

Practical aspects of service learning make work-integrated learning wise practice for inclusive education in Australia

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Inclusive education remains a challenge for Australian tertiary education, particularly specialized pedagogical approaches like work-integrated learning (WIL) and service learning. Critiques of mainstream pedagogical approaches raise questions about the predominant models of educating students (Butin, 2010; Howard, 1998). There is a definitive need to recognize the diversity of the student population within course structures, rather than integrating diverse student needs into a static curriculum (Harrison & Ip, 2013). *Wise practice* takes WIL objectives - professional skills development and professional experience - and positions inclusion and transformation at the center of the learning experience. This paper explores inclusive education in WIL and service learning and examines how a wise practice approach can help all students equally benefit from the transformative potential of service learning.

Keywords: Service learning, work-integrated learning, higher education, inclusive education, Australia

The role of tertiary education and the graduates produced by tertiary institutions in Australia are rapidly changing. Critiques of mainstream pedagogical approaches, namely the information-dissemination/"banking" models of education, have moved from the fringes to raise serious questions about the predominant models of educating students (Butin, 2010; Howard, 1998). Such critiques have led to discussions about the fundamental role of tertiary education: is it just to ensure graduates are trained and ready for the workforce, or does the obligation to student learning go deeper? Not only does higher education have an important role to play in the move towards a knowledge society (Blasi, 2006; Goede, 2011, p. 42) but it also has the responsibility to ensure graduates can use their knowledge and skills effectively. Wendell Berry (1987) argues universities should be aiming to produce "fully developed human beings" (1987, p. 77). He writes that good work and good citizenship are critical to this process. Following this, teaching citizenship should form a major part of the university curriculum (Sternberg, 2009; Sternberg, Reznitskaya, & Jarvin, 2007). Limiting tertiary teaching to academic knowledge and professional skills ignores the formative nature of the diverse range of student experiences encountered at university. Bok argues that universities should make considered efforts to foster civic values and behaviors such as honesty and tolerance (Bok, 2009). Despite the occasional misalignment with the other goals of higher education, citizenship has emerged as a key desirable quality of university graduates (Huber & Hutchings, 2010). The question then turns to the best ways to foster citizenship while still teaching the necessary academic and professional skills. Higgs (2012) posits wise practice as a rounded and more useful approach to education that calls for the creation of learning experiences that are inclusive and consider the diversity of student worldviews, as well as the contextual environment in which the learning takes place (Petruca et al., 2016).

Within a wise practice framework, work-integrated learning (WIL) and service learning have emerged as ways of exposing students to the workforce and facilitating transformative learning experiences. Service learning presents an opportunity for students to develop civic values by taking an active role in giving back to their community. Unlike community service, which may refer to any kind of volunteering, service learning integrates service projects with relevant coursework (Seider & Butin,

2012). Reflection, a key element of WIL, and reciprocity are key concepts of service learning as defined by Jacoby (1996, p. 5):

A form of experiential learning in which students engage in activities and address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service learning.

Service learning offers transformative learning where students can practically test their skills and broaden their understandings of the world around them through exposure to alternative and unfamiliar ways of life. Incorporating service learning within a WIL framework is wise practice because it meets objectives of the university experience from multiple perspectives including personal growth and professional experience for students and academic rigor and service to community from a university perspective. Reflexivity plays a central role within a wise practice approach and requires knowledge and understanding of both ethics and values, along with historical knowledge, cultural knowledge, social knowledge, self-knowledge and communication skills (Goede, 2011, p. 41; Rooney & McKenna, 2005). WIL and service learning provide students an opportunity to engage with these concepts while meeting learning objectives. A wise practice theoretical framework, based on inclusion and understanding, ensure the tenets of service learning account for all participants, students and the communities they engage with.

There are, however, challenges associated with ensuring such opportunities are available to all students. Inclusive education aims to proactively recognize the diversity of the student population and design course structures accordingly, rather than integrating diverse student needs into a static curriculum (Harrison & Ip, 2013). Similarly, a wise practice approach prioritizes participation and collaboration between stakeholders moving toward empowerment and transformative change (Petrucka et al., 2016) and accommodating the experiences of the individual and the collective. The concept of service learning at its core promotes inclusiveness; of students, community and educators. However, it can be a difficult and sometimes neglected aspect when designing a learning experience which is complicated by multiple stakeholders and time-poor educators. WIL faces similar issues and demands. A wise practice framework seeks to address these issues. This paper explores how the practicalities of designing service learning and, more broadly, WIL experiences in Australia, can offer an inclusive educational experience for a diverse student group within a wise practice framework.

