

Chapter 3

Putting Industry Into WIL Teaching Praxis: Engaging Creative Industries for Lifelong Employability

Jeff Naqvi

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3857-6884>

RMIT University, Australia

ABSTRACT

A 2008 review identified the need for Australia to get more citizens into higher education. With this increase in participation, the student cohort began to diversify. Qualitative research showed that final-year students experienced anxiety and a lack of confidence towards their impending transition into professional practice. The WIL course in this case study encouraged students to view career management proactively, as more than generating professional sustenance, but to connect to individual values and working preferences. Students reported that the WIL course helped them gain confidence in their existing skillsets to approach the market. There is an evidence base that as graduates the 'lifelong' career management benefits of the course continue to be valued. Considerations for WIL praxis include earlier adoption of work-based learning, leverage internal stakeholders to understand the student cohort, and educating academics on assessment design to enhance students' opportunity to learn.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will situate a five-year WIL completed case study in the context of the Australian higher education and industry environment. The course provided generation Z and Y students from multiple academic disciplines an opportunity to calibrate the disciplinary skills acquired, and work with industry and academic practitioners to construct this into a marketable asset for employability.

The shift in assessment design reflected the diversity of student cohort and their programmes, drawing in valuable professional skills such as peer review. Multimedia activities devised from career manage-

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ment, marketing, and psychology disciplines taught the importance of students acquiring knowledge of professional workplaces, but also of themselves to make sense of the world around them.

As a higher education sector, where a good job is done connecting curriculum to learning outcomes, and a reasonable job of connecting learning outcomes to graduate outcomes, there seems a gap missing: directly connecting curriculum to graduate outcomes. This case study exemplifies one model of WIL which can bridge that gap.

This chapter will:

- explore the Australian higher education landscape, and its nexus with industry;
- apply education pedagogy to the situation facing generation Z and Y;
- describe real-life artefacts of creative WIL curriculum in action;
- distinguish the suitability of assessment types to enhance lifelong employability; and,
- discuss approaches to consider for WIL design and teaching praxis.

AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY TRAJECTORY 2010-2020

There are 43 universities in Australia, encompassing public, private, international and specialty institutions. Education is Australia's third-largest export (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency [TEQSA], 2019). The 'Bradley Review' of 2008, a wide-ranging review into Australia's higher education system, recommended an increase in participation in higher education targets on the basis of population growth alone being insufficient to meet the skills and education needs of a future workforce (Bradley, 2008). In 2011, Prime Minister, and former Education Minister, Julia Gillard introduced a demand-driven university funding model for all Australian tertiary education institutions in response to one of the Review's 46 recommendations. Government funding increased alongside enrolment numbers. The result saw 190,000 more university students nationally, over two years (McGowan, 2018).

Lured by the prospect of additional funding, universities amplified marketing efforts. Vocational providers formed alliances with universities to provide higher education 'pathways'; many universities created their own entry pathways in the form of 'colleges'; universities launched online-only degrees; and regional universities emerged, targeting those living outside major cities.

With this philosophy of the then-government, the diversity in student cohort changed significantly. This was also one of the Recommendations of the Bradley Review – to bolster growth in students amongst groups “disadvantaged by the circumstances of their birth” (Bradley, 2008, p. xi). Many new students were: Indigenous; of low socio-economic status; from regional and remote areas of Australia; or, simply known as ‘first in family’, denoting their entrance into higher education as the first instance in their family. Tertiary admission scores (“ATAR”) lowered for several programmes to increase intake (Robinson, 2018). This meant that the summative assessments in use across programmes in higher education were now being undertaken by a more diverse student cohort than, arguably, ever before.

In 2013, there was a change in national government and with it, a shift to a conservative policy ideology. This government introduced, in 2017, a ‘cap’ on university funding from government. The days of demand-driven funding were over, with future funding instead pegged to 2017 student levels for their institution. For the next two years, any increase in student numbers would not be accompanied by a commensurate increase from the government (Doyle, 2017).

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