

Developing Learning Professionals



Springer

Professional and Practice-based Learning

Volume 7

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Professional and practice-based learning brings together international research on the individual development of professionals and the organisation of professional life and educational experiences. It complements the Springer journal *Vocations and Learning: Studies in vocational and professional education*.

Professional learning, and the practice-based processes that often support it, are the subject of increased interest and attention in the fields of educational, psychological, sociological, and business management research, and also by governments, employer organisations and unions. This professional learning goes beyond, what is often termed professional education, as it includes learning processes and experiences outside of educational institutions in both the initial and ongoing learning for the professional practice. Changes in these workplaces requirements usually manifest themselves in the everyday work tasks, professional development provisions in educational institution decrease in their salience, and learning and development during professional activities increase in their salience.

There are a range of scientific challenges and important focuses within the field of professional learning. These include:

- understanding and making explicit the complex and massive knowledge that is required for professional practice and identifying ways in which this knowledge can best be initially learnt and developed further throughout professional life.
- analytical explications of those processes that support learning at an individual and an organisational level.
- understanding how learning experiences and educational processes might best be aligned or integrated to support professional learning.

The series integrates research from different disciplines: education, sociology, psychology, amongst others. The series is comprehensive in scope as it not only focusses on professional learning of teachers and those in schools, colleges and universities, but all professional development within organisations.

Stephen Billett · Amanda Henderson
Editors

Developing Learning Professionals

Integrating Experiences in University
and Practice Settings

 Springer

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Series Editors' Foreword

Promoting professional learning has become of increasing interest in many countries because of the growing percentage of professional workers in the workforce, the need to prepare them adequately for their important workplace roles and also to sustain their occupational competence across their working lives. Certainly, much of this interest resides in higher education institutions as they work to fulfil their roles in preparing professionals through their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Increasingly, that interest is also being exercised in programmes associated with professional development (i.e. further development of occupational knowledge across working life). One feature of this interest in both of these kinds of educational programmes is how to most effectively utilise and integrate students' experiences in practice settings. That is integrating workplace experiences within the higher education curriculum. Of course, many programmes such as medicine, nursing and education have long utilised, and possibly sought to integrate experiences from practice settings. Practicums, placements and clinical practice have long been elements of programmes in these fields. However, now in both initial preparatory and ongoing developmental programmes, there is growing requirement for not only experiences in appropriate practice setting, but also their effective integration into the course curriculum. Hence, there is need for concepts, models and practices that can inform the implementation of educational process far more widely than in medicine, nursing and teacher education. Therefore, it is timely that this edited monograph is able to illuminate and support discussions about the educational purposes, worth and practices associated with this educational process are made available here.

In overview, this book identifies, discusses and elaborates processes through which professional learning can be effectively promoted through the integration of learning experiences across university and practice settings. Increasingly, programmes in universities from which the studies such as those included in this text are drawn have expectations that graduates will enjoy smooth transitions into professional practice. Hence, the emphasis on work-integrated learning within the higher education programmes, albeit with approaches to provide and integrate experiences in practice settings taking particular forms across the different disciplines. So, offered here are a range of Australian higher education perspectives

drawn from a series of nationally funded projects that have investigated processes through which these integrations might proceed. The contributions are drawn from projects that sought to identify the scope and bases for advancing work-integrated learning across the higher education system nationally and those that investigated curriculum and pedagogic practices to support that integration. Collectively, what is advanced through these contributions comprises the findings and synthesis of a series of projects that are seeking to inform the significance of integrating experiences in practice and academic settings. Given the interest, internationally, within higher education to utilise and effectively integrate into higher education curriculum experiences from practice settings, this book should attract a wide readership. Its strengths will be found in its conceptual premises, elaborations and synthesis, the use of actual incidents of practice to elaborate these premises and advance curriculum and pedagogic practices from a range of areas of professional practice.

