

# The Organisational & Personal Impacts of a Work-Based Learning & Research Programme in Australia

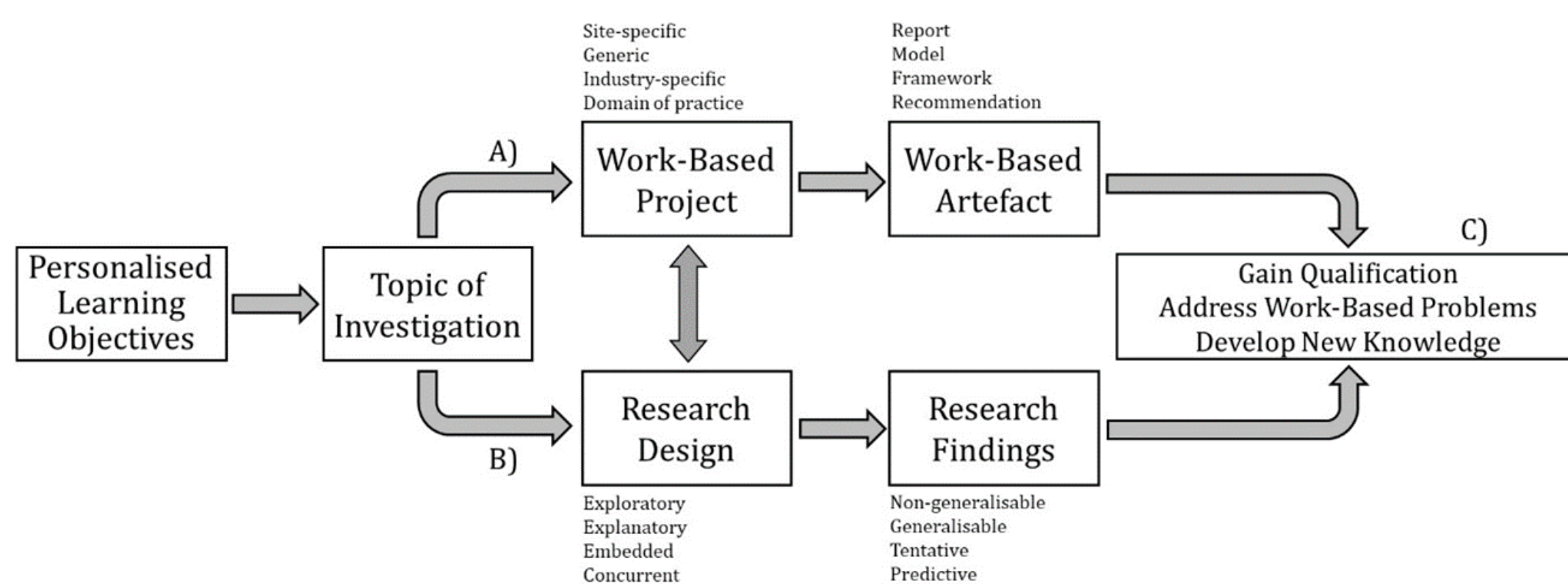
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## Aim of the Research

The premise of this work-based learning (WBL) research stems from the following assumption: the most authentic learning is learning by doing and the relationship between the professional, the world in which they work, and their learning from, through and at work, enhances Higher Education's potential impact on organisations and society. Secondly, the translation of this premise as grounded in Work-Based Learning pedagogy as a working education model of knowledge, learning and research, provides a mean-

## Description of the Professional Studies Programme

The two Professional Studies qualifications are the product of parallel streams of work-based inquiry: A) a work-based project; and B) a research project. Based on personalised learning objectives and a topic of investigation, stream A) is carried out in a specific work environment of relevance to any 'type of work'. The work-based project results in the production of an artefact, which can for example, project or technical reports, protocols, a model or framework, or a policy recommendation.



The second stream B) relates to the research project designed to maximise the higher education learning of the student and typically uses a mixed methods research design. These designs may include including exploratory, explanatory, embedded, or concurrent research typical of most scientifically guided research. It is the implementation of these two streams of work-based learning and research, built upon a foundation of personalised learning, which characterise Professional Studies HDR degrees and together form the basis upon which C), the practitioner, gains the MPSR or DPRS qualification, addresses a work-related problem, and develops original research to enhance collective knowledge.

## Holistic Perspective of the impact of Professional Studies WBL projects

The model has been described in research published in *Advances in Educational Marketing, Administration, and Leadership (AEMAL)*; *Postgraduate education in higher education*; *Journal of Work-Applied Management*; *Journal of E-Skills and Lifelong Learning*; *Reflective Practice and Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*.

It describes the "Triple-Dividend" of work-based learning in Higher Education with defensible evidence illustrating three contributions (and resultant individual, organisational, knowledge and social impacts):

