Work Based Learning: Innovation and Applications

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Overview

- My Relevant Experience.
- Definition of Work Based Learning.
- WBL: A Framework approach to Curriculum innovation.
- WBL Framework: individual and organisational applications.
- WBL advantages and Critical Success Factors.
- Further Reading.

My Relevant Experience

- Part of the original development team for WBL at Middlesex University in the early 1990s.

- Director of WBL at Middlesex from 1997 to 2014.

- Freelance Academic Consultant in the area of WBL since 2014.

Learning in the Workplace

- Formal and informal learning.
- Planned and unplanned.
- Tacit and Explicit.
- Individual, Collective and organisational.
- Tends not to fit into traditional subject boundaries.

The Landscape

- Placement
- Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)
- Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Work Placement

- **Work Placement** is about students being placed into work situations so that they can implement theory based learning and/or so that they can learn skills:

- The students remain primarily the responsibility of the higher education institution which has a responsibility to "place" the student appropriately (ie in a work environment where they will be supported and, if applicable, have the opportunity to achieve the learning outcomes of the subject related to the work placement.)

Work Placement

- Although this type of learning is long established in higher education there is now much more focus upon the responsibility of the higher education institution to the student and the placement provider.

- There is an expectation that the higher education institution will appropriately prepare the student and host employer before the placement, provide support during the placement and debrief after the placement.
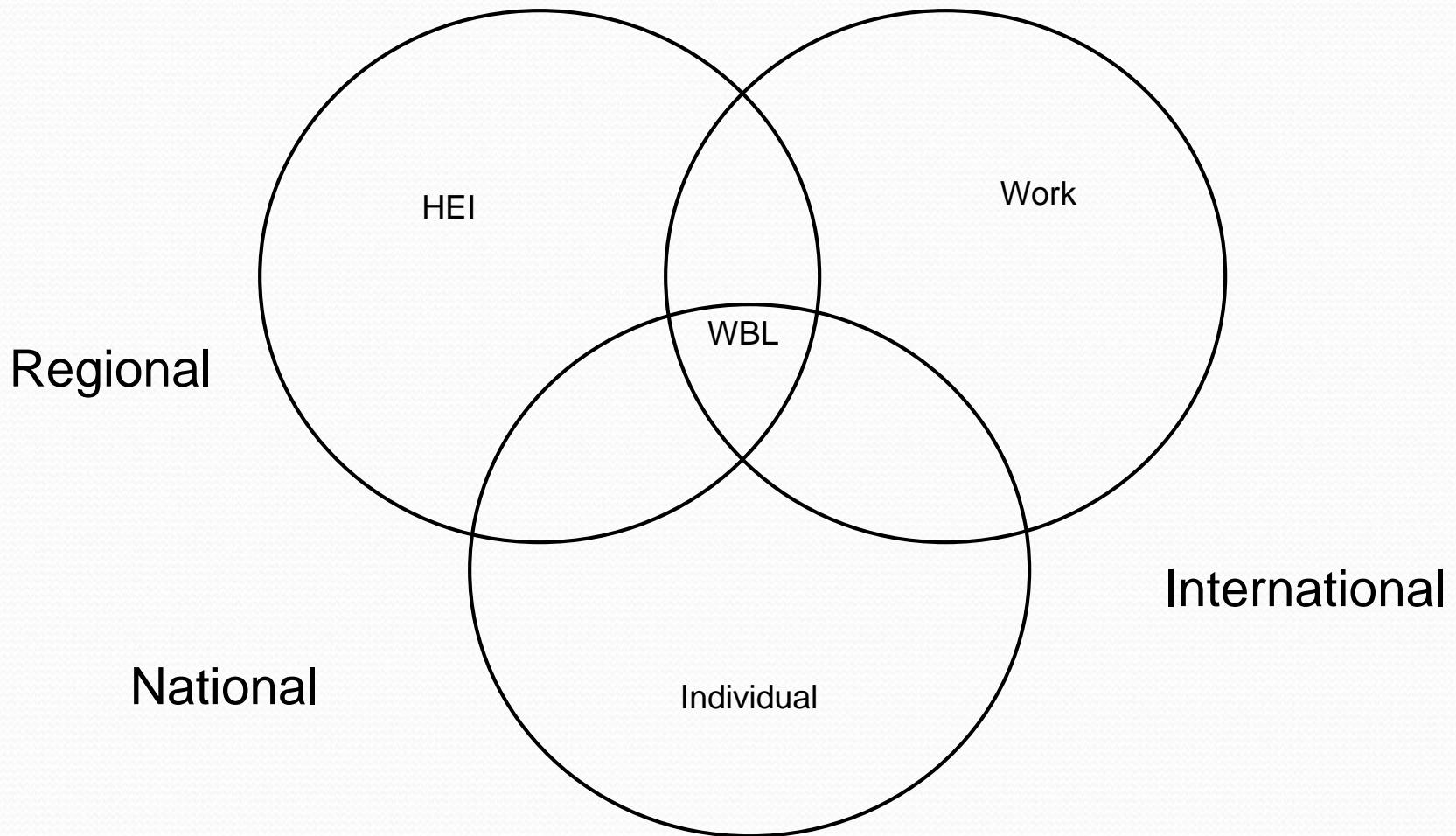
Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

