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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

NEW ZEALAND



Student experience in work-integrated learning

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Background of Work-Integrated Learning

- The term 'work-integrated learning' first appeared mid 1990's, became widely used early 2000's (Zegwaard et al., 2023)
 - First discoverable mention of WIL was from WACE's mission statement
 - Quoted in a paper from a conference in South Africa (Bradford, 1995)
- The concept is not new
 - Co-op started in 1906 (borrowed from Law studies)
 - Sandwich degrees already in existence around 1840
 - Apprenticeships traced back to Imperial Rome
- Defining elements of WIL:
 - educational approach
 - external partner
 - authentic tasks
 - meaningful purpose

(Zegwaard et al., 2023)



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WIL underpinned by several learning theories

- Cognitive development theory by Piaget (1985)
- Social culturalism by Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991; Engestrom, 1999
- Learning through experience by Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984)
- Reflective learning to enhance learning from practice (Schon, 1983; Gibbs, 1988)
- Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977)
- Situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

LEARNING THEORY





Why more WIL



Education for the betterment of society

- Highly engaging and transformative
- WIL enhances/deepens the student learning experience
- Develops critical, reflective, and creative thinkers

Education as a means to increase productivity

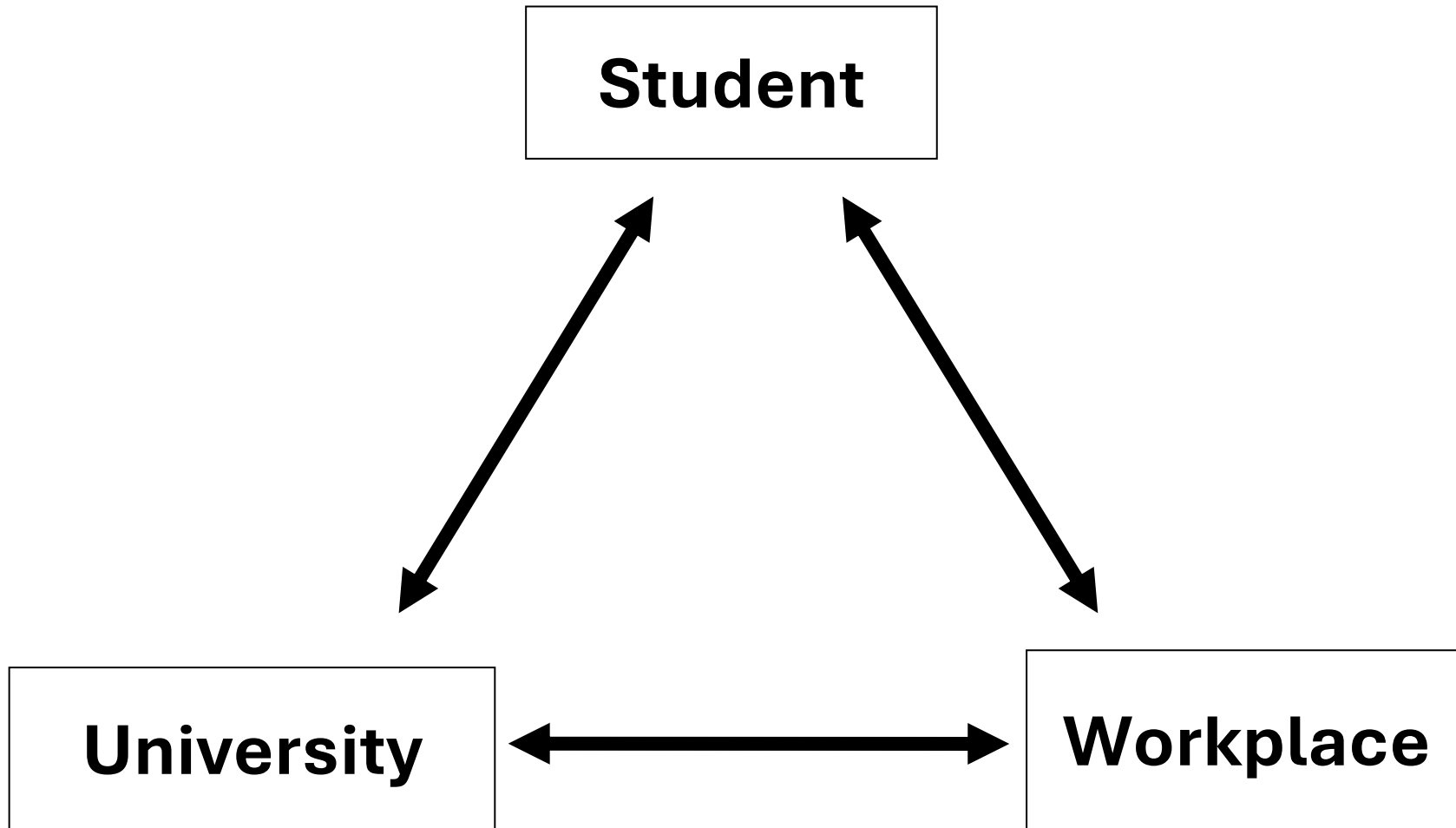
- Employability outcomes!
- Government see employability as a university KPI (Cheng et al., 2021)
 - Economic growth, return on investment
 - Students enrol because they want good careers
- Universities shape strategic goals around employability and community engagement



