

Global perspectives on profound pedagogies

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Welcome to the global perspectives on profound pedagogies special issue of Higher Education, Skills and Work Based Learning (HESWBL). This special issue aspires to contribute to work-based learning (WBL) scholarship and highlights two dimensions important in contemporary educational settings: global perspectives and profound pedagogy. The first of these is increasingly important in the context of the relentless internationalisation and globalisation of education. According to the latest OECD reports, the number of students “enrolled outside their country of citizenship” doubled to 4.5 million between 2000 and 2012, “despite” the global recession (OECD, 2014, p. 343), and predictions indicate that this is set to reach 7.2 million by 2025 (Altbach et al., 2009). This trend is reflected within vocational higher education more specifically, especially Luxembourg (49 per cent of vocational higher education students), New Zealand (21 per cent), Australia and Denmark (both 11 per cent) (OECD, 2014, p. 354). Globally, the OECD inform us that 29 per cent of the 450 educational policy reforms examined by the OECD between 2008 and 2014 target vocationally oriented/work-based education as well as internationalisation (OECD, 2015).

At the same time, however, scholarship into education practices with learners studying across borders is very rarely situated within WBL settings (Wall and Tran, 2015a, b), the central and unique focus of HESWBL. Even more problematically, it often takes a “deficit” view, where students are stereotyped as “passive, rote learners, lacking in critical thinking and independent learning skills and prone to plagiarism” (Ryan, 2011, p. 637). Here, there are risks of “cultural homogenisation and a creeping academic imperialism” (Roche, 2014, p. 597), that is, educational practices which actively and purposively squash particular ways of thinking, writing and other forms of behaviour towards dominant “western” forms (Altbach et al., 2009). This can be so ingrained into the cultural fabric of a higher education system that we might not even notice it. For example, the notions of “autonomous learning” and “critical thinking” can be explicated in deeply individualistic ways of thinking and behaving, which may oppose notions of learning oriented towards larger social groupings such as family or country (Goodall, 2014; Yunkaporta and Kirby, 2011). This is an important part of the contemporary education landscape, and as you will see, is an important one for this special issue.

The second dimension that this special issue raises is how we can facilitate deep, significant learning in WBL contexts, under contemporary economic conditions. Education, not just limited to work-based or vocationally oriented forms, has been subject to the pressures of marketisation for some time now, and is often (but not always), imposed by governmental mandate (OECD, 2014). This may have had benefits such as enabling greater consistency and flexibility for people in work to access and engage in higher education. Indeed, this is the intention of the recent Global Qualifications Framework initiated in the USA to work towards global comparability and consistency (Travers and McQuigge, 2013). Yet there are other consequences, such as how we engage with education as a product to be individually consumed in order to create economic utility and practical outcome (see e.g., Wall and Perrin, 2015). This may well be a central thrust of work-based or vocationally oriented forms, but how does this play out when we are trying to engender deeper learning and change, and impact wider communities beyond the individual? In preparing for this special issue, we learnt about advances in organisational storytelling across Europe and mindfulness practices in New Zealand, but also the challenges of utilising such pedagogies with senior executives: how do you facilitate deep mindfulness and reflection when senior executives are pressed for time and demand outcomes here and now? A challenging tension, but a symptom of contemporary conditions.

In raising and tackling such dimensions (and of course the potential risks and issues in doing so) this special issue is important and timely. Many innovative pedagogical practices have been shared with HESWBL during this special issue, featuring all continents and multiple educational settings that aim to inculcate deep, significant and/or high-impact learning. This may suggest a latent interest in this sphere of activity, but it also suggests that there is developing practice and scholarship which is worth sharing. As with any high-quality journal such as HESWBL, all of the articles received could not be published. Rather, a range of articles from around the globe have been selected which speak to the overall title of the special issue, and which are therefore relevant to the dimensions of contemporary education previously outlined. A mix of case studies, research reports and literature reviews have been selected. They are informative and some fundamentally challenge current pedagogical approaches pertinent to practitioners and researchers across HESWBL fields – the editorial team at HESWBL hope you find them as interesting as we have, and find useful insights into your own practice and/or scholarship.

In the first provocative paper of this special issue, Sun and Kang examine “western” conceptualisations of WBL and question what WBL might become if infused with “eastern” principles, or as described by the authors, a “meshing” where “the emphasis is on both pragmatism and humanism”. Though the west-east binary construct can be criticised for oversimplifying the richness and complexities of cultural milieu (Wall and Tran, 2015b), this paper is an invitation to reformulate the more technical-rationalist forms of WBL which localise and contextualise learning in singular time-space moments. Inherent and implicit in this invitation is a call for the reader to utilise Confucian values and priorities, such as wholeness and connectedness to one’s wider life and spiritual space, to design educational practices. This echoes contemporary calls for educational activity to become cast beyond purely economic terms, and where learning is an active and constructive process (Wall and Perrin, 2015).

