

Chapter 8

Designing Work–Based Learning Approaches for Gen Y, Gen Z, and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

This chapter seeks to develop a greater understanding of work-based and work-integrated pedagogy through a case study of an integrated degree apprenticeship using the lens of Generation Y (Gen Y) and Generation Z (Gen Z). The success of the programme relates to the embedding of work-based principles that include the active engagement of apprentices, employers, and tutors. Findings from the case study demonstrate that the Gen Y and Gen Z characteristics can be used to identify and evaluate cohort influences and provide key indicators for future planning.

INTRODUCTION

Work-based learning in the United Kingdom (UK) is seen as a way to provide academic and experiential learning for individuals and cohorts who are based in the workplace for short periods of time or employed within established roles. The more specific aim of work-integrated learning is to provide a connectedness between academic and workplace learning (Lester & Bravenboer, 2016). Degree apprenticeships are work-integrated programmes of study that present disciplinary and occupational knowledge, skills, behaviours and values that can be applied to sector specific job roles. Recently, there has been an expansion of degree apprenticeships in the UK that support government policies for delivering sector skills and social mobility (Crawford-Lee & Moorwood, 2019).

This chapter explores how work-based pedagogies can be used to address the challenges of planning degree apprenticeships for current and new generations of learners, Generation Y (Gen Y) and Generation Z (Gen Z) and provides a case study of the BSc (Hons) Professional Practice in Business to Business Sales (B2B Sales) Degree Apprenticeship, located in the Business School at Middlesex University. The degree apprenticeship was developed for establishing business to business salespeople

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in large and small businesses throughout the UK. This programme is a collaborative partnership with a Consalia Ltd. (2020) that provides specialist sales education. Consalia is affiliated with the Association of Professional Sales (APS, 2020), the professional body connected to the apprenticeship, and has been a strong supporter of the campaign to professionalise sales in the UK.

There is a continuing need to redefine work-based and work-integrated learning to build on the legacy of practice and to innovate the pedagogy for younger cohorts. Middlesex University has been a leader in practice-based and work-based learning for many years but has increased its engagement with hybrid pedagogic concepts for degree apprenticeships (Nottingham, 2017). Revitalising work-based pedagogy at this University seeks to address the guiding principles for apprenticeships to deliver relevant learning outcomes for the workplace (QAA, 2018). Degree apprenticeships contain assessments relevant to attainment for sector qualification frameworks outside of the academy, generic and lifelong learning principles (Nottingham, 2019) sustain broader higher educational goals. Working with work-based students means considering separate sites of learning and application of learning within the rapidly changing context of the workplace. This is a somewhat different proposition than determining what learning and teaching strategies that work well for students in a purely campus-based experience.

BACKGROUND

Trends for Understanding Current Higher Education Practice

The field of work-based and work-integrated learning is a varied one for universities and educators, and generally comes into focus when government policies endorse the expansion of skills and economic growth tied to the needs of industry. Apprenticeships are the latest policy initiative in the UK to support work-integrated learning (Richard, 2012; BIS, 2013; Powel, 2020). Work-based studies apply experiential learning cycles within organisational settings, and generally include independent research as a capstone project (equivalent to a dissertation) for degree work. The curriculum design allows academic practitioners to develop practice-based units of study that promote learning from experience underpinned by reflection on practice that acts as a catalyst for change (Helyer, 2015).

The pedagogy associated with work-based learning in the UK became more prominent in the early 1990s as there was an increased need to develop higher education courses that responded to national and international adult and lifelong learning policies (Little & Brennan, 1996). Traditional practice-based areas of higher education such as education, health (nursing and allied professions) and engineering adapted a work-based learning pedagogy to include the greater use of the workplace setting. Policies for widening participation and world class skills (Leitch, 2006) led to a more expansive vision for providing vocationally oriented higher educational experiences to those based in the workplace.

Degree apprenticeships combine higher education with professionally recognised qualifications in a particular occupation and with the provision of 20% off-the-job training (DfE, 2019) which equates to approximately one study day a week for around forty-five weeks a year. Taking part in work-based learning while in employment allows students to demonstrate, with formative employer feedback, the knowledge, skills, behaviours and values from a validated degree programme and gain national professional qualifications. Apprenticeship standards assess apprentices on disciplinary/occupational knowledge and professional competences (Bravenboer & Lester, 2016). A classic feature of this type of work-based

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