- **Work-Integrated Learning** builds upon the features of placement to focus upon the development *in situ* of ethical work practices, attitudes and agency.

- WIL will contribute to the achievement of subject learning outcomes.

- Preparation, support and debrief by the HEI are integral to WIL.

- WIL is not just about the application of academic theory at work, WIL is used to develop the learner as an emerging professional with a critical mind and a sense of ethical and proper conduct.

Work Based Learning (WBL)

- WBL is learning through, at and for work.
- WBL places the learner at the interface between work and higher education to explore work-focused issues.
- WBL has been a distinctive feature of the UK Higher education landscape since the early 1990s.

Positioning Work Based Learning

The Work Based Learning Proposition

- Values the learning already held by the individual and their organisation.
- Enables the individual and relevant work stakeholder to plan their own programme.
- Is typically delivered by blended learning.
- Is flexible to meet individual/organisational needs.
- Leads to internationally recognized higher education qualifications.

Work Based Learning

- Focuses on the development, conduct and learning from work based projects.

- Aims to develop the individual as a more effective work based learner.

- Aims to contribute to the organisation through the creation of new knowledge and the application of learning to achieve organisational objectives.
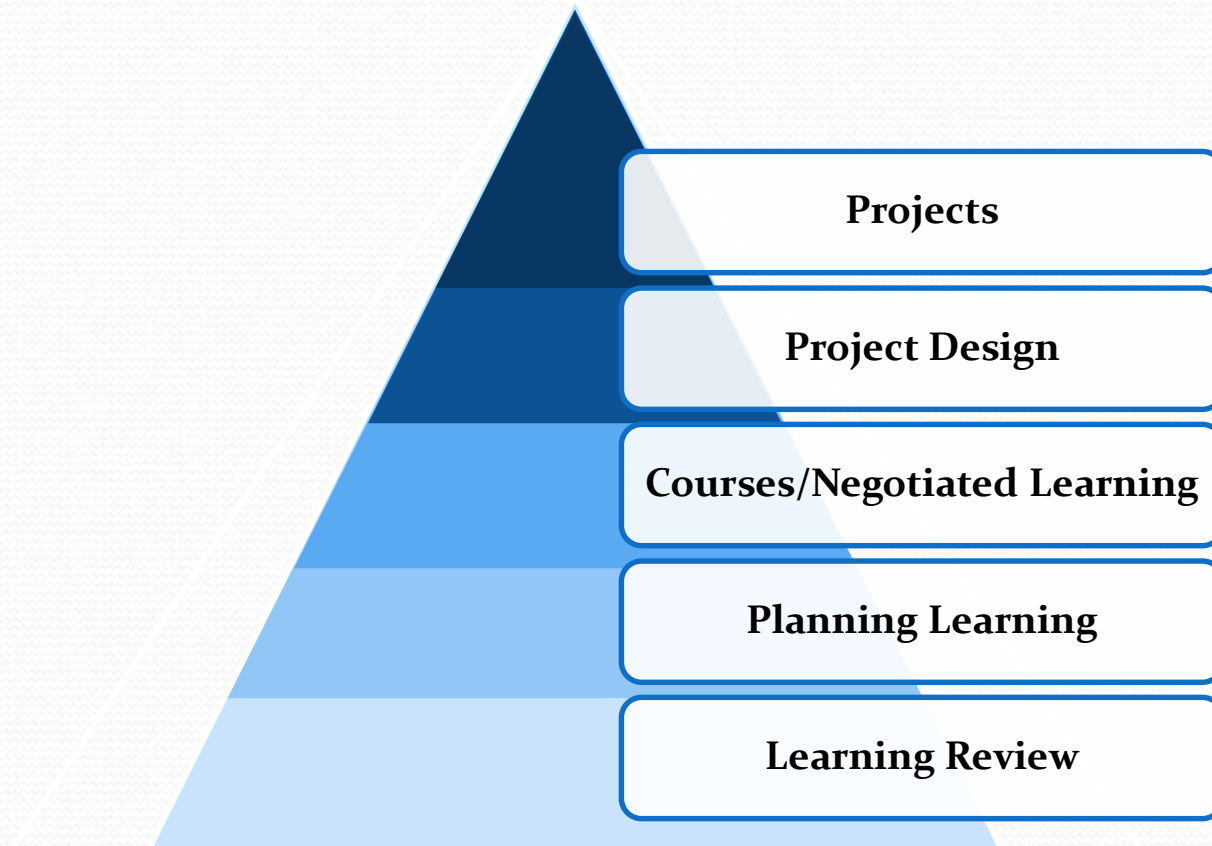
A WBL Framework