The second paper in the special issue continues with another provocative theme. Here, Franses and Wride offer an illuminating account of German scientist (as well as statesman and poet) Johan Wolfgang Von Goethe (1749-1832) and how his scientific/educational principles have been operationalised in practice. Goethe, and his subsequent advocates, developed a way of “doing science” which appears to be much more phenomenological in terms of its philosophical stance and methodological procedure than how we typically render “scientific method” (Stokes and Wall, 2014). The authors outline their pedagogical values, approaches and practices, and explore what their students say about their experiences. There are important insights here in relation to reinforcing and reminding us of the role of intuition, wholeness, play and experimentation in workplace learning. But the paper also implicitly questions how we understand scientific professionals, their workplaces and their assumed ways of knowing. As with other papers in this special issue, wholeness and connectedness to a sensed world around us is of key importance in contemporary “radically individualised” education – these are, after all, part of what makes us human.

Such diversity in practice is an important message in the third paper, where Devins and colleagues examine how employer influenced pedagogies (as an expression of WBL) manifest in three European countries: the UK, Finland and Spain. The authors combine theoretical ideas to propose an innovative theoretical framework to describe as well as analyse the possible relationships between educational orientation, the form of WBL and teaching and learning strategies. The examples not only provide an interesting account of cases across the three countries, but also offer additional evidence as to the plurality of form and practice within WBL and demand-driven education more broadly (Wall, 2013). The

paper is also an important reminder of the wider political forces that shape forms of education.

The fourth paper, by Grassberger and Wilder in the USA, uses a case study research method to illustrate and investigate using a case study as a teaching method. Here, the authors combined the theoretical apparatus of Fink's (2013) "significant learning" experiences and outcomes with Yin's (2013) seminal work on case study to deliver what they call "living case study". In this pedagogical approach and set of practices, the authors illustrate the possibility and potential impacts of connecting with organisations to generate expansive learning opportunities. Particularly important here is how the authors have found a practical way to animate learning with the associated complexities and dynamism of real workplaces and contemporary challenges. Though the research was located within the business and management sub-discipline of organisational development (which seems particularly suited to this form of pedagogy), a living case study appears to be an exciting and important development for vocationally oriented education across many fields.

Alden Rivers and colleagues shift the target of impact from the individual and organisational to further afield in their developmental work on social innovation education. Here, the authors, as part of the global Ashoka U Changemaker Campus initiative, present an innovative framework for learning design which aspires to enable an institutional-wide approach to equipping students with the resources to promote social change. This paper moves thinking on beyond employability skills, beyond what it means to be a "good citizen", and towards social enterprise and entrepreneurship attributes which are applicable at work, at home and even during personal leisure time. This emphasises the kind of social connectedness and wholeness already raised through the Confucian and Goethean inspired papers in this special issue. The authors recognise that the list of Changemaker attributes may "not necessarily be new, but are newly important" in contemporary education, and also document their collective approach to institutional-wide change and directions for further institutional development. Such a collective approach seems crucial in making radical changes to pedagogical infrastructures.

The importance of a whole-institution approach to student support is raised in the final paper of the special issue. In the sixth paper, Gribble and colleagues from Australia offer evidence of the pedagogic challenges of providing work integrated learning (WIL) to learners studying outside their country of citizenship. As part of a major three-year research project in Australia, they draw on the analytical apparatus of Bourdieu to highlight key issues related to the limited social connectedness of these students, unrealistic expectations of WIL, especially in the context of developing English language competence. While it is important not to essentialise or generalise the specific needs of "international students" (Wall and Tran, 2015b), this paper raises the profile of the wider infrastructures which need to be in place to ensure the increasingly diverse student body can fully engage in and benefit from the transformational potential of WIL and other forms of WBL. In this way, pedagogy is not just about the teaching and learning strategies, tactics and resources within the classroom or immediate learning environment (now common in higher education and forms of WBL facilitated at a distance), but the wider educational interactions surrounding and supporting it – this includes the marketing function of universities which aid the setting of student expectations.

The editorial team at HESWBL hope you conclude that this special issue meets its aspiration of contributing to the debate and influencing practice with regards to global perspectives on profound pedagogies. Perhaps it might encourage yourself, your colleagues or your research students to undertake further scholarly work and publish with HESWBL in the future. The editorial team is pleased that a number of our special issue contributors

expressed how much they valued comments from HESWBL reviewers during the review process and found the experience both developmental and rewarding. HESWBL's reviewers are essential to this experience, and of course, core to the existence of the journal. The HESWBL team hope you too will benefit from engaging with HESWBL as a contributor and reviewer as it continues to expand in reach and impact. Please contact us if you have innovative ideas with relevance to international audiences.

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