Chapter 7. Personal epistemologies and disciplinarity in the workplace: Implications for international students in higher education

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Abstract

Workplace experiences for international students undertaking higher education programs are important aspects of their university experience. This is because many of the programs in which they are enrolled are directed towards particular occupations. Nevertheless, these workplace experiences can be both engaging and daunting for all, but perhaps no more so than for international students, who may be unfamiliar with Australian workplace mores and practices, and therefore less able to understand and negotiate with them than their domestic counterparts. Not only do international students have to become familiar with the requirements of their selected profession but also need to understand and negotiate unfamiliar cultural environments. These students often have to engage in complex and demanding learning processes when engaging in work placements, perhaps more so than their domestic peers. Because of these discipline-based and workplace environmental challenges, it is necessary for these students and their mentors or supervisors to try and effectively mediate their participation and learning in the work placements. If all of those involved in work placements are aware of these factors, then the experiences and outcomes should potentially be more beneficial for all parties (i.e., students, supervisors, university staff, and workplaces). These issues are explored in this chapter through the notions of disciplinarity, which attends to the epistemological nuances of particular study or knowledge areas and how students develop skills as disciplinary professionals. With a focus on international students, the elaborations of these issues are explored through consideration of interculturalisation and how both the experiences and experiencing of international students impacts upon the success of their work placements. Using these concepts as explanatory bases stands to permit the illumination and elaboration of the complexity of factors and processes occurring as these students learn about, and participate in, their selected professional discipline and the cultural environment of its practice.

International students and work placements

The social work degree program prided itself in being highly applied. In the second week of the program, the students engaged in their first practicum within a social welfare agency. This was the first of a series of work placements across the degree program that aimed to provide experiences of social work and integrate these experiences into what was taught in the university setting as a central element of its educational design. However, this design created particular challenges for international students. Many of these students had only arrived in Australia the week prior to the program's commencement. Many of these students also came from countries that did not have a social welfare system, or social workers. They were largely uninformed about what social workers do, for what purposes and how they went about their work. Hence, there were conflicts between the design of this program and these students' readiness to engage effectively in these work placements that commenced within two weeks of the program's commencement. (Billett, 2015)

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Whilst potentially rewarding, undertaking higher education in another country can also be both daunting and confronting for many international students. As we can see in the above vignette students may not only arrive in a new country, experience a challenging university context, but are also required to undertake a work placement soon after this arrival. These feelings of being overwhelmed can be particularly accentuated during the workplace placement components which are increasingly becoming a common and essential element of these students' higher education programs (Barton, Hartwig, & Cain, 2015). Findings from inquiries into work integrated learning or work experience in higher education often identify issues that international students may face during their work placements. These issues are often attributed to the international student's personal dispositions and capabilities (Roberts, Chou, & Ching, 2010) and how the range of practices they need to exercise to contribute to the success of the work placement lead to a smooth transition into the workforce (Knoch, May, Macqueen, Pill, & Storch, 2016). What is less understood, however, is how the disciplinary aspects of the selected occupation influence international students' experiences. Also not fully appreciated is how their personal epistemologies, abilities and readiness to engage in, and effectively learn in, the workplace setting are applied. These capacities are shaped by any previous work experience they may have had prior to arriving in a new country and its direct relevance.

This chapter seeks to advance understandings about how international students come to experience and learn through their work placements. It does so through discussing the propositions that international students' personal, social and cultural histories or *experiences* potentially enable or inhibit workplace success. It also explores the notion of *experiencing* and the importance of all involved in the provision of workplace experiences. It is necessary that all stakeholders are open and honest and have an overt awareness of difference. This is critical in any interaction within the workplace for success. It progresses this case by firstly proposing the centrality of learners' epistemologies in how they come to engage with what they experience and come to know, do and value. Then, the demands of discipline and the challenges of interculturalisation are discussed to elaborate the range of factors that shape both what experiences are provided in both educational and work settings, and how international students might come to engage with and learn them. Hence, an enduring and salient point made in advancing the case made across this chapter is to consider both the social context of what afforded these students and how they came to engage with those affordances

Epistemologies, disciplinarity and interculturalisation

In considering international students' experience during work placements, it is necessary to explore the following key terms: epistemology, including personal epistemology, disciplinarity and interculturalisation.

