are open to an educational environment, which provides a rich resource for learning; (4) are predisposed and ready to learn by engaging in professional practice; (5) believe engaging in professional practice will assist them in improving their teaching of employability skills and (6) are motivated by the desire for professional development.

When describing how adults learn Kiely et al., (2004) emphasized the importance of context in shaping how adults learn, describing adult learning as a '"situated" cognitive process in which adults learn within experiences, rather than from experiences such that the learning occurs while reflecting in the doing of the experience.

By reflecting on their pracademic experience, academic staff may identify not only a variety of practical issues and problems for students to resolve, but also identify core employability skills and relevant technical content to enable such resolution. These workplace scenarios may then be pitched at students' required abilities, while taking into consideration any deficiencies of knowledge, such as a lack of local industry awareness, which may be experienced by international students.

The cognitive apprenticeship model is based on traditional workplace apprenticeship learning whereby the novice is provided with an insight into the processes used by experts to handle complex tasks. However, the expert demonstrates not only the cognitive activities used to solve the complex task, but also the processes of self-monitoring and reflection on the differences between an expert and novice to the apprentice. The apprentice observes, practices the skills involved, developing their expertise, until able to carry out the task independently. The transition from novice to expert involves four aspects of modelling, scaffolding, fading and coaching, although Collins et al., (1991) considered coaching as "the thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience" (p. 2). Falchikov (2007) considers "cognitive apprenticeships to be particularly suited to collaborative learning situations" (p. 131).

Pracademic experience may provide academic staff the knowledge and understanding to replicate the work environment within the classroom. Such replication may provide students with the opportunity to further build their employability skills through modelling, scaffolding, coaching and fading, using role plays, experiential learning exercises, and authentic case studies to be completed by students in workshops. Although students are not directly placed into a work environment, as these work situations or scenarios take place within the classroom, the ability to maintain consistent quality control of each student's learning experience may also be increased.

The aim of practice theory (Boud, 2016) is to design deliberate practice-based educational courses. Rather than focus on specific content knowledge or skills, practice theory focuses on how learning occurs within professional work by analyzing the practices which occur and how they interrelate within a professional office. Practices are defined as:

> bundles of sayings and doings that have existence beyond the particular individuals engaged in them. The ways practitioners speak about what they do and the actions in which they engage are an intrinsic feature of practice itself (Boud, 2016, p. 160).

Course curriculums should reflect, firstly, what professionals are currently doing, but also there should be a strong focus on what is needed in the future. In this regard, for example, artificial intelligence which impacts professional practice will require curriculums to be continually renewed. Within courses, students will need to be scaffolded into practice through practice-like activities, self-

management activities and simulated activities (Boud, 2016). However, assessment of practice must ensure that what is being assessed is capability in the practice by producing an authentic outcome (Boud, 2016).

Having completed a pracademic experience academic staff may be enabled to create an authentic assessment piece which assesses students' practice capabilities. For example, when preparing an assessment item, teaching staff generally ensure students are provided with all necessary information to resolve the issue/s or problem question. Whereas, it is often a matter of practice that professionals search for further information before they can resolve the issues or problem. Incorporating authentic workplace scenarios and circumstances into weekly workshops and assessment pieces may assist students to develop their practice or employability skills: to use initiative, to investigate, to think laterally or to "think outside the box", to document their investigations, and make reasoned recommendations, as well as meet deadlines.

CASE STUDY – AN INSOLVENCY PRACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Objectives of the Pracademic Experience

Three objectives were sought in undertaking the pracademic experience. Those objectives were: (1) increase the impact of the author – academic's research profile by disseminating the answer to her research question and connecting with the various stakeholders within the insolvency profession; (2) expand the authentic learning opportunities in the courses the author – academic convened and taught at university and (3) develop a framework for the future offering of pracademic placements within industry, government and professional offices to academic staff members at the author – academic's home university.

In undertaking the pracademic experience the author – academic sought to answer the following research question:

> How would the author – academic, the author – academic's home university, and the host – practitioner benefit from the pracademic experience?

