

Work Based Learning as a Conduit to Business Creativity in Australia

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The knowledge economy is compelling business leaders to adopt creative approaches to become and remain relevant and competitive. Business has the opportunity to use many of the learnings from art and philosophy in order to effectively respond to this situation. This article takes insights from creative artists and thinkers such as Dante, Yeats, Chomsky and TS Eliot and connects them with contemporary developments in professional learning, practice and reflection (with particular reference to the work of Hager et al., (2012) Kemmis et al., (2012) and Boud et al., (2006). The purpose of these connections is to illustrate the value of an emergent approach to tertiary education known as work based learning. The article is a departure from traditional views of work-based learning as it suggests that work based learning is a creative and innovative response that builds capability for both individuals and organisations. Within this context, significance is afforded through reflective practice. Whilst reflection is more associated with thinkers and artists than business leaders, it is an important skill in contemporary business settings. The authors argue that effective professional reflective practice draws the different elements of contemporary work based learning into a cohesive strategy for building higher levels of individual and organisational capability.

Keywords: *work based learning; workplace learning; reflective practice; professional practice; negotiated curriculum.*

Introduction

...for memory
Can't follow intellect through the same length
Of journey, as it goes deep to come near
What it desires. But all I could retain
As treasure in my mind will now appear
In this song.....
(Dante in James 2013, p.349)

As noted above by Dante (in Canto 1, Book 111 (Heaven) of the Divine Comedy), recalling what you have done, when what you have done is at the higher or deeper limits of your

intellect, is not easy. In essence we interpret Dante as saying that our memory faculty (to recount and thereby to learn) may not be sufficient when we are operating at the limits of our ability. This has significant ramifications for human learning because learning is connected with reflection and reflection depends on memory. This has been apparent for a long time, because efforts through time to understand how masters achieve masterpieces (be it through direct enquiry by or with the master, or by detailed observation and analysis) have proved problematic. Chomsky (2000, p.6), in dealing with our (human) difficulty in understanding our language faculty, noted that, 'the earliest attempts to carry out the program of generative grammar quickly revealed that even in the best studied languages, elementary properties had passed unrecognised, that the most comprehensive traditional grammars and dictionaries only skim the surface. The basic properties of languages are presupposed throughout, unrecognised and unexpressed'.

It is clear that in language and in business, the most obvious is sometimes not. Chomsky goes on to suggest that we have more difficulty in understanding those things that are close to us; close in the sense of being connected intimately with our human-ness (Dante calls it our intellect's 'desire'). He goes on also, to point to the distinct limits of human capacity - just as our bodies have distinct limitations, so too do our mental faculties. This is not something we are prone to recognise or admit; especially if we hold an important position or have an important role in our business or organisation.

Dante has pointed to the limits of our memory and Yeats puts another perspective on these limitations when he asks, 'how can we know the dancer from the dance' (in *Among School Children* (verse VIII) in Sarker 2002, p.250). This highlights in a very different way, what Dante was saying about our capacity for understanding what we have done when we have been fully immersed or engaged in what we were doing. So, if and when we are doing things, with which we are significantly engaged and we are performing close to our peak, it is really difficult to remember, reflect and learn in such settings. Possibly, the sporting equivalent of this is when a player is described as being 'in the zone' - when everything they do seems easy and when the sportsperson's skill, execution, timing, coordination and anticipation are all operating to fully support the accomplishment of the desired result. So often sportspeople are unable to remember the ingredients of those magic moments and then spend a lot of time trying to relive that performance. However, contemporary shareholders and stakeholders in business expect their managers to have the skill to separate the 'dance' from the 'dancer' - in essence contemporary expectations are that managers who are closely involved with key actions and projects are able to step-back from

such actions and to see the actions as though they were not personally involved. This is not something that generally, managers are automatically able to do.

Such a capacity requires a high level of learning such that the memory is sufficiently developed to enable dispassionate reflection on what has been done and (to avoid being protective or defensive) what may have been done differently, and sometimes better. Often managers are confronting ongoing problems and issues for which there are no simple solutions. We all know the frustrations and emotional energy that can be consumed in seeking a 'breakthrough' or an 'insight'. It appears that it is not usual for learning to be a struggle. TS Eliot (1944, p.31) referenced his struggle (when endeavouring to write poetry) in the East Coker section of the Four Quartets:

*So here I am in the middle way, having had twenty years.....
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure...
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: ...
For us, there is only the trying...*

Many contemporary business managers know what it feels like to be stuck in the 'middle way' - having to regularly endeavour to resolve recurring problems for which there appears to be no easy solution.