Epistemology and personal epistemologies

At its most inclusive conception; epistemology refers to the nature and origins of knowledge. It concerns how knowledge is derived, but also how it should be tested and validated. Even though epistemology is about how people acquire and curate their own personal knowledge-base, it is also concerned how this knowledge can work to limit human understanding and practices. Understanding how individual's personal epistemologies impact on and within workplace contexts is critical in developing, enacting and evaluating effective models of educational practice (Barton, 2015). According to Billett (2009) personal epistemologies are:

> … individuals' ways of knowing and acting arising from their capacities, earlier experiences, and ongoing negotiations … that together shape how they engage with and learn through work activities and interactions (p. 211).

In essence, they comprise what individuals know, can do and value which then directs how they think, act and learn. In consideration of engaging in intentional educational experiences, the epistemologies elaborate what has long been referred to within educational science as *readiness*: having the capacities to engage effectively and learn from what is experienced (Jollands, Jolly, & Molyneaux, 2012; Billett, 2015). So, taking the vignette provided at the beginning of this chapter, the following information could be speculated. Coming from countries without or with minimal social welfare provisions, the international students participating in this program would likely lack basic premises of the role of social work, the kinds of precepts under which it is enacted and the kinds of program, approaches, policies that drive a social welfare provision and the scope of social work (Harrison & Ip, 2013). Hence, their language skills, the ability to comprehend and respond appropriately might not be well-aligned to crucial aspects of this work in a particular cultural context (Huang, 2013). In addition, they might be unaware of the kinds of tasks that would need to be undertaken, including direct interactions and negotiations with clients who may be distressed, depressed or unwell and the kinds of difficulties they face, and the kinds of turmoil that render them in need of social welfare and other forms of support (Coffey, Samuel, Collins, & Morris, 2012). So, in these ways they lack a level of readiness that those growing up in a welfare state would know about.

Yet, another aspect of the readiness is the intentionality and interest of these students. Some of these international students had selected the social work degree on the basis of its relatively low entry requirements. Their selection of this program was based on what they could gain admittance to, and that they did not have any interest in learning to be or practice as a social worker or as Kelleher, Fitzgerald and Hegarty's (2016) also found in nursing. Indeed, possibly for some of these students, their goal is to secure a degree, regardless of its focus, principally as a means to accrue points to apply for Australian residency. Hence, their interests and intentionalities are not necessarily directed towards the program in which they are enrolled, but rather as a means to an end. Of course, these are not conditions that all or only international students face. Many domestic students are not wholly informed about the occupations in which they engage. There is no guarantee that domestic students would have adequate knowledge of what social work or nursing is about or have understanding about the role. This situation is particularly likely if these students have not had any contact with the social welfare system and social workers. But, the complexity of factors that international students face in engaging in practicums is likely to be of a qualitatively different kind than their domestic counterparts (McDermott-Levy, Cantrell, & Reynolds, 2014). A particular quality that may be lacking with these students is their ability to be agentic. That is, their ability to be active in engaging in activities and directing their interactions and learning guided by goals to become competent in their work-related learning (Barton et al., 2015; Billett, 2009). It is in these ways that their personal epistemologies may not be well-placed to assist them to effectively engage in and learn during their practicums, including being able to make connections and integrate what they have learnt into their course.

To ensure productive engagement in work placement components of higher education programs, it is necessary for students to be able to *think on their feet,* have a *hands-on* approach to solving problems and also to be able to negotiate with others within the workplace context. In addition, students need to be receptive to critical feedback from their mentors in the workplace in relation to how to improve their practice—often involving both

professional and personal introspection, rehearsal and conscious monitoring. Unless students have strong personal epistemological intents these skills and attributes are less likely to be present and, therefore, impact negatively on work placement success (see Chapter 1 also).

