

Book Review

Work Integrated Learning: A Guide to Effective Practice

Lesley Cooper, Janice Orrell, & Margaret Bowden (Authors).

Routledge, New York, NY

221 pages

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This book seeks to give a practical guide to managing a work integrated learning programme in the education sector. The authors saw the need for the book in response to an increasing demand for work integrated learning programmes as the educational sector aims to meet the ever-growing demand for more 'work-ready' graduates.

The book is divided into three sections; policy and framework; learning, teaching, assessment and supervision; and managing WIL. Each of the sections gives is comprehensively broken down to informative sub-section.

The first section explains the drive for WIL programmes and the increasing need educational institutions to produce 'work-ready' graduates, and goes on to explore the conceptual frameworks for WIL, explaining what WIL is (and is not) and having the dimensions clearly explained. Section two consists of four chapters exploring facets of the learning, teaching, assessing and supervising. This section goes into considerable depth of the learning aspects, explaining the unique characteristics and challenges that these present to WIL programmes. Section three finishes the book with an analysis of managing work integration, including management risk, legal requirements and responsibilities, and discusses difficult situations such as harassment, and injuries. The final chapter pulls the book together in a very structured way and describes the process by which work and learning should be integrated.

The book rightfully places emphasis on the learning aspects of WIL and distinguishes between WIL programmes and programmes that just offer mere 'work experience' where learning outcomes (if any) tend to be accidental rather than planned. It is important, especially given the renewed and rapid drive for WIL in Australia, that the focus on the learning aspects, and its integration into the broader curriculum, is not lost or overlooked but instead is focussed upon as a core component of our WIL programmes and essential to the development of our students into practising professionals. The book ends with giving two helpful appendices, one covering a framework for exploring skills and another giving a table of useful literature covering relevant possible risks and difficulties students could encounter in the workplace.

The book makes use of well-established literature from the co-op/WIL sector despite that the body of literature available to inform a book of this nature is limited, highlighting the need for significant further research drives in how learning and integration actually occurs. Nevertheless, the authors are to be commended to be able to pull a body of knowledge of this form together into one resource. The book has international appeal but appears to draw mostly from the Australian experience, reflecting the heightened focus on work integrated learning currently occurring in Australia. However, the Australian 'flavour' of the book does not present a limitation rather gives an encouraging sign of rapid WIL research and development that is currently occurring that part of the world.

I found the book to be very informative and personally was excited by the fact that the authors kept a strong focus on how learning could be structured into work placements. No doubt, this book will serve as a useful, informative, and practical resource for programme developers, WIL practitioners, and researchers.

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