Methodology

A descriptive case study was chosen as the research methodology. Yin (2003) recommends a case study design when the focus of the research is on answering the "how" questions. Using this methodology, researchers describe an event, with participants providing their reflections. Baxter and Jack (2008) also consider this research methodology to be an informative source of professional practice and evidence-based decision-making.

Participants

The participants in the case study were the author – academic, the host – practitioner and the author – academic's home university in providing the approved study leave to the academic to engage in the pracademic experience.

The Pracademic Experience

Planning commenced for the author – academic's 2018 pracademic experience in 2015. The lead in time was quite lengthy as the author – academic needed to be eligible for university study leave, and the

timing of the pracademic experience had to be mutually convenient to the host – practitioner, and the author – academic's home university, particularly, in terms of staffing needs.

The host – practitioner was specifically chosen for a number of reasons. The author – academic was previously acquainted with the host – practitioner through attendance at professional and university events, and co-authorship of academic and practitioner papers.

As a boutique insolvency practice, the host – practitioner focuses on all areas of insolvency including: solvency management; insolvency administration; and financial investigation. The practice has over 22 partners and over 100 staff across Queensland, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory and Victoria. Significantly, the host — practitioner enjoys nationally a market reputation of running paperless or digital offices, having designed and developed in-house computer programs specifically for the electronic documentation of insolvency administrations' files and investigations. Such a reputation was of paramount interest to the author – academic as the host – practitioner provided much needed access to insolvency practitioners who daily used digital resources in conducting external administrations. This access was provided at a time when the author –academic's research included surveying insolvency practitioners regarding their perceptions of the impact of artificial intelligence on bankruptcy and corporate insolvency administrations. The author – academic's role as a pracademic was twofold: to actively question and reflect upon insolvency practice and procedure within the employer's office and provide commentary and recommendations thereon; and to experience insolvency practitioners at work, which would provide the foundation for the creation of experiential teaching and learning activities and authentic assessment tasks, thereby blending practice with theory.

The author – academic was appointed a file accountant. A File Accountant's responsibilities include: meeting compliance obligations such as drafting and lodging business activity statements (BAS) via Australian Taxation Office portal on behalf of bankrupts; drafting and lodging Liquidators Statement of Receipts & Payments (Form 524s) via Australian Securities and Investments (ASIC) portal; drafting web-note advices to creditors; drafting creditors' reports; conducting investigations into bankrupts or directors of insolvent companies; conducting searches of bank accounts, land, motor vehicles, PPSR Register; adjudicating proofs of debt; calculating income contributions from bankrupts and drafting correspondence to the ATO, ASIC, company directors, and bankrupts.

The author – academic created an insolvency pracademic blog to record weekly reflections while working as a file accountant. The ten blog posts canvassed various topics such as "mining data in insolvency" (which considered the use of data analytics as a means of assisting businesses to avoid insolvency) to "adding value as an insolvency practitioner" (which questioned the true value of an insolvency practitioner's services). For publishing purposes, the blog website was then linked to the author's Facebook and LinkedIn webpages.

Publishing the blog posts, principally through LinkedIn, significantly expanded the author – academic's professional profile. The number of views of each blog post varied each week. However, after three months of weekly blogging the author – academic had attracted 789 views from LinkedIn users working in insolvency firms, professional accounting firms and universities, both within and outside of Australia, including the United Kingdom.

During the pracademic experience the author – academic completed the host practitioner's induction and development program to be familiar with the firm's organizational structure, including its reporting lines, staff roles and duties. As a full- time employee for three months, the author – academic participated in weekly team meetings, strategic planning programs, attended a breakfast seminar, and

socialized with staff on a formal and informal basis. By doing so the author has formed new relationships, as well as reinforced existing relationships, with both junior and senior staff members, with the intention of collaborating on future research and providing more opportunities for practitioners to visit and speak with graduates in the classroom.