Disciplinarity

Epistemology is related to disciplinarity as it both concerns knowledge and the adaptation of this knowledge in specific situations of practice. Minati and Collen (1997) define disciplinarity as "phases or forms of human activity to seek, develop, and produce knowledge" (as cited in Collen, 2002, p. 285). Accepting that occupations are examples of distinct disciplinary areas that have specific approaches—epistemologies—to building knowledge and associated literacies it is important for the learning of, and teaching that, disciplinarity (Anderson & Valente, 2002; Freebody, Chan, & Barton, 2013; Freebody, Maton, & Martin, 2008; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2006). Such distinctions mean that teaching strategies, assessment practices, and even socialisation into the profession, may differ across disciplines (Barton & Ryan, 2013). In fact, Davies and Devlin (2007, p. 1) state that disciplines are "embodied in collections of like-minded people, each with their own codes of conduct, sets of values, and distinctive intellectual tasks" (p. 109). For instance, taking the above example further, there are particular disciplinary mores and practices that underpin the conduct of occupations, such as social work and nursing. This could include an orientation to caring and placing the interests of the clients as being central to social work and nursing practice. Or perhaps to the extent that duty of care to clients/patients might lead to contestation with workplace policies and practices. The learning of such disciplinarities likely arises through the kinds of activities that come from engaging with clients ascertaining their circumstances and identifying pathways for them. Balancing needs and responses of these kinds are likely to be part of the disciplinarity of social work and nursing, to name just two.

Similarly, Barton (2015) explored the disciplinarity present in undergraduate and post-graduate teacher education students' experience in the area of music. Students were preparing for their first practicum in schools and, as such, developed personal philosophies—epistemological beliefs (Patrick & Pintrich, 2001) about the teaching of music. Many of these students commented on their previous learning experiences in music and how these impacted on their perceptions as nascent teacher. Also, the discipline of music itself greatly impacted on how these students conceptualised their approaches to learning and teaching music. For example, various music education philosophies or methods distinctly influenced how the students considered aspects of those experiences, such as: inclusivity and access, the theory-praxis relationship, cultural and social meanings inherent in music making and diversity. One student commented on how their own experiences working in an Australian Indigenous community had directly influenced the ways in which they taught music in mainstream classes including: greater reliance on aural/oral processes, more collaborative approaches to composition and performance and acknowledging the need to invite community members into the school context to share knowledge and understanding of music learning and teaching.

Newton, Pront and Giles (2016) explored experiences of international students and their supervisors in a clinical nursing context. The study found that a number of areas were heightened in relation to the supervision of international students, particularly in terms of effective nursing dispositional capacities. These included: sense of responsibility, additional pastoral care challenges, considerable time investments, communication challenges and cultural differences between teaching and learning styles. A number of themes were also identified including role preparation for both supervisors and international students within workplaces that was heavily accentuated towards the care of patients.

In this way, personal epistemologies are held to be central to students' learning and there may well be a broader and more diverse base of those epistemologies amongst international students that shapes their readiness to engage in higher education, and the workplace-based components of their courses.

Like the personal epistemologies discussed above, there are a set of concerns for international students associated with securing such disciplinarities. Here, the concept of interculturalisation is used to elaborate the particular processes faced by international students.

Interculturalisation

In understanding how international students' previous experiences, knowledge and learning impacts on their ability to engage in activities and interaction in their work placements, it is important to note cultural difference. The notion of interculturalisation has been identified as an approach that "understands others first, yourself second, and in a truly reflective nature, the introspective analysis of teaching and learning" (Hunter, Pearson, & Gutiérrez, 2015, p. i). For instance, Howells, Barton and Westerveld (2016) explored how culture impacted on post-graduate Speech Pathology students during their clinical placement. Findings from this study showed that students had a high interest in working with people from culturally and linguistically-diverse backgrounds, but acknowledged their limited understanding in this area. Some of the speech pathology students were, however, from diverse backgrounds themselves and had a heightened awareness of their cultural identities, stereotypes or biases (i.e., preferences), yet exercised their intentionalities in not allowing these perceptions to impact on the provision of effective Speech Language Pathology (SLP) services for their paediatric clients and their families. An intercultural approach was, therefore. evident as these students were emerging as culturally competent practitioners (Howells et al., 2016, p. 267). Ultimately, this study showed that it is increasingly important for SLP students in particular, to meet their client's needs by having a greater understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity in placement contexts. Without acknowledging interculturalisation as a critical component of these work placements, effective SLP practices would be at risk.