This extract from the Four Quartets is one of many examples in Eliot's work that bears on the learning process. Dawson (2003, p.114) notes that:

many of the themes that recur in Four Quartets have been the focus of considerable attention in the literature on experiential and transformative learning (Boud & Miller 1996, Jarvis 1987 & 1992, Kolb 1984) which is, of course, closely associated with the lifelong learning literature, and is equally under the onslaught of increasing preoccupation with learning for work, rather than learning for (and from) life (Briton 1996 & Welton, 1995).

The learning struggle noted by Eliot seems to be heightened when we are at our personal limits and we are endeavouring to put something into practice, that is applying it or implementing it. The melding of theory and practice is often required to achieve something worthwhile. However, a great deal of learning is based on understanding theories and concepts in a chosen field or discipline (Billett 2010). In professional circles there is an even higher level of recognition for those practitioners who not only learn, remember and understand but also know how to apply this learning and knowledge to a wide range of

circumstances. In these situations, the results of the professional's interventions build or detract from that practitioner's long-term standing/reputation in their field of endeavour.

There are multiple, complex steps involved in doing things at a high level (e.g. learn, understand, remember, interpret, apply and review) and over time, professionals or artists or sportspeople can become highly proficient, to the point of what has been described as unconsciously competent (Howell 1982). It is therefore not surprising that even professionals start to reach the limits of their ability. We have seen above even the most talented and creative people become aware of these limits and Dante is most explicit when he recognises that '... memory/ Can't follow intellect through the same length/of journey, as it goes deep to come near/What it desires?' It follows then, that for professionals to keep learning and developing whilst they are participating in complex tasks (their practice), it is necessary to develop the capacity for reflection, which builds on memory, to support further learning. This level of ongoing professional development compels the consistent practice of reflection and it is this practice that allows the committed professional to continue to work at the frontier of their profession's contribution to their field and their community. Work based learning is a clear pathway for professionals to expand their capacity for learning to practice. Before discussing work based learning it is appropriate to move, from the insights of creative writers and thinkers, to a consideration of contemporary perspectives on issues of learning and development at work.

Contemporary Perspectives on Learning, Practice and Reflection

The above perspectives of creative thinkers and writers provide an interesting introduction to a brief discussion on the contemporary, academic, position on learning, practice and reflection. The discussion thus far has emphasised the role of the individual in learning and reflects what Hager et al., (2012 p.6) has described as falling within the cognitive-psychology based theories of learning and:

their primary focus is on the individual learner and largely on rational and cognitive processing. Practice is construed as thinking (or reflection) followed by the application of this thinking or reflection and the concept of learning is simply assumed to be unproblematic.

Hager et al. suggests that this is not a sufficient picture of the contemporary learning environment for individuals and organisations. He therefore also puts forward two other broad categorisations, namely, 'sociocultural' and 'sociomaterial', which provide a richer insight into the circumstances for learning. The sociocultural approach rejects the notion that any type of learning can be removed or avoids its context and views learning (and

subsequent performance/implementation) as being significantly shaped by social, organisational, cultural and other contextual factors. This approach also affirms the role of emotions and desires in shaping the learning process far beyond just rationality. The sociomaterial perspective reinforces the discovery element of learning, in that many things are not decidable in advance and that new learning often flows in unpredictable and unexpected ways from the merging of existing practices and circumstances.

Viewed as a whole, these three perspectives on learning serve to highlight that contemporary workplaces can be just as effective for learning (if not more so) as classrooms, or other structured forms of learning. In looking more closely at work and learning, Illeris's model of learning in working life (2004) has three main focal points, being (1) the individual's own learning processes, (2) the technical/organisational learning environment and (3) the broader social/cultural learning environment. Illeris (2004 p.434) contends that learning only occurs when both the acquisition processes (through inner psychological processes) and the interplay processes (through the social interaction between the individual and his or her environment) occur. Just as with classrooms, some workplaces are more conducive to learning and these workplaces are likely to demonstrate the characteristics of high performance working (Fuller & Unwin 2011). In such settings both the individual and organisation have a shared interest in developing personal and organisational capacity. Fuller & Unwin (2011, p.52) have identified a range of specific characteristics for workplaces that are conducive to learning. These characteristics include:

- Staff are able to participate in different communities of practice - job/team boundaries can be crossed
- Management recognises and supports workers as learners - newcomers (including trainees) are given time to become full members of the workplace community
- The business uses workforce development as a vehicle for aligning goals of the organisation and of the individual
- Skills are widely distributed though the workplace
- Provision of time for reflection and deeper learning beyond immediate job requirements
- Workers are given discretion to make judgements and contribute to decision-making

Contemporary demands on business and industry mean that many workplaces do provide some or all of these characteristics and thereby provide a suitable environment for both vocational and higher levels of learning.

However, the pressures on workplaces to be conducive to learning are not just arising from commercial and/or market imperatives. Professions that have members employed in a wide range of organisational settings play a significant role in shaping approaches to learning and practice at work. Learning has been and continues to be a critical element of professional practice and in regard to contemporary **practice**, Kemmis et al. (2012, p.34-35) propose that:

practices exist as orchestrated arrangements – in particular, cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements, all held together in the different kinds of projects people pursue in their practising. In our view, these clusters of arrangements prefigure the social world for those who come to inhabit a practice of a particular kind.

These orchestrated arrangements give practices:

- *Their meaning and comprehensibility, in terms of the ‘sayings’ and ‘thinkings’ that occur in a practice in its cultural-discursive dimension, as it is constituted in semantic space, and in the medium of language*
- *Their productiveness, in terms of the ‘doings’ that occur in a practice in its material economic dimension, as it is constituted in physical space-time, and in the medium of work or activity*
- *The kinds of connectedness and solidarity among the people and objects involved in a practice, in terms of the ‘relatings’ that occur in a practice in its social-political dimension, as it is constituted in social space, and in the medium of power.*

Practices play an important role in shaping how particular professionals engage with their workplaces and can be a rich resource in contributing to the development of organisational capability. Professional bodies have developed a range of mechanisms for supporting the ongoing professional development of their members. These appear to provide a diversity of different learning settings and are strongly linked to sharing information between individuals and/or groups of professionals, in practice oriented contexts. The classroom seems to play a very minor role in these development opportunities. As noted above however, just as organisations are more or less expansive/restrictive in regard to high performance working there is the scope for professional bodies to foster and develop approaches that are more or less conducive to high performance working. This tension between personal/professional practice and organisational expectations and culture is just one of the many contextual issues that add to the nature of the learning available in workplaces. However, the ongoing maintenance of and progressive development of professional practice is strongly associated with learning in at and through the workplace.

In regard to **reflection**, reflective practice has been long associated with learning and development but not always with business development. In discussing a project that specifically explored reflection and reflective practices in workplaces, Boud et al (2006, p.17) note that 'we realised that the sense of being time poor and experiencing life as proceeding at a frenetic pace was not just a phenomenon of work but was characteristic of most aspects of contemporary society.'

This seems to put in some doubt that people will willingly give their time to the practice of reflection. However, Boud et al. (2006, p.6) propose that reflection is:

an integral component of work, a necessary element in the evaluation, sense-making, learning and decision-making processes in the workplace. It is through a focus on reflection we suggest that the needs of production can be reconciled with the needs of employees to have satisfying engagement with their work. As the identity of worker shifts to worker-learner in new forms of production, so reflection is a key element in working with the challenges to identity that are also involved.

Boud et al. (2006, p.15) see the context for this emergent need for productive reflection at work being driven by a number of different elements, including -

- *Staff having to deal with complexity and ambiguity*
- *Development in business settings of distributed and flexible competencies*
- *The growing need for a contingent approach to problem solving (because so many problems in business are 'new' ones)*
- *The establishment of flexible project groups to respond to commercial and market demands.*

This approach towards productive reflection and the drivers for this approach are highly consistent with developments in learning and practice noted above. As such it is important to reiterate that this contemporary approach to reflective practice is not just an internal self-affirmation nor is it a rote process that is replicated time and time again. It is a creative and indeterminate process that requires a level of discipline to keep on subjecting one's efforts to open review and scrutiny. It requires interaction with others, enquiry into new developments in theory and knowledge and an underlying recognition that continuing professional development is not an option but a prerequisite for being able to effectively contribute.