WISE PRACTICE

Wise practice, as an approach to WIL and service learning (Valencia-Forrester, forthcoming), sits comfortably outside the western concept of best practice, being “a system of treatment methods and procedures that are seen to be the most tried and proven modalities for enacting positive change in the lives of clients and service users” (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010, p. 391), recognizing that not all lived experiences fit neatly within the same box. Wise practice takes WIL objectives - professional skills development and professional experience - and positions inclusion and transformation at the center of the learning experience, understanding that best practice in one situation does not automatically present itself as the best option in similar situations given, “the variety of unique [access], identity, cultural and situational environments” of students and the placement opportunities (Thoms, 2007, p. 8). There is no one definition of what constitutes wise practice because “by its very nature [it] is idiosyncratic, contextual, textured and probably inconsistent, it is not standardized or off the shelf” (Davis Jr, 1997, p. 4). A best practice approach to WIL sees educators placing value on student feedback

about their work experience placement and what employers say about their performance, rather than on what students are learning about themselves, the transformation, of values, critical thinking, and their growth (Wilson, 1989). Wilson suggests WIL educators should reposition assessment criteria: instead of giving credit for placement, educators should be awarding credit for “learning resulting from work experience” (1989, p. 36).

SERVICE LEARNING

Service learning explores the premise that university education should be a holistic experience aimed at producing graduates that are not only equipped with academic and professional skills, but also with a strong sense of civic values (Mabry, 1998). Critical to the development of these civic values is that the service learning itself is designed in such a way to provide equal benefits to the provider and recipient of the service, and place equal emphasis on service provision and learning (Furco, 1996). This is not achieved through the “addition of service to learning, but rather the integration of service with learning” (Howard, 1998, p. 21). Butin suggests several key features that distinguish service learning: students are required to spend a certain number of contact hours in the community and then reflect on the value of their contributions through discussions or written work (2010, p. 17). What exactly these contact hours involve is subject to debate. Some authors (Butin, 2010; Furco, 1996) suggest considering a continuum of service learning programs, with those that emphasize the service and the served - such as volunteering and community service - at one end, and programs that focus on learning and “the provider” of services - internships, for example - at the other. Regardless of the specific approach taken, service learning involves a commitment to holistic learning through time spent in the community, and reflections on the value of that time for both the students themselves and the community stakeholders.

The advantages of a service learning approach are well-documented in the literature. In terms of graduate outcomes, service learning can give students “a leg up in gaining employment after graduation (Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010, p. 11). Student benefits were also observed throughout Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray’s far-reaching and extensive review of service learning research. They noted several recurring themes including positive impacts on students’ “spiritual and moral development” as well as “reducing stereotypes and facilitating cultural and racial understanding” and improving “social responsibility and citizenship skills” (2001, p. 1). Opportunities for growth in such areas represent the transformative potential of service learning programs, which extend far beyond the traditional measures of academic success.

Transformative Learning

Having identified that service learning broadens the scope of tertiary education beyond academic knowledge and workplace skills, it is important to note these opportunities can result in meaningful learning experiences that can have deep and lasting impacts on students. Transformative learning refers to experiences that trigger a deep, structural shift in the way students view and exist in the world. O’Sullivan, Morrell, and O’Connor, (2002, p. 18) write that:

Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.

In their work with teams of Australian and Malaysian pre-service teachers, Tangen, Mercer, Spooner-Lane, and Hepple, explicitly refer to service learning as “transformative” through supporting the “development of cross-cultural, interpersonal and communication skills, which are cornerstones of intercultural competence” (2011, p. 63). Indeed, Seider and Butin (2012) argue that service-learning in higher education represents an important space for “emerging adults” to engage in transformative learning experiences through engaging with and exploring different understandings of the world. Through transformative learning experiences, service learning imbues students with civic values and broader perspectives on the world around them.

Service learning is also transformative through the approach to teaching questioning the traditional “banking model” of education (Freire, 1996). This model is widespread in higher education, as evidence by the predominant format of the lecture: an efficient way to transfer academic knowledge and theory to a large group of students, but one that firmly roots the lecturer as the disseminator of information and students as passive recipients (Howard, 1998).