As illustrated above, interculturalisation also encompasses how individuals consciously or unconsciously utilise culturally-derived preferences towards others, which have often been the product of previous experience. Such preferences may be deployed uncritically as they have been appropriated by individuals as have viability for them. So, for example, an international student from a Confucian heritage country where self-sufficiency is accepted might view recipients of social welfare as being unworthy or to be admonished for their lack of efforts or efforts to be self-sufficient. Equally, these students' familiarity with filial piety (i.e., respect for older people) may lead to difficulties in dealing with older clients. Conversely, students from Scandinavian countries might struggle with the level and kinds of social welfare provided in other countries as being insufficient or unsubstantial against what they know and expect. They might question efforts that are intended to move clients off of social support as quickly as possible. An intercultural approach to international students and work placement requires both students and mentors to be aware of the diverse range of ways that people bring what they know, can do and value (i.e., their personal epistemologies) when engaging in activities and interactions in workplace setting and work placements. This awareness requires an openness to prospects of difference in interpretations, understandings and actions founded on a tolerance for other beliefs, background and experiences than their own.

Hunter et al. (2015) note a method of exercising this tolerance and openness can be understood through a process of *transcending* one cultural system for another. That is, when others are able to consider a phenomenon from a different perspective consciously then transformational practice is more likely. Further, they acknowledge the need for people to be cultural agents (i.e., meaning) by learning about other's "shared knowledge, values, and behaviours that connect us" (p. 1), or possible serve to divide us. Yet, this process is as much to be exercised by students as their teachers or workplace mentors. Positive and agentic engagement is, therefore, necessary for intercultural exchanges to be successful amongst international students, their mentors and others participating in the provision of practicum experiences.

Yet, there is also a need to be reasonable and realistic about the ease by which embedded values and precepts that are the product of earlier experiences (i.e., enculturalisation) can likely be changed. A group of refugee migrants claimed that their teachers in a vocational college did not understand the traumatic experiences they had encountered in Africa that had caused them to flee the country of their birth and become refugees (Onsando & Billett, 2009). Whilst such teachers might be informed about the needs of their students, it is possibly unreasonable and improbable to expect these teachers to truly understand the students' past experiences. This would impact on the ways in which the teachers could address how the students come to engage with their studies and how their struggles may not be fully addressed.

The point here is that empathy and reciprocity is likely to be helpful, but ultimately, insufficient on the part of higher education teachers, workplace mentors, but also reciprocity and engagement on the part of the students. An intercultural approach involves exchanges, negotiation, and a complete openness to view the world differently than to what people are most familiar.

In this way, the concept of interculturalisation is something that is central to the experience of international students as they seek to make sense of what they experience in their host country, albeit in diverse ways for these learners. It positions the provision of higher education as being more than one that dispenses values, cultural values in ways that may not always be consistent with students; socially and culturally-derived sentiments, values and preferences. When authentic intercultural understanding is apparent in a relationship then the potential for positive experiences and experiencing are more likely for all involved in such an exchange (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001).

Experiences and Experiencing

Prior to considering educational implications of the explanatory concepts advanced above, it is helpful to place centre-stage two further concepts and the relationships between them that can assist considerations of curriculum, pedagogies and student engagement in seeking to enhance and promote the educational worth of international students engaging in work placements. These two concepts are experiences and experiencing. What has been proposed above is that sets of experiences are provided for students, in both educational and in work settings. Yet, as has been proposed more than the provision of experiences, ultimately the educational worth of both the intended and unintended experiences in educational and workplace settings are what students make of them. That is, how they construe and construct knowledge from these experiences: the process of experiencing. As with so much that has been advanced in the sections above, there is an inevitable duality between the provision of experiences and how students come to experience them. That duality means seeking to

understand the relations between the experiences provided and how it will be experienced by international students.

A long-standing maxim for education is that what is provided for students is nothing more than an invitation to change. What is most important is how students come to engage with that invitation. Hence, it is important to consider the bases by which students might come to engage with what is afforded them. For instance, in one project, information technology students were provided with work experiences as part of their course. However, the university hosting the students had great difficulty getting quality placements for international students. So, whilst their domestic peers went to work in software companies, IT technology labs, the university could only find placements for these international students in not-for-profit organisations such as charities and schools. Whilst their domestic counterparts were engaged with high-end technologies, emerging processes and new applications, the international students' experience was restricted to basic maintenance of often outdated computers and assisting their users. On the one hand, the experiences provided for the two groups of students were quite distinct in terms of what is likely to be learnt from them. On the other hand, how these students came to experience what is provided for them would only add to that distinction, particularly when opportunities arose to realise the difference in the experiences. Doubtless, the international students will come to realise they were being positioned in terms of jobs, both within the university as well as within Australian society.

