Foreword

The Order of New Work Integrated Learning in Universities

The integration of work and learning is not new, as many of the writers in this book will attest and illustrate. Industries and businesses function in a technically and socially changing knowledge environment, simultaneously generating and requiring new knowledge and skills. Universities are an integral element of societies’ knowledge generation and transfer systems. How they meet this mission is under challenge and pressure to change due to significant reforms in government agendas, social expectations and technological innovation. These forces have produced an invigorated and more formal focus in universities on the relationship between learning and work and among industries, professional regulatory bodies, and universities. Universities have always had both formal and informal programmes in which students engaged in work outside of the classroom in order to learn. What is new is the public inclusion of work integration into institutional missions, targets, and strategic plans making it visible and contestable in higher education and subject to quality assurance and systematic research.

Work Integrated Learning has a broad agenda driven by contrasting but often tacit philosophies which cause researchers to question the interplay and balance of work and learning and to ask just where is the ‘integration’ and its value. Explications of philosophies, however, are largely overlooked in the need to attend to governments’ drive for graduate competencies to meet workforce demands and to comply with professional standards requirements.

Despite these overriding pressures, universities, curriculum developers, and researchers have generated an exciting new field of endeavour for higher education to foster innovation in work integrated learning. In this book, the researchers and curriculum and institutional innovators rightly focus attention on the adequacy in the preparation of the workplace and the students for optimal learning through, and from, experience, noting that experience alone is not enough. It is important to be reminded that theory and practice are not unrelated. At best, they are essential and symbiotic elements of the whole. Practice will not change unless informed by theory, and theory will not develop unless challenged by real world experience. How this transfer between knowledge development and practice development occurs is an important site of inquiry.

The new order of Work Integrated Learning as a higher education enterprise involves the full scope of curriculum concerns. It has a role in developing graduates’ global and cultural awareness, as well as their capacities to be ethical and responsible citizens and as knowledge workers. These following chapters explore these important concerns, reflecting their national diversity yet similarity in their endeavour for innovative programs that use research and evaluation to assure high quality education.

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Janice Orrell (Education Consultant, Australia) Janice has been an educator for over 40 years. In the 1960s and 1970s she taught in rural, remote and urban Schools in Western Australia and South Australia and was a Director in early childhood education. She also worked in graduate careers guidance, establishing links between industry and higher education programs for academics, students, graduates and employers. In 1984-87 she taught in an International School in Southern India, at the same time established a non-formal education program for young tribal and dalit women in remote Palani Hills villages that now, 23 years later, is a Community Education College. Returning to Australia, she taught in Aboriginal Teacher Education and Nursing Education before establishing and coordinating the Academic Development Unit at Flinders University. In 1986 she became a foundation Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Director of Discipline Networks. Janice is now a private higher education consultant and holds a number of adjunct associate professorships (Flinders University, University of New South Wales and Sydney University). Janice has recently co-published a book: Cooper, L. Orrell, J. and Bowden, M. (2010). Work Integrated Learning: A Guide to Effective Practice, Routledge: London.