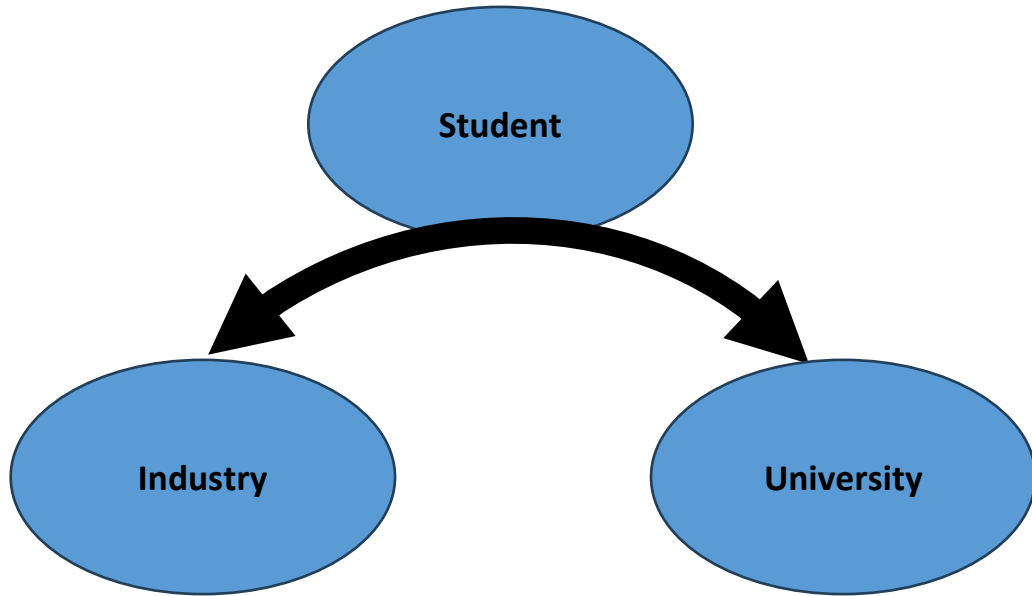
Student experience

- Student experience is broad, diverse, and varied
- WIL literature very focused on student experience
 - Also overwhelmingly focused on the positive aspects
- Where does student experience fit with the relationship of the three stakeholders?

