

Book Review

Advances in Research, Theory and Practice in Work-Integrated Learning: Enhancing Employability for a Sustainable Future 2022

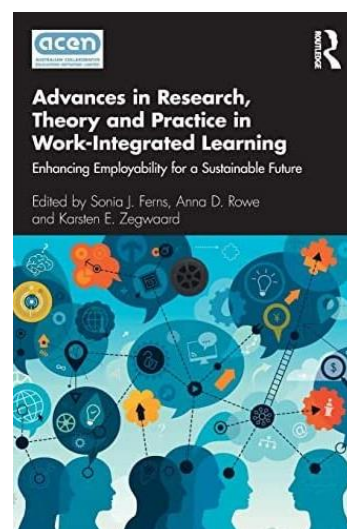
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This edited book provides insights into current research and scholarship in the field of work-integrated learning (WIL). Fifty-nine WIL researchers/ experts, mainly from Australia, contributed to 22 chapters. The Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) provided support for this Routledge publication.

The book begins with an introductory chapter from the editors on contemporary insights into the practice of WIL in Australia. Clearly, much of this discussion is also applicable to international WIL contexts. The book is then organized into six sections: Teaching and learning within work-integrated learning programs; Engagement with stakeholders; Maximizing learning outcomes through work-integrated learning; Exploring the diverse forms of work-integrated learning practice; Support and infrastructure to develop good work-integrated learning practice; and Future directions. Each section is expanded into subsections covering a range of key topics that will likely appeal to a diverse audience.

The first section, Teaching and learning within work-integrated learning programs, begins with a critical discussion on the complex construct of employability, as it relates to WIL in the higher education context. A case study, exploring the connections between employability policy and WIL curriculum design is presented. In the subsequent chapter, there is further discussion on designing WIL curriculum. The following chapter focusses on authentic assessment design for WIL, a challenging but crucial component of the educational process. Highlighted within this chapter are three key principles for assessment design, along with examples of how these can be incorporated into practice.

Section two focusses on engagement with stakeholders. The first chapter proposes a sustainable model for co-creation of WIL curriculum and recommendations for practice are highlighted. Professional accreditation is the topic of the second chapter. A useful contribution to the chapter is a case example of a WIL partnership model, where an accreditation process is used to co-create WIL curriculum. This section clearly emphasizes the significance of stakeholder engagement and WIL partnerships as being critical to successful WIL experiences.

Section three has five chapters, focusing on maximizing WIL outcomes. Recent evidence on the important topics of work, stress, resilience, and wellbeing in relation to WIL, is examined. Effective student supervision is discussed in relation to current research on this topic, and a conceptual model for supervision is proposed. A detailed section on principles and essential strategies for helping students maximize their learning is also included. The subsequent chapter from the same authors

proposes a holistic framework for supporting student learning. The next chapter examines dimensions of WIL quality and presents a WIL quality framework, developed for use in the design, implementation and review of WIL curriculum and practice. The final chapter argues for the importance of evaluating WIL to ensure WIL quality, and the importance of using evaluation tools that meet the needs of WIL stakeholders. An example of an evaluation tool developed by the authors is shared.

Section four explores different forms of WIL practice. With relevant theory and case studies included, chapters cover the following examples: Innovation in WIL, Entrepreneurial WIL; Service Learning as an approach to WIL, and Interdisciplinary project-based WIL. The challenges faced by international students undertaking WIL are also explored in this section, along with a chapter examining the benefits of undertaking WIL in international contexts.

Section five on support and infrastructure to develop good work-integrated learning practice, begins with a chapter on effective institutional leadership for WIL. Drawing on research in the Australian context, this chapter examines the key elements important for the success of an institution-wide approach to WIL. The next chapter examines the elements of governance and risk management. A useful guide for managing institutional risk is included. In the following chapter, student access and equity are critically examined, and actions required to improve inclusive practice in WIL are proposed. This chapter is particularly topical as equity of access and engagement in WIL continues to be a major challenge globally. The final chapter in this section discusses the opportunities and challenges related to the increasing use of technology-based WIL, including e-internships/ virtual WIL and simulated WIL experiences.

The final section discusses the vision and insights for the future direction of WIL, particularly for the Australian context. The authors summarize and bring to the attention of the reader, both the opportunities and the challenges that are critical to advancing WIL scholarship and practice. Key recommendations for progressing sustainable approaches to WIL to meet the future needs for stakeholders are proposed.

This book brings together a growing body of research and scholarly discussion, providing evidence to help understand, inform, and advance WIL practice. It is pleasing to see how research specific to WIL has grown substantially over recent years, and this book provides recognition for this work. The editors and chapter authors are commended for addressing key topics that underpin and are essential to providing quality WIL experiences for all stakeholders. While many of the authors and case examples shared are from Australia, the literature cited has drawn from a wide range of research undertaken globally. I highly recommend this book as relevant to an international audience, and useful for WIL practitioners, WIL curriculum designers, WIL researchers, and faculty/academic staff. The topics and issues covered are important to developing and advancing good WIL practice, regardless of the context. The chapters related to institutional leadership are also valuable to share with senior leaders in higher education institutions, to support strategic decision making for a sustainable future of WIL.

Overall, a well written resource of research, theory, and case examples. The book provides a valuable and significant contribution to the literature to support the advancement of WIL practice globally.

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