The contributions of this book focus on the kinds of experiences that can best assist the effective initial preparation of professional practitioners, including a smooth transition into practice and the development of 'learning professionals.' The contributions are provided across three sections. First, the introductory sections set out the procedural and conceptual terrain. This section includes discussions about the worth of the integrations and offers some conceptual bases to assist understand what they comprise and how they need to be ordered as intentional learning experiences. Following this in the section entitled – *Integrating Practice and University Experiences: Curriculum and Pedagogy Practices* – are a set of discipline specific cases from nursing, physiotherapy, midwifery, social work and medicine, including an interdisciplinary study involving medical and nursing students. Each of these chapters reports on distinct kinds of pedagogic and curriculum practices that aim to integrate students experiences for different purposes. Then, and third, in the section entitled – *Institutional Practices and Imperatives* – are contributions that elaborate how career education can be realised through such integrations, how institutions might be best organised to secure such integrations, the ordering of experiences in multidisciplinary work teams in clinical settings. In all, provided here is a text that seeks to elaborate concepts and practices associated with professional and practice-based learning.

(October 2010)

Hans Gruber
Christian Harteis
Stephen Billett

Preface

In countries with both emerging and advanced industrial economies, there are new educational challenges arising from demands for universities and other educational institutions to prepare their students for specific occupations and to be ready to practice in the particular instances of that occupational practice. That is, they are required to be ‘job-ready’ on graduation. This is an extremely tough educational goal premised upon societal expectations that are not easy to achieve. Yet, this goal would likely be seen by the majority of educators as being the very kind of outcome that they intend for their students. Consequently, not only are parties external to higher education concerned with this kind of goal, but also many, and perhaps most, of those who work in higher and tertiary education are concerned to secure positive and productive learning outcomes for their students. Yet, achieving this educational goal requires the development of the conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge needed for competent occupational practice, including the variations of that knowledge necessary to address the specific requirements of particular instances of professional practice in which graduates are employed. In many ways, this challenge is greater than the expectations of schooling, given the specific requirements of particular practice circumstances. Here, there is an imperative for the development of the canonical knowledge of the professions to be learnt robustly and also in ways that make it adaptable to the kinds of practices that graduates will encounter during their courses and directly upon graduation, many of which may be unknown to both the teacher and the student. In addition, there are other goals that, although included within the development of occupational knowledge, may need specific educational considerations. One of these is preparing students to be proactive and self-directed in their occupational practice. A key quality of professionals is for them to be self-monitoring of their practice and self-directing in their ongoing learning. Yet, these capacities will likely need to be developed; they will not necessarily simply arise through students’ participation in an educational programme. Moreover, these capacities need to have a contextual dimension because abstract or dis-embedded capacities are unlikely to be helpful in situations that have specific requirements and generate particular kinds of problems.

It is for these reasons that there is a growing imperative in many countries and across a growing range of occupational disciplines not only for graduates to have

practice-based experiences throughout their programmes of study, but importantly for these experiences to be integrated within the academic curriculum. More than being merely opportunities to practice and apply what has been learnt in university settings, experiences in practice settings stand as essential learning opportunities in their own right and need to be positioned effectively within the overall curriculum to strengthen and augment what is learnt through taught experiences in educational institutions. That is, they are central to the development of the kinds of knowledge required for effective practice, and also the capacities that will serve graduates well in monitoring and sustaining their effectiveness as occupational practitioners. It follows then that the focus of this volume reflects such imperatives, needs and concerns. The studies discussed within this volume provide distinct accounts of how the development and integration of these experiences can progress to promote professional learning. The contributions findings of several distinct studies are highlighted, and included for understanding the pedagogic, curriculum and institutional bases for professional development. In addition, considerations of appropriate conceptual premises and procedural approaches are used to inform and guide the discussions across these chapters.

Support for this book has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Limited, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and also the Australian Research Council. The views expressed in this book do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council, or the Australian Research Council.

It is also important to acknowledge the support of the Griffith Institute for Educational Research in production of this book, most especially the skills and commitment of Ms Andrea Kittila whose editing and formatting work was greatly appreciated by all contributors and the two editors.