By disrupting the hierarchy and authority of the relationships between teachers and students, a more collaborative, transformative model of education emerges, one where teachers and students are co-constructors of knowledge (Butin, 2010). This model removes the hierarchical structure of a best practice approach (Thoms, 2007) and facilitates a wise practice model that encourages more holistic engagement. Students are empowered to take a leading role in their own education through collaboration (Petrucka et al., 2016) and accommodating the lived experiences of both the individual and the collective while working toward realizing ‘the common good’ (Sternberg, 2009).

SERVICE LEARNING AND WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING AS WISE PRACTICE

To explore how the practical aspects of inclusive education for service learning make wise practice for WIL, it is important to firstly understand the impact of inclusiveness on the broader Australian WIL curriculum. Service learning and WIL are different but related concepts. A wise practice approach weaves the benefits of each concept together. While service learning places emphasis on being of service to the community, WIL simply refers to the intentional integration of academic learning with its practical application in the workplace (Edwards, 2015; Orrell, 2011). The aim of WIL is to produce employable, work-ready graduates through instilling desirable workplace proficiencies (Moore, Ferns, & Peach, 2015). Traditionally, placements were by far the most reported and accepted form of WIL (Rowe, Clark, Bilgin, & Cantori, 2014), but the scope of the term has since broadened. In their far-reaching review of WIL in Australia known as *The WIL Report*, Patrick et al., (2009), employ WIL as an umbrella term to describe a broad range of approaches and strategies that integrate discipline theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum. WIL may include any range of activities including internships, virtual placements, work simulations, practicum, cooperative learning, and industry placements, among others. Service learning is generally accepted to fall under this “umbrella” (Abeysekera, 2006; McLennan & Keating, 2008; Patrick et al., 2009).

Application of Course Content

Critical to both service learning and WIL is learning through the practical application of course content. Integration of course content and its application provide a crucial link between theory and practice and represents an important aspect of both WIL and service learning. Edwards (2015) refers to this link, where the theoretical meets the practical, as providing the “ah-ha” moment. This integration is critical to the very purpose and definition of WIL (Patrick et al., 2009), and there is extensive research that supports how service learning also links theory and course content to practice (Eyler et al., 2001). It is

inter-relationships between practice and knowledge, alongside the importance placed on practice (Higgs, 2012), where application of theoretical concepts in work practice allow a deeper learning that is compounded by the requirement for applied judgement and reasoning.

Reflection Skills

Reflection is often used as both a key learning tool and skill to be developed within both service learning and WIL. Students are required to reflect on their experiences in the field to facilitate deeper learning and reflexivity. Such skills are important to develop as reflection “provides the link between theory and practice that can facilitate the development of a new kind of knowledge that cannot be gained from just having an experience, watching others, or reading about it” (Martin & Fleming, 2010, p. 46). Reflection is a pedagogically valuable tool that greatly contributes to positive student learning experiences in both WIL and service learning (Billett, 2009; Dahan, 2016; Helyer, 2015; Moore et al., 2015). Reflection encourages students to consider the practical application of their coursework and forms an essential part of most of both service learning and WIL programs.

Self-confidence and Identity

Service learning and WIL have been linked to students developing greater self-confidence and becoming more assured of their own identity. Seider and Butin (2012) observe that participating in service learning during college years is positively associated with higher self-confidence and efficacy. Similarly, participation in WIL has also been proven to improve students’ confidence in their own capabilities and develop their understanding of ‘who they are’ (Freudenberg, Brimble, Cameron, MacDonald, & English, 2013). Within wise practice, respect is about equality and fairness, helping others less fortunate, allowing students to re orientate themselves, and helping develop and reinforce identity (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010).

Cross-cultural Competence

Service learning and WIL also place emphasis on wise practice principles of fostering respect for others and cross-cultural competence. Respect for others and teamwork represents a key feature that constitutes a desirable work-ready graduate (Patrick et al., 2009). According to McLennan and Keating (2008), so-called soft skills such as communication skills and learning to work within diverse teams were identified as key learning outcomes resulting from WIL, and are also priorities within wise practice approaches. Furthermore, gaining a cultural awareness of workplaces within their disciplines represents an important learning experience for students (Patrick et al., 2009). Billett (2001) argues that understanding the ongoing and reciprocal processes of learning and knowledge within social situations such as workplaces is a vital skill for students. Both service learning and WIL, as workplace learning environments, encourage the development of these skills. There is increasing dialogue in the academic literature about cultural awareness, cultural competence, or cultural sensitivity, all of which can be regarded as beginning processes. Cultural safety, a Maori concept developed in New Zealand to facilitate nursing staff to provide care that supports a patients ‘personal, social and cultural identity’ (Richardson 2011) and is best regarded as an outcome, much like wise practices, that allows safe service to be determined by those who are receiving the service (Ramsden, 2002). Workplaces are also realizing the importance of inclusion and diversity. Wise practice situates the concept of respect as the form of expression that indicates everyone, every plant and animal, and everything is equal in their ability to live, feel and express themselves (Wesley-Esquimaux & Snowball, 2010).

