A Theoretical Model of Experiential Work Based Learning

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Abstract

The inclusion of some form of work based learning (WBL) experience in undergraduate degree programs in Australia is a common feature of contemporary degrees across many disciplines. There have been some attempts to measure the benefits derived by students from these experiences, however, the findings from research in this area have been mixed and have lacked theoretical cohesion between the expected benefits of WBL and empirical evidence of these benefits in the form of improved student outcomes. The theoretical model developed and presented in this paper is expected to provide a framework by which the variables encountered in different WBL environments can be accounted for when analysing the actual benefits accruing to the students. This paper provides a review of relevant experiential learning theory literature and derives a theoretical framework that can be used to underpin research into the benefit(s) of work-based learning (WBL) on student learning outcomes. It is expected that this model will improve significantly our understanding of the interaction between the experiential environment and student’s work based learning outcomes and provide a theoretical underpinning for future empirical research into this area.