Brisbane, QLD
Brisbane, QLD
(July 2010)

Stephen Billett
Amanda Henderson

Series Introduction

This series of books for Springer constitutes an important international forum for studies of professional and practice-based learning. Its origins are located in the need for a focused and cross-disciplinary scholarly forum to propose, explain and further elaborate how learning through and for occupational practice proceeds and how that learning can be promoted and supported. The need for effective occupational preparation is well understood, but increasingly is being extended to practice-based experiences, and their integration within programmes of initial occupational preparation. However, the need for professional learning throughout working lives has become essential within the last decades as the requirements for occupational practices constantly change, and likely become more demanding. Additionally, professional learning is not only a matter of working life, but also a matter of social participation, as successful accomplishment of occupational challenges provides the basis for access to societal resources. In all, occupational development, transitions in individuals' occupational careers, as well as shifts in jobs, activities and tasks make learning throughout working life essential. Also, because changes in these workplace requirements usually manifest themselves in the everyday work tasks, professional development provisions in educational institutions decrease in their salience, and learning and development during professional activities increase in their salience. Consequently, educational enquiry has now to focus on the analysis and the support of learning within and throughout professional life. Scholarship on professional and practice-based learning is, therefore, emerging as a crucial topic within educational enquiry.

Indeed, there is wide interest in such a forum. Professional learning and the practice-based processes that often support it are the subject of great interest and attention in the fields of educational, psychological, sociological and business management research, and also from governments, employer organisations, professional associations and unions. Importantly, the concept of professional learning encompassed in this series goes beyond what is often termed professional education. Instead, it includes learning processes and experiences outside of educational institutions in both the initial and ongoing learning for the professional practice.

Readers can draw on contributions from a range of disciplines and sub-disciplinary fields, as they confront a range of scientific challenges and important

focuses within the field of professional learning. These include understanding and making explicit the complex and massive knowledge that is required for professional practice and identifying ways in which this knowledge can best be initially learnt and developed further throughout professional life. A major issue of the book series will be analytical explications of those processes that support individuals' learning as well as organisational change.

In all, the series aims to establish itself as a strong and highly esteemed platform for the discussion of concepts of professional learning that focuses on both the individual development of professionals and the organisation of professional life and educational experiences to support and sustain that learning. The series aims to overcome the compartmentalisation of research methods and paradigms by being inclusive of the approaches used in the field of professional and practice-based learning.

Stephen Billett
Hans Gruber
Christian Harteis

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Chapter 1

Promoting Professional Learning: Integrating Experiences in University and Practice Settings

Stephen Billett and Amanda Henderson

1.1 New Educational Challenges for Professional Learning

Currently, there is a growing interest in considering how best to assist the learning for professional occupations across universities worldwide. This interest is arising from the increased emphasis within higher education institutions on programmes that aim to prepare students for specific occupational outcomes usually for the professions, and growing expectations that these graduates will be job ready and able to engage in and move smoothly into effectively practising their profession (e.g. Department of Innovation Universities and Skills, 2008; Universities Australia, 2008). Consequently, today, university graduates are increasingly expected to possess the capacities to make a smooth transition into effective professional practice. All of this requires educational programmes that can develop occupationally specific forms of conceptual, procedural, and dispositional capacities that comprise the canonical knowledge of the occupation, something of an understanding about the particular manifestation of that knowledge needed to meet the situational requirements of the circumstances in which they will practise, as well as a set of capacities associated with being self-directed in their learning, working both independently and interdependently, and adopting a reflexively critical capacity that will permit them to monitor, evaluate, and improve practice across working life.

Not surprisingly, therefore, higher education institutions are now increasingly expected to organise curriculum and utilise pedagogies that can realise these three kinds of expectations. These expectations come from government, industry, professional bodies, and, increasingly, students themselves who invest time and money in their degree programmes. Given this focus upon the occupational practice and the need to provide experiences that can assist the development of the conceptual, procedural, and dispositional attributes required to effectively enact occupational practice, it is understandable that there has been a growing interest in providing students with learning experiences within the settings where these occupations are practised,

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as well as those within university settings. Indeed, experiences in practice settings are increasingly seen as being indispensable components of the higher educational curriculum for many sectors. The realisation that participation in university-based activities and interactions alone is insufficient to develop the competence required for effective professional practice is far from new and has long since led to the inclusion of practice-based experiences in courses of professional preparation (Jolly & Macdonald, 1989). Yet, experiences in practice settings may still be seen as largely providing opportunities for students to merely practise what they have learnt in the academy, or to develop the skills for practice, rather than these settings being accepted as providing rich and legitimate learning experiences in their own right (Billett, 2001; Boud & Solomon, 2001), and, as such, making particular and salient contributions to the development of professional competence (Henderson, Twentyman, Heel, & Lloyd, 2006). Moreover, despite the growing recognition of the learning potential arising from them, it is perhaps the exception to identify circumstances where students' experiences in practice-based settings are seen as being a legitimate and integral component of the students' higher education curriculum (Billett, 2009). However, attempts to maximise the knowledge learnt from practice settings through their integration with what is taught and learnt through experiences within the university have yet to become a central curriculum or pedagogical tenet of higher education. The contributions provided in this volume seek to contribute to redressing this situation through their considerations of how higher education student learning can be generated in ways that support the integration of experiences in both settings.