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education is a broad term that defies simple definition. Traditionally used to refer to the exceptions and entitlements of students with disability, the term has broadened to apply to the diversity of the student population (Harrison & Ip, 2013). The enormity and complexity of the concept of inclusive education led Slee and Allan to write of being defeated before we begin when it comes to defining inclusive education: “to attempt to provide a broad sweep of the commonalities and differences in theorizing class, race, gender and disability as they intersect with education in general, and schooling, is too grand” (2001, p. 174). Booth and Ainscow (2002) employ inclusion as the “unending process of increasing learning and participation for all students” (2002, p. 3). This paper takes a similarly broad definition of inclusion which, as Armstrong et al explain, focuses on how institutions respond to student diversity rather than narrow definitions which focus on promoting the inclusion of specific groups of students within “mainstream” education (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011, p. 31). While inclusive education is widely practiced across many Australian universities through anti-discriminatory policies, how these policies apply to learning outside of the classroom is less explored. The question remains as to what measures can be taken in service learning and WIL programs to ensure inclusive education translates into the field (Harrison & Ip, 2013).

With the wide variety of placement formats available in higher education, a range of potential barriers can prevent the possibility of inclusive education. These are often derived from the diverse nature of the student cohort. In terms of Australia, *The WIL report* identifies several groups of students most likely to be affected by issues of equity and access: “international, employed students/students with family responsibilities, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those with a disability, Indigenous students, and those from regional and remote areas” (Patrick et al., 2009, p. 24).

Language and Cultural Barriers

Language and cultural barriers impact upon international students and students from culturally diverse background and how they participate in WIL and service learning programs. International students are a key group that often find themselves disadvantaged when it comes to service learning and WIL placements. Patrick et al. observed that international students were often less satisfied with WIL experiences and felt frustrated with the lack of equal opportunities for WIL (2009). Language barriers play a role in this, particularly when it comes to understanding colloquial language, discipline-specific jargon, and accents. Furthermore, industry stakeholders may be reluctant to supervise international students based on the fear that their English communication skills may not be fit for the workplace (Harrison & Ip, 2013). Though this is a legitimate concern for some students, language concerns may act as a smokescreen for deeper cultural issues in the workplace (Patrick et al., 2009). In their work with international students on placements, Harrison and Ip (2013) observed that “international students often lack the social networks and cultural capital—or taken-for-granted ‘know-how’—that domestic students have that enable them to more readily fit in with the agency workplace culture while on placement” (2013, p. 231). Language and cultural differences can represent a significant barrier to full and equal participation in WIL and service learning programs.

Loss of Income

A significant barrier to participation in service learning programs is the cost of not being able to undertake paid work. Service learning often represents a significant time commitment from students which may impact their ability to earn an income. *The WIL Report* (Patrick et al., 2009) notes that the demographic of the student body is changing, with more and more students supporting themselves

through part-time work in addition to their studies. This represents a catch-22 for low-income students “whereby their attempts to meet the educational and living costs associated with being a student are undermining the amount of time and attention they can give to their studies” (Patrick et al., 2009, p. 27). Students working within these limitations find themselves either unable to complete WIL or service learning programs or are restricted to large companies that may have the resources to offer paid placements. International students may be further disadvantaged in this respect due to work limitations that are a condition of their visa. Work placement is only allowed if it is a compulsory part of the course, where compulsory means that students cannot graduate without completing the course in which the work placement occurs (Patrick et al., 2009).

Family Commitments as Primary Carer

Service learning and WIL often require significant time commitments which can disadvantage those students with family commitments as a primary carer. Child care is a problem for students, both in terms of costs and negotiating operating hours (Moore et al., 2015). There is significant legal impetus to make options available for students with carer responsibilities. As *The WIL Report* notes, “if students were disadvantaged by being unable to access WIL placements due to their parental status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, or other grounds, then such students could raise a complaint regarding discrimination” (Patrick et al., 2009, p. 26).