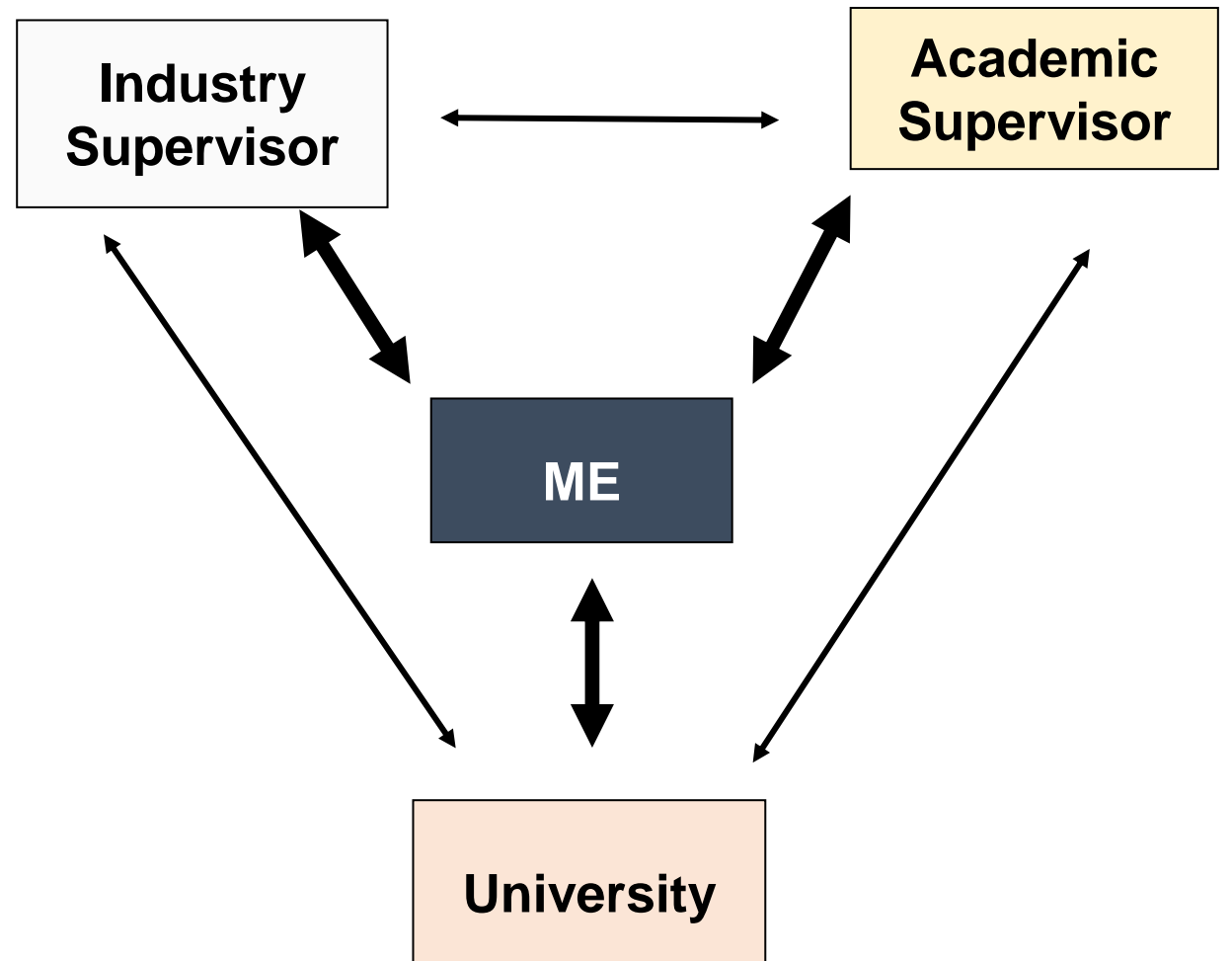
Nature of the relationship



Academic supervisors' views



Students' views



The benefits from the student experience

Student experiences through WIL provides:

- **Employability outcomes** (Jackson & Cook, 2023)
- **Academic outcomes** (Tanaka & Carlson, 2012)
- **Social capital, human capital, cultural capital, identity capital, psychological capital** (Jackson & Cooke, 2023)
- **Applying taught knowledge to a relevant practical context** (Wang & Calvano, 2018)
- **Insights to professional behaviour, professional ethics, moral citizenship** (Smith et al., 2009)
- **Extending learning professional skills to being a professional** (Jackson, 2017)



Influence on study choices

- Career clarification (Zegwaard & Coll, 2011)
 - Students can have poorly developed, even stereotypic ideas of a career.
- Study direction clarification
 - Changing study choices
 - Changing degree major
- Graduate study choices (Zegwaard & McCurdy, 2014)
- Career self-management
 - Estimated, 5-7 career changes (World Economic Forum, 2023)
 - Average of 12 jobs over 55 years
 - 60% of workers in the US considering changing job

