

Series Editors' Foreword

Across most nations with advanced industrial economies, provisions of higher education are now being increasingly directed towards outcomes associated with specific occupations and the employability of graduates within those occupations. In different ways, university programs are increasingly giving greater consideration to the world of work beyond higher education, and, in many instances, to the particular requirements of specific occupations, and, in some situations, the particular circumstances where occupations are to be practised. Hence, medical education in some instances is not only focusing more completely on clinical aspects of that education, but also particular forms of clinical practice (e.g. in rural settings). One consequence of these changes is for a wider and more comprehensive consideration of the ways in which students' practice-based experiences can contribute to their higher education programs and outcomes. Of course, there is nothing particularly new about a consideration of work or practice-based experiences as part of higher education programs. This has long been a part in programs preparing graduates as doctors, lawyers and engineers, and more recently nurses, physiotherapists, journalists and teachers, to take some examples. However, there are now two distinct changes that in some ways these experiences are being included within higher education programs. Firstly, the growing interest in and need for practice-based experiences to be essential components of higher education programs has seen an increase in the demand for these kinds of experiences because now they are required far more widely in university programs. However, the kinds of models and approaches that have been used in medicine, teaching and nursing to provide these experiences (i.e. supervised placements) may be often not appropriate for a range of occupations now requiring these experiences, but these kind of resource-intensive provisions are unlikely to be available more broadly. Secondly, there is a need for the experiences provided and practice settings and processes accessible within them to be understood as making particular contributions to students' higher education. That is, rather than being seen as augmenting, extending or refining what can be learnt in university settings, these experiences have the potential to make quite distinct contributions to students' learning and, in particular, their readiness to engage in their selected occupation upon graduation.

It follows, therefore, that far greater numbers of university teachers are now engaging in providing these experiences and seeking to utilise them effectively in

promoting their students learning, and for a wide range of purposes. Consequently, it is important for examples of the purposes for providing these experiences and instances of how these educational experiences are enacted to be available to inform the broader adoption of practice-based experiences within higher education.

The provision of these examples and instances is the key focus of this edited monograph. Its overall project is to emphasise the importance of the role that higher education teachers play in formulating the purposes for their students' experiences in practice settings and activities, and then enacting those experiences. Such a role requires understandings of the broader and specific context for higher education provisions including what various interests promote in terms of particular emphases within the purposes of programs and content within courses. Hence, the first set of contributions in this edited monograph set out some of the key issues and concerns associated with the provision of practice-based experiences within higher education. These contributions inform how teachers in higher education might consider or approach providing students with these experiences and for what purposes. The second set of contributions comprises instances of how teachers in higher education across a number of countries have addressed these issues. Importantly, the examples provided here are not merely reflecting pragmatic goals associated with job readiness and employability, as exhorted by some. Instead, issues addressed here include how ethical conduct can be learnt by students, questioning the implications of clinical governance within healthcare education, mediating the influence of professional standards in shaping access to and the kinds of experiences provided within healthcare education, and the role that occupational standards play as mediating artefacts in shaping those provisions. Hence, these contributions address issues that have come to be the concerns of many teaching in higher education, as they attempt to reconcile the range of interests which are shaping the educational purposes of their programs and their students' experiences and considering how they should act as higher educators.

A third set of contributions addresses aspects of how these provisions might progress. These extend to an appraisal of how electronically-mediated learning experiences can be provided in ways that integrate those founded in practice, those in laboratory work and those which need to accommodate multidisciplinary contributions. Here, specific issues about and formulations for providing and integrating practice-based experiences are advanced, including considerations of how conflicting demands and time constraints play important roles in how teachers in higher education come to engage with and enact practice-based experiences for their students.

It is through this set of contributions that variously focus upon the broader educational contextual issues, specific and sometimes contested purposes, and then practices associated with higher education teachers work that this edited monograph makes its contributions.

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Practice-based Learning in Higher Education

Jostling Cultures

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2015, IX, 189 p. 8 illus. in color., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-94-017-9501-2