- A stock of modules from UK levels 4 (1st year undergraduate) to 7 (Postgraduate).
- Rules governing how the module stock can be used to construct pathways to all the main higher education qualifications (Certificate to Masters).
- Learning and Teaching focused upon the learner and the needs and context of work.
- Assessment that is meaningful in the work context.
- Quality Assurance at the level of the module/programme/partnership and Framework.

Types of WBL Framework Modules

- Learning Review – often portfolio with critical commentary.

- Planning Personal and Professional Development – 3 way learning agreement.

- Project Design – Planning a work based project of a research based nature.

- Negotiated Learning/ Work Based Project.

WBL – Building on individual learning

Projects

Project Design

Courses/Negotiated Learning

Planning Learning

Learning Review

- Can be unique to the individual learner

Example WBL Projects

- Developing a Design and Build Handbook for a Construction Company (Joint Masters).
- Preparing a College for Investors in People (Masters).
- Establishing a centre of excellence for a major financial services organisation (Masters).
- Improving ICT teaching in a Secondary School (BA).
- Improving healthcare support services for refugee families (BA).
- Developing a quick reference guide for urban search and rescue teams (BSc).
- Review of sustainability practices within a local government department (FdS).

WBL suggests new ways of working with employers

- Starting point employer business objectives.
- Learning already identified by the employer as valuable.
- Joint design of programmes.
- Focused application of learning to combine individual learning and organizational development.

Halifax Community Bank: Journey in Practice

- Developing Professional Branch Management Teams.
- Accreditation of in-company training plus work based project for University Advanced Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate.
- Sales up 9.8%, Customer Impact scores up 40%.
- WBL project linked to faster improvement.

Halifax Community Bank:
Journey in Practice

- "JIP is the Jewel in the Crown for the Lloyds Bank Group in Professionalising the retail banking workforce." Peter Hallard, Group Learning Director

- "To gain a qualification from a University while carrying out my day job is a fantastic opportunity." Ian Grady, Branch Manager

- "Furthermore I have a business plan which really fits my branch." Sandra Dixon, Branch Manager

WBL Advantages

- Flexible provision (extending access across all levels of qualification) and which focuses upon the learner in their work context, available across the whole institution.

- Time and resource effective.

- Tested and quality assured.

- Enables rapid partnership development with employers, professional bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

Critical Success Factors

- Clear educational philosophy.
- Committed core team of staff.
- Institutional systems and structures that support flexible delivery.
- Support of high level champions.
- Willingness and ability to engage in a partnership with employers and learners.

Follow up Reading

- Garnett J (2012), *Authentic work integrated learning*, in Hunt L, & Chalmers D (eds), University teaching in focus: A learning centred approach, pp 164- 179, ACER Press: Melbourne.

- Helyer R and Garnett J (2015) *How does Work Based Learning fit into higher education ?* in Helyer R (Ed) Facilitating Work-Based Learning A Tutors Handbook pp 13-32. London: Palgrave.

- Higher Education Academy (2008) *Work-based learning Workforce development: connections, frameworks and processes*, York: HEA.

- Workman B and Bravenboer D (2015) *Flexible frameworks and building blocks*, in Helyer R (Ed) Facilitating Work-Based Learning A Tutors Handbook pp 52-72. London: Palgrave.

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