One simple example of what is pushing managers towards an enhanced capacity for reflection are the multiplicity of questions often asked when a business takes a particular course of action. These questions are often raised by external stakeholders be they board directors/shareholders or staff, following critical decisions and when significant actions are

taken in regard to the enterprise. The scrutiny can be intense, public and widely based and this is compelling a need for contemporary organisational leaders to be able to reflect on their actions. The management team will often be called upon to justify their actions and this may require a well-reasoned outline of why the action was taken and to compare that action against alternative courses.

It follows therefore that key organisational players need to develop the reflective capacities to respond to the searching nature of queries that arise from stakeholders, in a world where these queries may be both well researched and considered. Reflective practice enables the practitioner to 'remove' themselves from the immediacy of being directly involved in the decision or action and to put their actions into a 'context' that provides a fuller appreciation of all the circumstances that led to that decision or action. Under these circumstances, reflective practice, at its best, builds a bridge between those closely associated with an action or decision and those stakeholders slightly removed from it. It facilitates communication from the 'inside' to the 'outside' in organisational settings. Reflective practice is therefore being recognised as an important part of managerial learning.

It should also be noted that the role of reflective practice is not being limited to responding to 'post hoc' questions in business and organisational settings. Approaches to reflection and review figure in approaches to organisational improvement, quality control and personal, professional development. 'Reflection' or 'review' or 'checking' are different ways of conveying the role of active reflection in action learning cycles such as - PLAN-DO-CHECK ACT or APPROACH- DEPLOYMENT-RESULTS-IMPROVEMENT. Managers are regularly expected to be able to demonstrate a capacity for improving outcomes - be they outcomes associated with an individual's actions or through a project or process that involves a team or group of employees. Leaders who can model the benefits of personal reflection and bring this approach to bear in group or project settings for the benefit of all are most likely to win confidence and grow improvement and innovation in and for the business.

As such, reflective practice can operate as a bridge - on one hand it is a personal tool to connect the individual (their own personal traits and preferences) with their professional growth and learning; while on the other hand it is a shared (organisational) tool in business innovation, quality improvement and project management. It can assist a workgroup to connect the now (current state) with the future (desired state) and represents and through this informs improved practice and creates even more opportunities for learning. The power of disciplined, creative reflection seems to lie in its capacity to operate as a bridge that connects the territory on either side (be it - inside with outside; personal with professional or

current state to future state). Alluding back to the creative writers and thinkers mentioned earlier, American literary critic Harold Bloom (2000, p.279) makes the point that creative works, such as poems -

.....can help us to speak to ourselves more clearly and more fully, and to overhear that speaking. Shakespeare is the largest master of such overhearing.

To some degree this highlights the dual, connecting process of reflective practice - that enables the poet to learn and grow (as part of the creative process in writing the poem) but that the (third party) reader is able to 'overhear' and similarly learn and grow from the reading.

This review of contemporary approaches to learning, practice and reflection serves to highlight that as more workplaces strive to build creativity into their organisational capital, the more the insights and learnings from creative writers and thinkers will be relevant and useful to business managers. The next section looks more closely at work based learning as a specific mechanism to support the organisational development of creativity and capability.

Professional Development Through work based Learning

Work based learning is a well-established approach to all levels of learning (Garnett 2000 Garnett & Young 2008, Garnett & Young 2009, Garnett & Workman 2009, Garnett, Costley, & Workman, 2009). In Australia, work based learning is beginning to gain influence with a number of education authorities. In general, it provides an opportunity for those who work in roles that enable them to design and or implement organisational activities, projects or processes, to gain fully accredited qualifications. The learner worker is able to use work based learning to achieve awards, from vocational certificate, diploma and undergraduate to post graduate. The application of work based learning in Australia to university level awards is nascent and the approach has been traditionally usually associated with work integrated approaches in vocational training and professional development.

Work based learning uses projects as a vehicle for achieving the learning outcomes consistent with the learner worker's negotiated curriculum. The academic standards and approaches to supervision and assessment are all consistent with national standards for all educational awards. The work based learner is cast in a situation that provides them with the scope to tailor their curriculum to match their own personal and professional learning with their organisation's future development and growth. The situation can also be characterised as representing a tension between 'relevance and rigour' (Dick 2002, p.166). Dick used this as a way of illustrating the plight of the action learner/researcher in dealing with, on one

hand the organisation's need for work to be relevant to its business needs and wants and on the other hand, the learning institution's need for work undertaken to be done in a rigorous manner sufficient to meet academic standards and learning outcomes.

