

Welcome to the latest issue of *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 7.2. I hope you will agree that the issue contains a fascinating mix of great new research, case studies and innovative practice, all focussed on areas where academia and business overlap.

The first paper “Re-evaluating work-based learning pedagogy”, by Nottingham, investigates the pedagogic principles for work-based learning (WBL) as well as its status as “field of study”. WBL pedagogies have featured in worldwide debates about how to facilitate professional learning within higher education (HE) for some time. Practices exist within WBL that relate to subject specific programmes and also non-subject specific. More recent iterations of WBL include workforce development and apprenticeships; their policy-driven economic imperatives reposition the way in which HEIs engage with WBL.

This diversity has prompted calls for additional pedagogic rationale and theoretical underpinning. This paper demonstrates how shifts in interpreting the WBL field of study have implications for future WBL pedagogy and curriculum design. As a seasoned WBL academic practitioner, who has studied existing pedagogies, the author shares her experiences to demonstrate WBL as highly adaptive and engages with the question of how established concepts are influencing pedagogy using emerging evidence from WBL academic practitioners. Examples from England, in particular Middlesex University, and Europe are drawn upon.

Our second paper, “Gauging the value of MOOCs: an examination of American employers’ perceptions towards higher education change” allows its author, Rosendale to examine the technologically enabled educational environment of the twenty-first century as somewhere capable of creating a new type of learner.

He presents educational institutions as embracing the concept of distance education as a means to increase revenue and attract students, regardless of location. He claims that the global workforce will increasingly be made up of those citing free-sourced online education as their primary form of post-secondary training.

The paper suggests that massive open online courses (MOOCs) and open educational resources (OERs) may be the next step in online education; this means that the learner has access to concepts and coursework in specific areas that do not necessarily result in assessment or academic credit. The author thinks that MOOCs and OERs potentially offer benefits to educational stakeholders. Students may benefit by utilising content that is either free or a low cost. The benefits of this kind of material are explained. The paper describes the value of MOOCs as relative to each participant; for example, some students will look for academic content and authenticity whilst others will value independence above this, and so on. Survey results are shared.

Mongkhonvanit’s paper, “Thailand’s dual education system: a way forward” follows and shares with us a documentary study, a survey, a focus group and some in-depth interviews around the status, values and attributes of dual education. The tripartite system of technical and vocational institutes, employers and government in Thailand’s dual education is central to this. The paper explains the key elements of the dual education system in four selected countries while examining and recommending dynamics and roles for governmental policy, technical and vocational institutes, and employers in developing a dual education system that will generate a competitive workforce.

The paper claims that within the tripartite system framework, there are nine essential factors to improve the capacity of Thailand’s dual education system, and they are: the technical



and vocational institutes, curriculum, in-school teachers, accredited qualification, students, employers, in-company trainers, government policy, and government and related agencies. The paper concludes that government, companies, and technical and vocational institutes must collaborate for mutual trust and benefit while ensuring the quality of dual education programs. This is the first study to examine the status and development of dual education in Thailand through the collaboration of key players and reflects the challenges of a major developing country in creating a dual education system.

Next, Eliophotou Menon and Athanasoula-Reppa use their paper “Managing graduate unemployment: the case of education students in Cyprus” to tackle an under-researched topic – the decision making of university graduates as they attempt to manage periods of prolonged unemployment and formulate strategies for their future. The authors suggest that in times of economic uncertainty such investigations are of vital importance, especially with the rising numbers of unemployed young people, many highly educated, being linked to the financial crisis, in different countries.

The paper explains that currently a high incidence of graduate underemployment and unemployment is characteristic of many European countries as high numbers of qualified people fail to find work; especially in the European South, dramatically affected by the financial crisis. Furthermore, the authors portray the problem of graduate employability as a major challenge for HE policy makers in both developed and developing countries and suggest that despite the severity of the unemployment problem, very little is known about the strategies used by young people in order to enhance their employability.

The writers illustrate that young people are striving to enhance their employability in many ways, one of which being the acquisition of additional skills and competencies through education and training; therefore using education as a facilitator to employment. They further suggest that by pursuing additional education and training, young people are investing in human capital, and expecting returns both at the private and the social level. An understanding of the way unemployment is managed by young people is necessary in the design of policy measures that can address the needs and aspirations of the unemployed and assist them in gaining employment.

The “Career choice of females in the private sector: empirical evidence from the United Arab Emirates” continues with the theme of graduate employment, a paper in which AlDhaheeri, Jabeen, Hussain and Ali Abu-Rahma present their research into the career choices of female Emirati students in the private sector. To enhance the participation of local Emiratis in the workforce, the government of Abu Dhabi established the Abu Dhabi Policy Agenda of the Emirate in 2007-2008, including the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030, centring upon the development of joint efforts between the public and private sector. One of the main objectives of this is to increase the level of employment opportunities, especially for nationals, and to maximise the participation of women in the workforce.

This research identifies the factors that influence the decision of female Emirati students, from both public and private universities, to join the private sector and prioritises these factors using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP).

The paper highlights the factors that impact on the choice of career, and provides a survey of the relevant literature as well as an overview of the AHP process and details of the methodology used in the study. The results present an analysis and discussion of the outcomes of the study and the paper concludes with the implications and limitations of the findings, along with directions for future research.

Fleming and Haigh follow this with their paper, “Examining and challenging the intentions of work-integrated learning” where they examine and attempt to explain the various interpretations of “work-integrated learning” (WIL) and the differing expectations of its stakeholders. The authors feel that industry perspectives on the purpose of cooperative education have not been investigated in depth and very little is known, for

example, about workplace supervisors' perceptions or understandings of their role in the WIL experience. Furthermore, it cannot be taken for granted that workplaces, students and academics all have a shared understanding of what a successful WIL experience entails. This research therefore explored the perspectives of the three stakeholders in a cooperative education programme within a sport and recreation undergraduate degree, a model that is one variant of WIL.

The authors explain that cooperative education is identified by the integration of academic knowledge with knowledge accessed or constructed through experiences in workplaces, with the further critical components of negotiation of clear learning goals, directly relevant to the student's degree or career goals, and the alignment of workplace experience and practice with these goals. These principles are common to cooperative education programmes, with variances in structure, length of placement, supervision responsibilities and payment expectations across disciplines, institutes or countries. It is useful to compare the disparity of stakeholders' expectations in WIL programmes in New Zealand with similar WBL educational programmes in the UK.

Finally, Wall, Hindley, Hunt, Peach, Preston, Hartley and Fairbank present us with "Work-based learning as a catalyst for sustainability: a review and prospects" a paper that seeks to develop a greater understanding of the approaches that can be used to develop climate literacy in HEIs, and in particular, proposes that WBL can act as a catalyst for wider cultural change, towards embedding climate literacy. In this way, this paper extends the conceptual and empirical work currently available about how sustainability is integrated into HE, but more importantly, develops insight into how change can be instigated in HE through WBL curricula.

The paper uses a case study of a Climate Change Project conducted through a WBL project at a UK university, and draws from an action research study into its delivery. The paper also examines climate literacy and the fragmented nature of it in practice and scholarship, setting the scene for the methodological approach adopted. The findings are outlined in relation to the creation of a unifying vision, or framework, for action across multiple disciplinary, professional and identity boundaries. Finally the paper discusses the wider implications of its findings and concludes with questions that will stimulate additional insights into how WBL can be utilised to inculcate climate literacy in practice.

I hope you enjoy the papers in 7.2 and please do feel free to send us your own research, I am very happy to discuss ideas and abstracts as well as completed work.

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