Ultimately, it is students' experiencing of what is provided for them that is central to their learning. The quality of that experiencing, and the degree by which students are likely to engage effort-fully with that process is central to what and how they will learn. Therefore, as consideration is given to educational implications of personal epistemologies, disciplinarity and interculturalisation, it is helpful to engage with this duality of experience and experiencing as an organising principle.

Implications for international students and work placement

Having set out some conceptual premises to understand students' engagement in work placements and the integration of those experiences within their higher education studies, it is necessary now to consider how the educational worth of these experiences can be promoted and extended. The authors' current university for example, has a *Good Practice Guide* (Barker & Griffith Institute of Higher Education, 2011) related to internationalising the curriculum and interculturalisation and offers a range of strategies to improve an intercultural perspective in both teaching and learning. It also hosts the generation of a range of curriculum and pedagogic practices about how experiences in tertiary education and work settings might be effectively enacted to secure the optimum educational worth of these experiences (Billett, 2011). The following section draws upon the intentions of these guides in elaborating the kinds of curriculum and pedagogic practices that might be helpful, and also how the engagement of international students, their mentors and other stakeholders involved in the work placement process might be ordered and promoted.

Curriculum considerations

Curriculum, as discussed here, refers to a dynamic process rather than a static document (e.g., a syllabus) or policy (e.g., a set of content) (Ewing, 2012; Marsh, 2009; Marsh & Willis, 2003), in which students play a key part. Indeed, for Angelo (2002), effective curriculum needs to be learner-centred. He states that:

> Well-designed learner-centred curriculum is one that helps all willing and able students achieve and demonstrate the expected standard of learning more effectively, efficiently and successfully than they could on their own (p. 110).

Hence, considerations of the intended curriculum (i.e., what is supposed to be learnt) as well as how it is enacted include: a learner-centred approach that emphasises and acknowledges students' needs and their own personal experiences and experiencing. Interestingly, a scanning and mapping exercise, for the *Work placement for International Student Programs* or WISP project, of all curriculum documents related to work placement across six university sites in Australia, found that there was limited acknowledgement of potentially rich cultural exchanges during work placement components of study across a range of disciplinary areas. This project comprised a range of data collected via interviews, focus groups, artefacts and a large scale survey involving six universities and across a number of disciplinary areas including Business, Education, Engineering, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Psychology and Speech Pathology. In the WISP project, it was found that, unless intercultural perspectives are embedded in what we do then it is unlikely that what might be taken as socially-authentic practices will occur. The first consideration is the kind of educational philosophies that embrace diversity, as well as understanding the reciprocal exchanges required in ensuring success for international students during work placements.

To impact curriculum procedures positively, via an international or intercultural perspective, it is necessary to explore a number of levels of enactments. These include at the university, program, course and classroom levels. The kinds of recommendations made in the *Good Practice Guide* (Barker & GIHE, 2011) could be at the core of an internationalisation strategy that requires effective engagement by staff and students as well as industry partners if these practices are to be embedded in daily work.

Firstly, higher education institutions need to make a strong commitment to making a difference to, and having a positive impact on, the international student experience—not just because they are fee paying. At the broader institutional level, universities need to consider specific needs of international students; and provide quality services for support, particularly when students are undertaking work placement, and then market responsibly. This includes acknowledging international students' readiness with admission and orientation processes.

At the program level, it is important for leadership teams including program directors or coordinators to view programs in terms of their intents (i.e., aims, goals and objectives) and also the kinds of experiences being provided to realise those goals and identify where international perspectives and considerations are most appropriate throughout the program moving towards an intention to embed appropriate experiences across each course. This action can support richer learning experiences by working from a surface to a deep level of engagement (Peck, Chiang, & BrckaLorenz, 2015). If students perceive approaches to inclusion as being tokenistic then they are less likely to engage with learning and evidence suggests students will carry out tasks for assessment purposes only (Entwistle & Peterson, 2004; Lublin, 2003).