This positive tension is causing a meshing of business and academic processes. For example, students of work based learning are developing unique methods that combine elements of project management with elements of action learning and research (Armsby 2000, Armsby & Costley 2000, Costley & Armsby 2007). Organisations are also employing academic research approaches (such as ethnography) to pursue business knowledge (Anderson 2009). This enmeshing of business and academic processes is well illustrated by a student worker (in the early 1990s) enrolled in work based learning whose core project was closely associated with the early development of 'in-car' navigation system products, which are now widely used. Projects such as this need to build on extant bodies of knowledge, employ clear methods for achieving results (rigour) and contribute to a material change in the operation of their organisation (relevance).

Unlike other programs and academic awards where what the student learns has already been resolved by the institution and included in their course offering, in work based learning, what the student learns is resolved through a process of negotiating their curriculum. This is encapsulated within both a process and a document called the Learning Agreement. The objective of the Learning Agreement is to identify the common ground or 'sweet spot' where 'rigour' and 'relevance' intersect. The Learning Agreement provides both the rationale and the subject area of the student's work over the ensuing period of their degree. The Learning Agreement formally brings together the whole work based learning journey (Garnett 2000); the components of which are incorporated in the stylised work based learning pyramid set out in *Diagram One* below.

This representation has been developed following on the work of Garnett (2000 p.65) in regard to the UK higher education context. The components of the pyramid are as follows -

- **Learning Agreement:** This document is negotiated between the key players and sets out the learning outcomes, timeframes, unit structure and resources associated with the student's intended learning journey. As noted above, the rationale for the student's learning outcomes is founded on a logic that is outside the university's existing programs, faculties, disciplines and course offerings but does not exclude the opportunity of utilising these as sources of input for the student's learning outcomes.

- **The Actors Interests:** Are brought to a head for a particular student so that their learning journey is capable of occurring within the workplace and to satisfy the standards of the curriculum at the same time as achieving personal and professional objectives.
- **The Elements of work based learning:** There are considered to be six primary elements of work based learning that are incorporated into the Learning Agreement. These elements cover (1) Research/Enquiry methods - without knowledge of and reference to these a work based project will not satisfy the standards of the academy (2) Projects - are the primary 'units' of work based learning and it is within one or more projects that students achieve the learning outcomes of their curriculum (3) Portfolio - is a foundation element where the student identifies their existing knowledge and capability and this starts to build their journey in reflective professional practice (4) Accredited work based learning - is the opportunity for students with previous knowledge and experience to gain credit for prior learning in the workplace (5) Accredited Taught Courses - provide students with the opportunity to acquire knowledge from existing sources that will complement their own learning objectives (6) Benchmarking and Referencing - like research methods, ensures that the student's learnings are located within a body of knowledge and capable of being academically assessed.