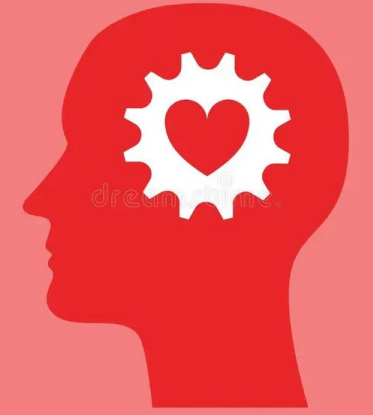


Authenticity

- Student value the nature of applied learning (Aprile et al., 2023)
- But do they value the *authentic nature* of WIL?
- Bootcamp and engineering projects (Kovalsky & Zegwaard, 2021)
- Students feared failing
 - The authenticity of the outcome causes stress
- How do we allow students to make 'safe' mistakes
 - Concept of failing forward
- Highlights importance of:
 - Quality preparation
 - Scaffolding of WIL learning experiences across the curriculum



Reality check: The complexity of the workplace



- Students can have idealistic views of:
 - How the workplace functions
 - Their possible impact on the workplace
- Students' professional identity development and ethical behaviour (Campbell & Zegwaard, 2015)
- Students less likely to speak against unethical behaviour after a work placement ($p < .05$)
- Workplaces are complex:
 - Power differentials, expectations, norms of behaviour (good and bad)
 - What is ethical and not ethical is not black and white
- Better understanding of the complex workplace

Stressors	Slight to severe stress	Moderate to severe stress
<i>Any source</i>	100%	83.4%
Financial	84.2%	67.1%
Physical health	93.8%	52.1%
Health of or needing to care for a family member	89.0%	33.6%
Work colleagues and supervisors	93.8%	30.1%

Stressors	Slight to severe stress	Moderate to severe stress
COVID-19	87.7%	25.3%
State of the world	87.7%	24.7%
Student peers	87.0%	15.1%
Living away from home	83.6%	14.4%
Other	7.5%	6.8%



Wellbeing: paid vs unpaid



- Unpaid placement common practice in some disciplines
- Payment made no difference on the meaningfulness of placements (Milne & Caldicott, 2016), unless students experienced both (McHugh, 2017)
 - However, payment does change the nature of the expectations
- Students on unpaid placements experience significant financial stress (Gair & Baglow, 2018; Hemy et al., 2016;)
- Unpaid work placements
 - Unpaid interns feel less supported by hosts ($p < .001$)
 - More reliant on support from all sources ($p < .001$)
 - Less satisfied about wellbeing ($p < .01$)
 - Greater financial stress ($p < .001$)
 - Greater stress about the health of or caring for a family member ($p < .05$)

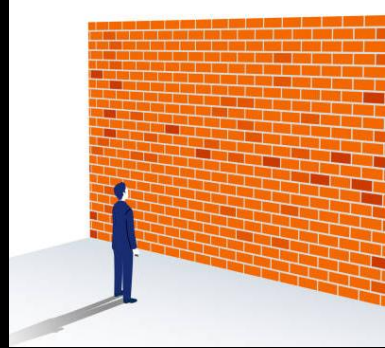
Financial stress during placement caused stress	Paid	Unpaid	Diff
Yes (1-10)	73%	100%	27%
Moderate to severe (5-10)	24%	80%	56%

Did you need support for wellbeing during placement?	Paid	Unpaid
Probably or definitely needed support for my wellbeing	26%	27%

Prob or def needed support, did you find it?	Yes	No	Unsure
Unpaid (n=18), did you find this support	17%	67%	17%
Paid (n=12), did you find this support	33%	50%	17%

Student experiencing barriers to access

- Equitable access to Higher Education long been debated (Kelly, 2010)
- Equity long been identified as a challenge for WIL (Orrell, 2011; Patrick et al., 2008)
 - Student experience access differently (Jackson et al., 2023)
- Find your own placement model (Harrison & Ip, 2013)
 - Argued it reflects reality
 - Great for those with good social capital
 - Difficult for first-in-family students, internationals, remote regions, minority groups
- Half of students with disabilities and a third with mental health disabilities opt out of WIL (Gatto et al., 2021)
- Minimum GPA requirements
 - With preparation, low GPA students perform in WIL as well as high GPA students (Melis-De Lamper & Benner, 2024)



Improving the student experience

- Ensure quality experiences
 - Much recent work (Campbell & Pretti, 2023, Campbell et al., 2019; McRae et al., 2017; Stirling et al., 2016; WACE, 2024)
 - Constantly reviewing and refining
- Well-resourced programmes
- Quality assessment practice. Assessment for and as learning
 - Authentic assessment
 - Connect the assessment to what the student is doing
- Student voice in programme (re)design
 - Listen to our students
 - Listen to our external stakeholders
- Continuously research and consume research of student experiences
 - As society and technology changes, so does the student experience
 - Research-informed good practice