As mutually agreed, the author – academic provided a review and report on the professional and administrative procedures within the host – practitioner's office. The report contained eight recommendations to improve the employer's professional insolvency practices and administration. The most controversial recommendation was the need for the host – practitioner to fully automate the issue of its first day notices and searches for bankruptcies and corporate insolvency administrations so as to maximize the efficiencies of digitization. This recommendation was then the catalyst for further discussions regarding the future strategic focus of the firm.

Findings and Discussion

In terms of engaged research there was evidence of the mutual benefits of pracademic and practitioner collaboration (Bushouse et al., 2011; Powel et al., 2018).

The author academic's research into the role of artificial intelligence (AI) within the insolvency profession was informed by completing the daily activities of a file accountant working in a paperless office. The author academic also appreciated the opportunity to discuss with insolvency professionals the impact of digitization on the insolvency profession.

The pracademic experience provided the host – practitioner with additional resources to undertake further investigative work on behalf of creditors in bankruptcies and corporate liquidations. The host – practitioner agreed that the experience had enhanced his firm's reputation as a supporter of tertiary education and created closer professional ties between his firm, the home university as well as the local community. Lastly, the host – practitioner believed that staff recruitment opportunities would increase given the closer ties between his firm and the university's Business school.

Jason Bettles, Partner Worrells Gold Coast provided the following comments:

> It was a great synergy for Worrells Solvency + Forensic Accountants Gold Coast. There were the obvious financial benefits of having an experienced academic working in our office at no cost to the firm. But more importantly it provided Worrells with exposure to personalized academic thinking and input on insolvency technical matter, together with the ability for us to provide real world experiences to academics and therefore influence the teaching of generic and professional skills to commerce students within the Griffith Business School. I am very supportive of the project and keen to continue to create closer professional ties between Worrells and Griffith University.

Engaging in a pracademic experience also informed the author – academic's learning and teaching role, in a number of ways. In terms of pedagogy, the author – academic is much more focused on experiential learning as a means of providing students with deeper learning opportunities (Ruhanen, 2005). To that end, subsequent to the pracademic experience, the author – academic created an online bankruptcy case file and two experiential learning activities based on her pracademic experience. These authentic learning and assessment materials were then implemented into a post-graduate Insolvency Law course.

Students are asked as file accountants to undertake a number of prescribed tasks and document their completion by making relevant file notes with supporting work-papers. Rather than provide students with a hypothetical set of facts, the bankruptcy case file is comprised of a series of authentic source documents from which students will extract needed information, undertake searches and conduct investigations, where necessary. All materials are provided digitally, reflecting the increasing use of technology within the insolvency profession.

The pracademic experience reinforced for the author – academic the need to integrate business students' accounting and legal knowledge in terms of learning and assessment to reflect current insolvency practice. The bankruptcy case file assesses students' knowledge of bankruptcy laws, written communication skills and time management skills as there are deadlines by which students must submit their file notes, searches or statutory reports. Oral communication skills and employability skills such as listening skills and group work skills, are practiced, assessed and peer reviewed by students replicating work-related activities in workshops. These workshop activities include answering client inquiries over the phone or by email or drafting reports for creditors' meetings.

During 2018 the author – academic's home university was seeking re-accreditation with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). As part of this re-accreditation process the home university was asked to provide examples of its Business School staff engaging with the practice of business, including faculty internships. A summary of the author – academic's pracademic experience was submitted as an example of such Business School staff engagement with business practice.

Unless actively consulting with industry or the professions, there are few opportunities for academic members to move between their academy and the world of practitioners. One means of creating such opportunities is to introduce a Pracademic Experience Pilot Program, which offers mid-career faculty members the important experience of joining theory and practice.

To that end, the author-academic has successfully applied for and was awarded university funding to scope the viability of a Pracademic Experience Pilot Program to provide a further source of teaching employability skills within the Business School and meet the professional development needs of the University's Business School academic staff.

A principal aim of the Pracademic Experience Pilot Program is to offer Business School academic staff pracademic experiences with industry, professional partners and government as a means of better engaging collaboratively in curriculum design and renewal and ensuring staff have the capabilities to deliver on priorities, such as teaching employability skills, now and in the future.