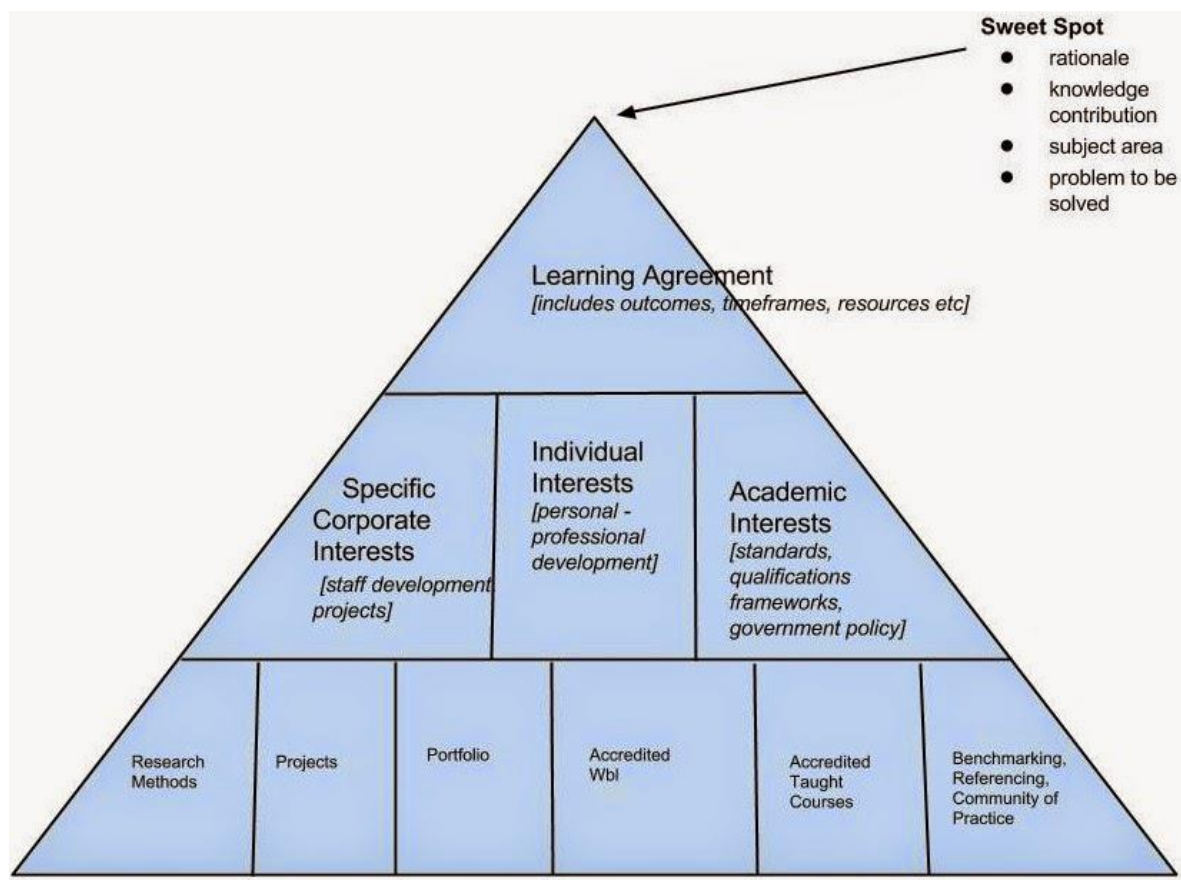


Diagram One: The work based learning pyramid developed from initial work by Garnett (2000, p.65)

The different elements of work based learning set out above are generally very similar, no matter what level of award is being sought. This allows students to move to higher awards whilst building on the achievements and the skills acquired in earlier programs. There are considerable benefits in 'overlapping' work and learning with gaining a degree - not the least of which are (a) using time spent on work projects to count towards an award (b) minimising time away from both work and family and (c) focusing study effort on a project/learning area that is directly relevant to the student/worker's career. The next section looks more closely at the role of reflection in work based learning.

Reflection is Pivotal in work based Learning

Returning to an earlier point in relation to existing business and organisational settings, reflective practice supports leaders and workers in explaining their actions and decisions as well as being a mechanism for improving both personal and business outcomes.

Consequently, student workers come to work based learning with varying levels of reflective practice capability depending on their prior development and learning. However, work based learning is designed to ensure that this level is increased through the program. In essence, irrespective of the nature of their work based projects or the method employed to undertake these projects, students should be required (or encouraged) to employ reflective techniques.

At the start of the work based award, reflective practice is specifically employed to assist a student in naming and locating their own knowledge. This is particularly significant for students coming in at lower levels in the education and training system. Many who seek initial qualifications may have not seriously reflected on what they know, given it a name or description and thought about where their interests lie in relation to future skill and knowledge and capability development. As such, reflective practice is employed early to build a new level of professional/practitioner self-awareness.

Projects (current or past) undertaken as part of a work based qualification are also an important specific area for exploring the role of reflection and reflective practice. Students at all levels in work based learning must employ a considered approach to their projects. Clearly the approach needs to be consistent with the learning outcomes associated with the level of the award. Having an approach is essential to meet the 'rigour' elements of nationally recognised qualifications. For conventional awards this approach would usually be described by way of existing academic conceptions of ontology and epistemology and a research method would be identified and employed. work based learning often compels students to pursue projects and to undertake them in a manner that meets their

organisations requirements of 'relevance'. For most organisations, knowledge must generally have a performative value (Garnett 2009) as they have purposes other than just the creation of knowledge: it is usually knowledge directed towards or guided by the nature of the company's continued survival and success.