IMPROVEMENT

Future directions

- We need to challenge established assumptions
 - Revisit prior understandings
 - Some may not be accurate
 - Some have changed
 - Some need reaffirming
- Ask the difficult question, seek out understanding
 - Explore the 'not positive' aspects of WIL
- Consider context
 - WIL experienced is highly contextualised
 - WIL is complex



General future directions

- World is changing fast - higher education must also
- Future of higher education needs:
 - More authentic learning through doing
 - Learning *within* the changing world, less *alongside* the changing world
 - More blurring between working and learning
 - Ability to source information, discern quality and reliability
 - Less knowledge transfer, more synthesizing and applying knowledge
- Student learning experiences need to prepare them for the future workplace
 - Embrace artificial intelligence
- Universities need to become dynamic and agile
 - Flexible curriculum



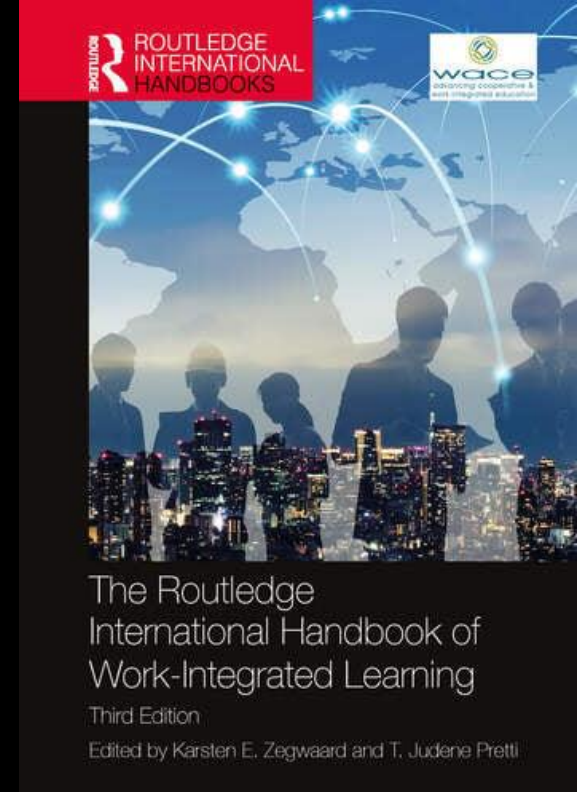
An open book with text on the pages, resting on a stack of other books. The pages are aged and yellowed. The text is in a serif font, arranged in two columns per page. The book is open to a page with a large heading at the top, followed by several paragraphs of text. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

LITERATURE

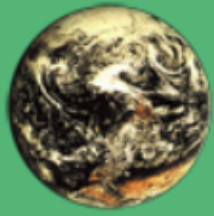
The Routledge International Handbook of Work-Integrated Learning (3rd ed.)

- Compilation of established knowledge and critical discussion of the practice of WIL
- A 'go to first' book for WIL practitioners, educators, and researchers
- 37 chapters, 96 authors, 644 pages
- Five sections:
 - 1) *defining and theoretical background*,
 - 2) *benefits*,
 - 3) *models of WIL*,
 - 4) *developing and managing WIL*, and
 - 5) *topical issues*
- Available in hardback and eBook – paperback/softback later this year.
- www.routledge.com/9780367741761
- University libraries likely to have ebook access already

Currently about
USD\$55 (eB)
\$315 (HB)



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International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning

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www.ijwil.org

- Central journal for WIL, commenced 24 years ago
- More than 600 published articles
- Open access, double blind reviewed, 50-member international review board
- Indexed on Scopus, EBSCO, ERIC, DOAJ, Cabells, ESCI
- Q2 journal (71 percentile)
- Special issues:
 - Assessment
 - Employability
 - Research methods
 - Impact of COVID (double special issue)
 - Cultural perspectives
 - Equity, inclusion and access
 - WIL and wellbeing (*to be published start of 2025*)

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Resources: Books and good practice reports

- Ferns, S., Rowe, A. D., & Zegwaard, K. E. (Eds.). (2022). Advances in research, theory and practice in work-integrated learning: Enhancing employability for a sustainable future. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003021049>
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Any Questions?



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