At the course level, convenors might need also to exercise their educational discretion to accommodate international perspectives through considering the following aspects of the courses: content and design, materials and tools, learning and teaching activities, classroom practices, assessment, evaluation and review and internal accreditation. As course delivery is the point of engagement between what is intended to be learnt and the students' participation in learning, it is critical that higher educators understand practices associated with

intercultural education. The exercise of these capacities may well need to occur at the course level for courses directly related to workplace experience whereby discipline experts highlight workplace practices that benefit from international perspectives. For instance, because of cultural preferences, nurses need to be aware that for some patients using a pillow to rest a patient's head on that has previously been used to near their feet is culturally insensitive. So, even though hospitals catering for a Pacifica and Islander people have colour-coded pillows, unless a content expert makes students' aware of this sensitivity and the coding of the pillows, they inadvertently cause offence in the workplace.

In relation to courses that include or are a complete workplace learning experience, intercultural perspectives can be critical in ensuring success in those experiences for reasons advanced above. The WISP project, for example, highlighted a number of instances where an enhanced awareness of cultural difference, and/or cultural sensitivities and insights, the more likely the successful outcome. This was particularly important in regard to students working with industry mentors and the kinds of communication amongst university staff, international students and work placement staff, because it is the collective interactions amongst them that will mediate understandings, expectations and ways of proceeding.

Pedagogic considerations

As stated previously, elements of the intended curriculum, including program and course learning outcomes, content and materials in specific disciplinary domains will only be optimised if appropriate support for or mediation of students' learning is enacted. A central element of an appropriate enactment is the use of appropriate approaches to education and particular kinds of pedagogies. For instance, many educators refer to productive pedagogies or what Shulman refers to as signature pedagogies (2005). The *Good Practice Guide* (Barker & GIHE, 2011) offers a range of teaching and learning strategies that foster and ensure intercultural understanding and acceptance.

These include problem-based learning that constitutes an international case study; having students critically reflect on international or intercultural matters; highlighting the ideologies behind certain disciplines and cultural elements of the discipline; exploring the impact of culture on the development of disciplinary methods; and undertaking a work placement in a variety of contexts (Barker & GIHE, 2011, pp. 12–13).

Classroom or pedagogical practices have also been provided. Similarly, a set of pedagogic practices for integrating higher education students' experiences workplace settings were identified through 20 studies across a range of occupational domains. These pedagogic practices were categorised into those that stand to be particularly productive before students engage in workplace experiences, during them and then after their completion (Billett, 2015). At the core of these practices are grounded strategies that have been identified, trailed and also selected on the basis that they can be undertaken as part of their usual teaching practices. Such strategies can address diversity and inclusion when international students are working to reconcile their experiences across their study programs and workplace experiences.

Of course, more broadly applicable approaches such as demonstrating mutual respect through interculturally-competent interactions with students may be essential in fostering and practising effective and productive pedagogies. Yet, and as foreshadowed earlier, beyond the provision of experiences as in the intended and enacted curriculum alone are insufficient, as it will be the agency students exercise when engaging with what is afforded them in terms of experiences that will ultimately shape how and what they learn. That is, their processes of

experiencing are essential and crucial. However, it would be educationally negligent not to find ways of supporting and guiding their engagement. Therefore, encouraging students to participate fully and engage effort-fully in their learning processes is also a consideration for higher education and the role that falls to its teachers.

Ways of engaging students and their mentors

Earlier in this chapter, reference was made to students' personal epistemologies, their role in engaging in intentional learning activities: the process of experiencing and learning through experiences provided. Given that the kinds of learning aimed to be achieved through higher education are usually a product of effortful engagement, deliberation, critical appraisal and comparative analyses. None of these outcomes are likely to arise without student engagement. So, it is important to find ways of engaging international students with the course content and experiences afforded by both the university and workplace-based components of their course. As noted in the opening vignette, the international social work students did not have the same kind of motivations and bases for engagement as students with long-standing interest in social work, for instance. In that particular circumstance, the teachers organised a day and a half orientation for students so that they would understand the social welfare system, the kinds of tasks that social workers undertake and also the kinds of roles that they need to perform. In this instance, it was to prepare naive learners about how they would come to engage in work settings were the occupation they have selected to learn is being enacted. All this points to the need for specific educational interventions to assist students to engage productively in learning experiences for which they may not be ready. Indeed, a key set of findings from the study identified a range of pedagogic practices that could be enacted to assist higher education students in being prepared for, and engaging effectively with the work experiences. The lessons here, although not specifically intended for international students likely have applicability to the student cohort.

