# Chapter 1

# A Work–Integrated Learning Philosophy and the Educational Imperatives

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## ABSTRACT

*The Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) philosophy, as theorised, can be expressed as a number of generic WIL models, imperatives and learning frameworks. The models are the result of using the lens of a content study first completed in 2006 (reported in Calway and Murphy, (2006) and repeated in 2009/10. The studies investigated WIL models using resources such as: cooperative education literature, continuing professional development, and published public and higher education policy. These models reflect a concentration mainly upon education policy of a school-to-work paradigm. From associated studies, a set of learning imperatives was also proposed (Calway & Murphy, 2007) together with a pre and post graduation WIL approach for both higher education and continuing professional practice (Murphy & Calway, 2008).*

*The chapter explores these WIL findings as: embedded life-long learning, continuing professional development, and the various learning modes that employ the work and learning interface. Further, any understanding of a WIL philosophy must incorporate a learner environment for individual 'action learning' and institutional (i.e. educational as well as workplace) 'active learning' as an initiative that addresses the specific educational imperatives and models outlined.*

## INTRODUCTION

## Background

Work-Integrated Learning found its genesis in engineering in the early 20th century, and during the past century the initial model has evolved into a multiplicity of variations and been transferred and implemented across a vast array of disciplines, institutions and workplaces. Work-integrated learning is a broad church of approaches, across many levels of education worldwide, that incorporates knowledge and skills acquisition with 'real-world' experience. The World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) is the peak organisation worldwide and the promoter of the work-integrated learning paradigm, as a deep learning model at school level and the workplace (WACE, 2010). Broadly speaking WIL can be expressed as "… educational activities that integrate theoretical learning with its application in the workplace." And "should provide a meaningful experience of the workplace application that is intentional, organised and recognised by the institution, in order to secure learning outcomes for the student that are both transferable and applied". (Griffith University, 2006)

Much of the literature examined expresses the perceived benefits of WIL as a form of learning. We instead concentrated on the educational and public policy understanding relative to the usage of WIL as expressed in education institutions (i.e. pre and post graduation) and also expressed by professional associations and in Standards Legislation. As an example relative to WIL pre graduation: 'cooperative education' represents one educational form which has broad recognition worldwide among employers, students and tertiary institutions. This example of cooperative education forms a significant part of literature reporting WIL and incorporates hands-on work experience in a real-world setting. Cooperative education assumes a level of explicit knowledge/skills on the part of the student and the exchange of tacit knowledge/skills from the employer to the student. Alternatively an example of post graduation WIL would be continuing professional development, aimed at competency assessment, satisfying compliance requirements and/or knowledge/career development.

In its broadest sense WIL is most often described as an attempt by educators to provide a 'schooling-to-work' pathway to support the employability of graduates. The cooperative arrangements, between stakeholder groups, have for decades shaped programs of study at many tertiary education institutions, and certainly for the best part of the last century in the Western economies. Such approaches endorse a workforce and competence imperative for education and learning which, while consistent with the broader expressions in public policy, offer less encouragement or engagement in career-based professional development education and learning.

## Government Perspectives

At all times, the major stakeholders in WIL have been seen as industry, students and the education institutions. However, a wider relationship exists that includes: Professional Associations; the Government; and more widely the community, which may extend over time as a lifelong career development paradigm. Successive Western governments have expressed a social-economic imperative for 'work-ready' and 'life-long learners' as part of the labour policy. An examination of public policy recorded in Australia over three decades, undertaken by Calway and Murphy (2007), found that education policy was being driven by workforce-ready imperatives and risk minimisation (i.e. competence and compliance) strategies. This was also consistent with worldwide policy directions detailed in:

- OECD reports (OECD, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005-06);

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