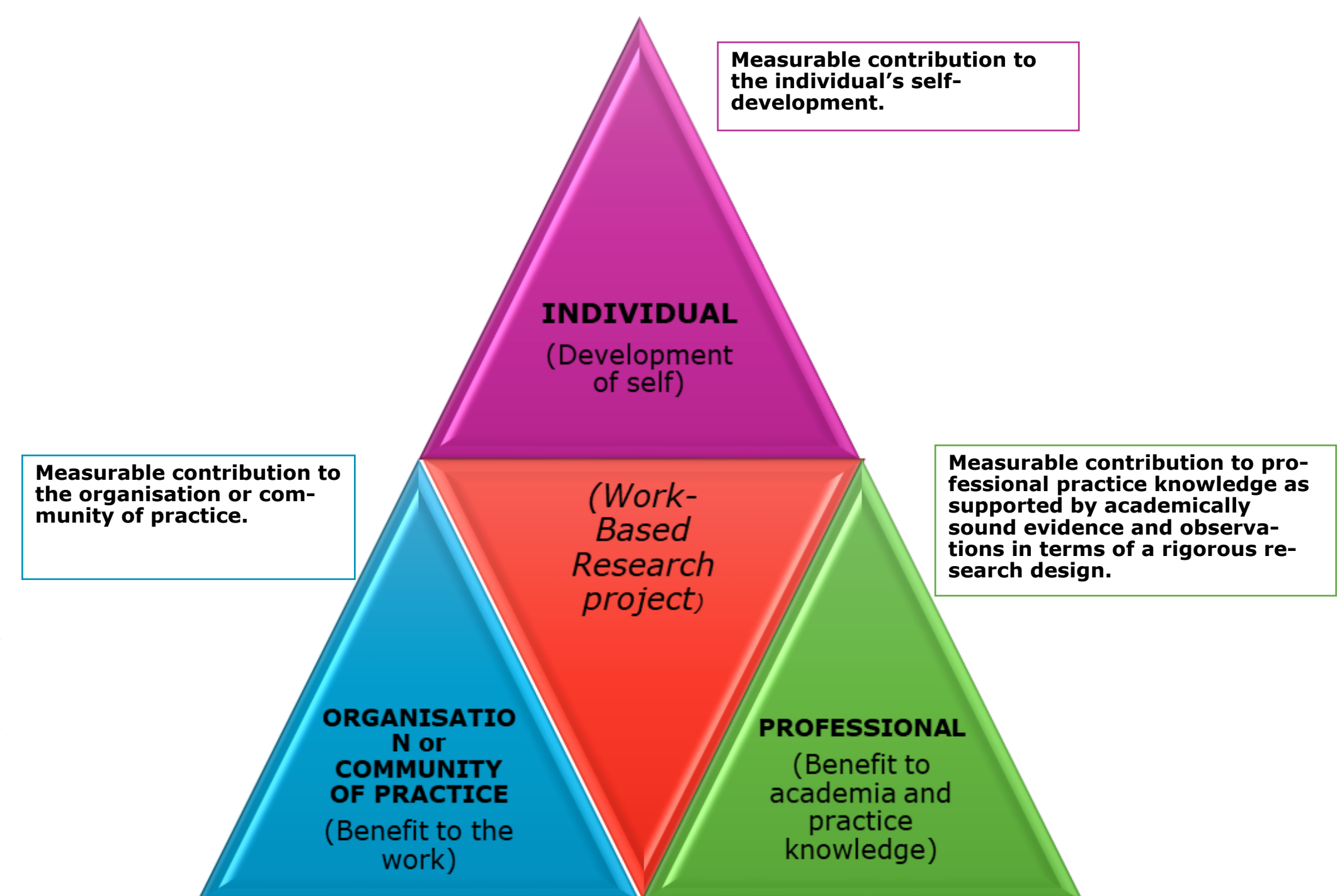
- ⇒ Contribution to self-development (professional and personal)
- ⇒ Contributions to organisation or community of practice
- ⇒ Contribution to knowledge (professional practice)

## The evidence

The evidence of these contributions are measured in terms of:

- 1) The extent to which personal learning objectives are met at the Australian Qualification Framework.
- 2) The extent to which the purpose and objectives of the work-based project has been achieved.
- 3) The external examination / peer review of student academic work.

ingful opportunity for Higher Education in fulfilling its mission. Application of the pedagogy is said to not only enhance professional practice and contribute to academic and organisational knowledge, but also achieve Higher Education aspirations in terms of impact and engagement. This research reports on the organisational and personal outcomes of a work-based learning higher degree by research (HDR) programme at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia, called Professional Studies.



## Organisational and Personal Impacts

To illustrate the organisational and professional practice impact, we present findings from cases of graduates and leaders from policing and emergency services in Queensland, Australia as examples.

According to a Queensland Police Service Senior Sergeant, the research he conducted under the auspices of the Professional Studies programme: "a) delivered pioneering analysis and assessment of a unique crime class; b) made 16 recommendations to address crime reduction, data quality, and enhanced investigative techniques; c) improved heavy equipment recovery and industry partnerships; and d) delivered the QPS strategic goal of 'working in partnership with the community to stop crime'. In these and other ways it can be said the policing work-based learning ecosystem achieved its learner-centric goals while fulfilling its mission of social responsibility and justice. —SF

Organisationally the impact has been recognised at senior levels with both civil service departments.

"The gift of education and knowing the importance of research in a large public service institution like the Queensland Police Service (QPS) allows practice to be informed by theory. Complex problems will not be solved without practical scholarship, and new theory cannot be developed without testing what ideas have emerged from solving complex problems. Together we, in this unique collaboration, can build a more capable public service as a result our joint commitment to learning. The collaboration between the QPS and University of Southern Queensland is testimony to this joint commitment to valuable co-creation of knowledge and human capability."

Deputy Commissioner, Queensland Police Service  
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and the University of Southern Queensland develop in their staff "vital skills and gain that vital knowledge in the fields of analytical, critical and creative thinking by creating a complex, contemporary body of knowledge across relevant disciplines to address capacity building, professional practice and promote innovation, and thereby learn how to assess and manage complex ethical concerns in the delivery of our vital services to the community of Queensland.

Deputy Commissioner, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services