Beyond preparing students for their work experiences, the findings suggest students may require support during those experiences to maximise their engagement, and promote productive learning. The findings also consistently suggest that the provision of guidance and support may be required after students have completed their workplace experiences. This would allow students to more effectively consider, share and otherwise optimise the outcomes of their workplace experiences. As a result of these considerations across the projects some key pedagogic practices were identified in each of these three moments (i.e., before, during and after work experiences). It would seem that educational practices have fairly direct applicability for effectively engaging international students in work experiences and also in optimising the learning from them.

In overview, these pedagogic practices are as follows.

1. Prior to the workplace experience, it is helpful to:

- establish bases for experiences in work settings, including developing or identifying capacities in workplaces (i.e., practice-based curriculum, interactions);

- clarify expectations about purposes, support, responsibilities etc. (i.e., goals for learning);

- inform about purposes, roles, and expectations of different parties (e.g., advance organisers);

- prepare students as agentic learners (i.e., develop their personal epistemologies)—including the importance of observations, interactions, and activities through which they learn;

- develop the procedural capacities required for practice; and

- prepare students for contestations (e.g., being advised to forget everything learnt at university) (Billett, 2015).

2. During workplace experiences, it is helpful for there to be:

- direct guidance by more experienced practitioners (i.e., proximal guidance);

- sequencing and combinations of activities (i.e., learning curriculum, practice-based curriculum);

- active engagement in pedagogically rich work activities or interactions (e.g., handovers);

- effective peer interactions (i.e., collaborative learning); and

- active and purposeful engagement by learners in workplace settings. (Billett, 2015).

3. After the workplace experiences, it is helpful to:

- facilitate the sharing and drawing out of experiences (i.e., articulating and comparing—commonalities and distinctiveness, e.g., canonical and situational requirements for practice);

- explicitly make links to what is taught (learnt) in the academy and what is experienced in practice settings;

- emphasise the agentic and selective qualities of learning through practice (i.e., personal epistemologies); and

- generate critical perspectives on work and learning processes in students (Billett, 2015).

All of what is proposed here is quite consistent with what was advanced in Chapter 1 of this volume which explores a model of effective educational practice. In this way, it accounted for the kinds of experiences that will confront learners, including societal mores, practices and sentiments, particular kinds of activities from which learning arises, and also how students come to engage with and learn through those experiences. Of significance here is the influence of the discipline in which the international student is immersed in for work placement components of study. Equally important though, is their own personal epistemologies—that is, their own personal and professional experiences prior to undertaking study in another country as well as once they arrive—upon this process and collaboration. For teachers in higher education, the lessons here are quite explicit. Without an openness to accept the confluence of experiences and experiencing that these students will encounter it will be difficult for them to provide effective experiences for students. This means being open to the kinds of pedagogic practices and educational processes that are listed above and

not be limited to the didactic such as oral presentation, texts or electronic formats. Essentially, it comes down to placing the students at the core of any educational interactions, which should always be the case.

Perhaps a starting point for any educational experience is understanding what is intended from the perspective of the learner. Whilst it is possible to generate aims, goals and objectives for educational provisions remote from the circumstances of practice and without knowing the students involved, it is a perilous educational project to proceed without accounting for the learners' readiness, which includes their interests, capacities, concerns and intentionalities. Then, the concern is to accommodate such readiness as directed towards the intended educational outcomes. Of course, programs can be delivered in the absence of understanding such readiness. However, the delivery of programs does not in itself guarantee the quality of experiencing and the kinds of outcomes intended. With the growing practice of international students commencing study in another country set to rise across the globe (Garrett, 2014), as well as the fact that many international students desire workplace experiences then engaging all stakeholders, including the students, being opened to a broad range of educational goals, and extending a consideration of curriculum and pedagogy may well be required.

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