Here, understandings are advanced about practices associated with how the integration of student's experiences across the university and practice settings might best proceed in assisting realise educational purposes associated with preparing graduates who are adept and agentic professional practitioners. These goals are realised through drawing on the findings of a series of projects conducted in Australia that have investigated diverse aspects of work-integrated arrangements and commonly have sought to develop robust professional practitioners. In considering these projects, this volume provides a platform to understand and appraise diverse perspectives and practices that seek to integrate students' experiences within higher educational institutions with those that are encountered within practice settings across a range of discipline areas, yet within the same national higher education context.

So, the collective aims of this volume are focused on identifying, discussing, and elaborating processes through which professional learning can be effectively promoted through the intentional and guided integration of learning experiences across university and practice settings. As noted, this is increasingly an important consideration for higher education in advanced and emerging economies. Across a range of countries, programmes in universities are being positioned as 'higher vocational education', with expectations that graduates will enjoy smooth transitions to professional practice (Department of Innovation Universities and Skills, 2008). Indeed, the progressive shift in the emphasis in university programmes in many countries away from liberal arts (Lomas, 1997) and more towards preparation for specific

occupations has led pejoratively to descriptions of universities as now primarily being involved in 'higher vocational education'. As noted, aligned with this positioning is an increased interest in and emphasis on work-integrated learning within higher education, albeit taking different forms across different countries and universities within countries. Some will see this educational focus as a slight, others a description of a changing focus for higher education meeting particular social and economic goals. Yet, regardless of the way this discussion runs, a focused consideration of the purposes, procedures, and aspirations of higher education and to what degree these are supported or imperilled by these changes is now urgently warranted. Certainly, meeting the high expectations of governments, employers, and students represents a significant educational challenge to those who work in higher education and seek to organise and enact effective experiences for their students. There are important questions to be addressed not only about the educational worth of these experiences but also about how best should the integration of these experiences occur within higher education to approximate or realise the expectations of those who sponsor and employ graduates and make judgements about provisions of higher education. Arguably, these kinds of outcomes are what most higher education students want, employers increasingly demand, and governments expect. Yet, to get close to realising these kinds of outcomes within higher education programmes requires the selection and organisation of learning experiences that can best develop these occupational capacities. All of these imperatives are leading to a growing interest in and an emphasis on work-integrated learning within higher education, albeit taking different forms across different disciplines, institutions, and countries.

Certainly, the educational challenges arising from these demands are for universities to prepare their graduates for specific occupations and for these graduates to enjoy successful and smooth transitions to instances of professional practice, which cannot be known until the graduate is employed within them. Yet, fulfilling this expectation constitutes a very difficult educational goal; because the particular requirements for professional practice can differ quite widely across occupations, as do the settings in which practitioners work. The work undertaken by nurses in a major teaching hospital within a metropolitan capital may be quite different from that undertaken by their counterparts in a small rural hospital, health-care centre in a remote community, or in a doctor's surgery as a practice nurse. Moreover, in contrast to the specific requirements of the settings in which these individuals will work, there are now growing demands for graduates to meet the requirements of national standards associated with professional practice. The educational provisions for some occupations have long been highly ordered and include regulated arrangements for practice experiences (e.g. teaching, nursing). Other occupations follow different kinds of long-standing, practice-based arrangements (e.g. medicine, physiotherapy, accountancy, law). However, far more, and perhaps the majority of, disciplines have practice-based arrangements that are enacted on less structured and organised bases than supervised placements in preparatory occupation programmes for a range of disciplines. So, there is a need to develop the canonical knowledge of each profession (i.e. the knowledge required by all who practise that occupation), and also a requirement for this knowledge to be learnt in ways that make it