As work based projects proceed under these circumstances, reflective practice is employed in parallel with or as part of the project methodology. The student must demonstrate the capacity to review and reflect on what has worked/not worked, what milestones have been achieved/not achieved and overall, what outputs and or outcomes have resulted/not resulted. The student may be employing elements of any established academic learning methodology (and to our knowledge none of these are precluded from work based learning) and it is through employing appropriate reflective techniques that the journey, along the line of tension between 'rigour and relevance', is effectively negotiated.

The operation of reflection in work based learning is intended to ensure that the project is not building 'the world's best mouse trap' - that is, to ensure that rigour doesn't win the battle over relevance - but to also ensure that the reverse does not occur. If relevance wins over rigour, the project may satisfy the company (and the boss) but have limited value as a contribution to the professional community of practice. As such reflection is designed to build in checks and balances to avoid 'group think' and to avoid a situation where the student believes that there is only one way to solve a problem. Boud et al (2006) go so far as to suggest that reflection is the nexus between learning and work. Our experience is that reflection also operates as the nexus between relevant work based projects and rigorous educational outcomes.

Conclusion

Creative writers and thinkers have been exploring the issues of learning, practice and reflection for a long time and often without using those specific terms. T. S. Eliot (1944, p.59) highlights this towards the end of his Four Quartets when he says:

we shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time

The creative purposes of learning, practice and reflection are many but include the expansion of human consciousness, understanding and communication. These purposes are increasingly coming into play in contemporary workplaces. Contemporary academic enquiry into **learning**, **practice** and **reflection** provides us with a realisation of the inter-connectedness, contextuality and complexity associated with these three areas. It also leads

us to realise that the knowledge economy is progressively moving us to a position put by Barnett that 'work has to become learning and learning has to become work' (in Sawchuk 2011, p.176). In this context, work based learning is an appropriate approach for both employees and employers. This is because it has been designed to both deliver, and engender, creativity in practice and to achieve mutually beneficial improvements in organisational and personal capability.

Reflection and reflective practice is a vital, coalescent element of work based learning that is becoming increasingly relevant to contemporary organisational life. Reflection in, at and through work is intended to be creative and engaging - not just an inward looking personal practice. Reflection as a personal practice may be something that humans do that arises from our intellect and our memory. In and of itself reflection may have many functions for humans (which are well outside the scope of the workplace) but in a professional development and learning context, it is clear that it has a significant role in all contemporary approaches to professional extension. However, reflection as a purely individual, insular process is prone to all of the shortcomings that humans bring to bear - it can lead to the reinforcement of poor practice and entrench existing shortcomings in knowledge and expertise. The reflective practices that are truly developmental and creative are necessarily disciplined and engaging.

Reflective practices in work based learning are designed to operate as a bridge to enhanced learning and are intended to serve a number of different purposes. These include:

- using reflection as a way of communicating the basis for decisions and actions and highlighting the review of alternative options and possibilities
- applying reflective techniques proactively at the group level as part of established quality, project and business improvement cycles
- personal reflection as a mechanism for personal growth and creativity
- employing reflective techniques in helping to name and locate an individuals knowledge and skills
- using reflective practice to build a unique practitioner approach to work based projects by operating in parallel with and as part of existing, established project and research methods

To achieve these purposes, reflective practice needs to:

- be informed by current knowledge and thinking in reflective practice
- be practised at both a personal and group level

- incorporate input from others and actively seek out other sources of information and knowledge and check/compare/benchmark this with what the individual and or group already know or think they know
- be shared (at least in part) with others when it is being used as part of professional development
- recorded and shared with others (at least in part) for the purposes of exposing the reflections to the light of day

With these points in view, it is reiterated that reflective practice (in work based learning) operates on multiple lines of tension between relevance and rigour; inside and outside; current state and future state; personal and professional. As such reflective practice plays a pivotal role in building organisation capability whilst encouraging expanded levels of professionalism in the individual student/ worker. As part of this process, the opportunities for work based learners to reference creative individuals as part of their own development means that work based learning can be a bridge not only between industry and structured learning but also to connect creative thinkers, across all disciplines and professions, with the world of contemporary business practice.

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