Chapter 9
Examining Feedback Practices in WIL Subjects:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore feedback practices and support for feedback literacy development within subjects that feature work-integrated learning (WIL). WIL is growing in the tertiary education context as institutions face ongoing pressure to produce graduates that are 'work ready'. The extent to which feedback and feedback literacies are supported or transpire within WIL activities and subjects has yet to be examined. This study aims to identify current practices of feedback, particularly Gen Z students' perceptions of their feedback development, in subjects that support WIL experiences. This study was conducted as a case study within the Bachelor of Primary Education Degree at an Australian University. Thirty-four students participated in focus groups and responded to questions regarding the role and quality of feedback and feedback literacy development. Findings reveal that when students perceive activities and assessments are linked directly to their teaching (discipline) practice, that is their future careers, they are more inclined to value the feedback.

INTRODUCTION

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is an increasingly important part of tertiary education (Orrell et al., 2010; Stirling et al., 2016; Yorke & Knight, 2006). With pressure on universities in Australia to produce 'work ready' graduates, institutional focus has shifted towards the development of employability skills (Yorke & Knight, 2006). One way to prepare students for the workplace and close the gap between theory and practice is through participation in WIL (Orrell, et al., 2010). While there are a range of definitions for WIL that may vary between institutions, broadly WIL is described as an umbrella concept for pedagogical strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within curriculum (Patrick et al., 2009). It can take place in workplaces or through non-placement WIL experiences (Dean et al., 2020), such as those in virtual or educational settings. It includes a range of activities such as internships, project work, simulations and technology-mediated WIL (Patrick et al., 2009).

In Australia, pre-service teacher education students experience a range of WIL activities across their degree. A major part of qualifying for the degree involves the submission of assessments that are aligned with WIL experiences. Despite assessment being a significant part of the undergraduate degree, and a core practice for pre-service teachers upon graduation, there is little research on how pre-service teachers are supported through assessment and feedback practices (Grainger, 2020). While there is evidence of a need for further research into both feedback design and teaching students how to utilise feedback to their advantage in learning (Grainger, 2020; Winstone & Carless, 2019), this study was interested in exploring how students articulated their perception of feedback and how they made sense of their feedback for future learning opportunities.

The role of feedback is crucial to the teaching and learning process, with literature experiencing exponential growth supporting the paradigm shift from feedback as information, towards feedback as involving dispositions of students, their feedback literacy, as pertinent to the process (Carless & Boud, 2018; Chong, 2020). Educators are crucial to facilitating and promoting feedback literacy through the design and guidance of curriculum (Carless & Boud, 2018). The way feedback is integrated and supported through assessment processes is shaped by what educators focus on in the feedback, and whether students perceive applications beyond the assessment itself (Dawson et al., 2020; Winstone & Carless, 2019). However, while the concept of feedback literacy is growing, empirical evidence around feedback literacy is still in its infancy (Han & Xu, 2020). There has also been little attention on learner's perceptions on the role they play in feedback processes and what they value from feedback (Molloy et al., 2020).

The purpose of this study is to explore feedback and support for feedback literacy within subjects that feature WIL. This research aims to examine students' perception of the role, integration and support experienced for feedback alongside WIL activities through a case study in a primary education degree. Specifically, we asked: *What are the current feedback practices in subjects that provide WIL opportunities within the Bachelor of Primary Education?* And, *how does the design of assessments support feedback literacy in subjects that provide WIL opportunities?* Given the limited research and the important role of feedback in WIL, it is of value to determine the current practices that students perceive as helpful to their learning. If feedback is ineffective and uptake is inhibited, students' learning could potentially be compromised. Therefore, it is crucial that feedback in subjects that provide WIL opportunities are evaluated because of the direct link to the development of students' employability skills.

This chapter explores the perceptions of students who are Gen Z, also known as post-millennials or the Internet generation (Tapscott & Williams, 2010). This generation consists of those born mid-1990s through to about 2015 (Scholz & Rennig, 2019) and comprise a large portion of students currently mov-

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