LIMITATIONS

This paper has outlined the previously evidenced and documented benefits of academic staff engaging in a pracademic experience. Those benefits include providing empirical research opportunities which benefit both the host practitioner in terms of practical evidence-based insights and academic staff in terms of providing a source of researchable questions and data. A pracademic experience also provides academic staff and industry /professional practitioners with the opportunity to collaborate and identify gaps in the teaching curriculum.

However, the paper has also put forward the proposition that academics engaging in a pracademic experience may gain the knowledge and understanding to replicate the work environment within workshops, using role plays, experiential learning exercises, and authentic case studies, providing

students with the opportunity to learn and reinforce their employability skills. A theoretical argument based on three transfer of learning theories – andragogy; cognitive apprenticeship model and practice theory was provided to support the above proposition. However, it must be acknowledged that the proposition is based upon the experiences of one participant and thus, lacking any supporting empirical evidence, cannot be generalized beyond this context.

CONCLUSION

Offering pracademic experiences to academic staff as part of their professional development enable staff to bridge the gap between academic theory and professional practice and so may provide an array of research and teaching benefits to academic staff, including the possibility of a supplemental source for teaching employability skills to students. Such supplemental sources are needed as continual exposure and practice of employability skills is considered a best practice principle in WIL, so as to effectively prepare and support students in their WIL experience.

Benefits also accrue to academic staff in terms of an expanded academic and professional profile, a teaching curriculum which is reflective of current professional practice, and to the University and host practitioner respectively, closer professional ties and enhanced reputations. Given the breadth and number of benefits derived from offering pracademic experiences to academic staff, a pracademic experience is considered an essential component of a comprehensive framework of continuing professional development.

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About the Journal

The International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning (IJWIL) publishes double-blind peer-reviewed original research and topical issues dealing with Work-Integrated Learning (WIL). IJWIL first published in 2000 under the name of Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education (APJCE). Since then the readership and authorship has become more international and terminology usage in the literature has favored the broader term of WIL, in 2018 the journal name was changed to the International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning.

In this Journal, WIL is defined as "*an educational approach that uses relevant work-based experiences to allow students to integrate theory with the meaningful practice of work as an intentional component of the curriculum*". Defining elements of this educational approach requires that students engage in authentic and meaningful work-related task, and must involve three stakeholders; the student, the university, and the workplace. Examples of practice include off-campus, workplace immersion activities such as work placements, internships, practicum, service learning, and cooperative education (Co-op), and on-campus activities such as work-related projects/competitions, entrepreneurships, student-led enterprise, etc. WIL is related to, but not the same as, the fields of experiential learning, work-based learning, and vocational education and training.

The Journal's main aim is to enable specialists working in WIL to disseminate research findings and share knowledge to the benefit of institutions, students, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that leads to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of WIL, and promote further research.

Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts sought by IJWIL is primarily of two forms; 1) *research publications* describing research into aspects of work-integrated learning and, 2) *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and provide critical explorative discussion around a topical issue. The journal will, on occasions, consider best practice submissions.

Research publications should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry. A detailed description and justification for the methodology employed. A description of the research findings - tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance to current established literature, implications for practitioners and researchers, whilst remaining mindful of the limitations of the data. And a conclusion preferably including suggestions for further research.

Topical discussion articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical and scholarly discussion on the importance of the issues, critical insights to how to advance the issue further, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.

Best practice and program description papers. On occasions, the Journal also seeks manuscripts describing a practice of WIL as an example of best practice, however, only if it presents a particularly unique or innovative practice or was situated in an unusual context. There must be a clear contribution of new knowledge to the established literature. Manuscripts describing what is essentially 'typical', 'common' or 'known' practices will be encouraged to rewrite the focus of the manuscript to a significant educational issue or will be encouraged to publish their work via another avenue that seeks such content.

By negotiation with the Editor-in-Chief, the Journal also accepts a small number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.