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities face unique challenges when it comes to participating in service learning and WIL. How students with disabilities experience WIL and service learning represents an area of future research. While much of the prominent WIL literature (Moore et al., 2015; Patrick et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2009) recognizes that students with disabilities do face challenges, the exact nature of the barriers faced by this group of students remains to be explored. Universities are required by law to make sure that reasonable accommodations are provided for students with disabilities; course conveners often work with university disability support staff to facilitate such accommodations (Patrick et al., 2009).

Rural and Remote Students

Students based in rural and remote areas face several barriers to participation in WIL and service learning. Students are either restricted to the limited number of regional placements or must bear the costs associated with travelling for a placement, such as transportation, accommodation, and time away from paid employment (Patrick et al., 2009).

ENABLERS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Taking a wise practice approach to service learning may work towards addressing these barriers to inclusive education. In order to facilitate inclusive education, it must be incorporated throughout all levels of policy and course design. This is by no means a simple transition, but rather represents a “fundamental paradigm shift” (Slee & Allan, 2001, p. 177). Sustainable inclusive education requires “focusing simultaneously on both institutional and individual factors” (May & Bridger, 2010, p. 5). Though there is undeniable value in preparing students for placements and providing support services, there is the risk of “displacing the responsibility for change onto students rather than the institution” (Harrison & Ip, 2013, p. 240). May and Bridger (2010) observe that such an approach mirrors the move from “a medical model of disability to a social and rights-based model” (2010, p. 31). Rather than expecting students to adapt, policies and courses must be designed with inclusive education as a

priority from the outset. Research has offered several different enablers. The following section outlines some of these options.

Flexible Access to Course and Supporting Materials (Online or Multiple Offerings)

An important enabler of inclusive education is the provision of flexible access to course and supporting materials. This may refer to making learning materials available online or providing multiple course offerings. Flexibility in terms of course offerings ensure that certain groups of students, particularly those students juggling family responsibilities, have equal access to the learning opportunities available (Patrick et al., 2009). Offering flexible options can also ease the pressure on those students experiencing financial uncertainty. As an example, Moore et al. (2015) suggests the simple change from placements that are five days per week for several weeks to one day per week over a longer period (2015, p. 251). Providing flexibility in terms of access to course and supporting materials represents a key enabler to inclusive education.

Language and Cultural Support

Providing English-language and cultural support can act as enablers towards inclusive education. Given the linguistic and cultural barriers faced by some students, providing support in these areas represents a key enabler. In addition to the barriers discussed earlier, international students may be at risk of being relegated to the ethnic sector, which may prevent them from gaining mainstream service learning experience (Harrison & Ip, 2013). The provision of ESL and cultural support gives students the best opportunity to make the most of their placements and overcome any cultural or language barriers they may face.

Broad Selection of Placement Opportunities

Offering a wide selection of placement opportunities can assist in facilitating inclusive education. Providing the option to select placements that suit their requirements and learning goals empowers students and is an example of inclusive education in action. Offering a broad selection of placement opportunities creates a learning environment that caters to the diversity of the student body, rather than making special arrangements for individuals, an approach that May and Bridger term “modified provision (2010, p. 85). This is in stark contrast to “inclusive provision” which offers “flexible and anticipatory arrangements within the curriculum to support all students to succeed” (ibid.).

Financial Support

There are several potential enablers that can ease the financial pressures on students looking to participate in service learning. Offering financial support and opportunities with minimal or no financial impact relieves pressures on low-income students and those who may struggle with the costs, such as child care or transportation, associated with participating in WIL or service learning. Patrick et al. (2009) offer an example employed by one university in Queensland, Australia, that offers scholarships and bursaries for low-income students, as well as additional bursaries specifically related to offsetting the costs of practicums. Although these options can address issues of inclusiveness there are other implications that require consideration before they can be applied to course design.

IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE IN SERVICE LEARNING AND WIL

Based on these considerations, as well as the enablers and barriers of inclusive education in service learning, there are several practical strategies that can be implemented to foster diversity and inclusion.

Online Course Offerings

One potential strategy for encouraging inclusive participation in service learning is that of online service offerings. As discussed, many students are disadvantaged by their physical location and other commitments such as carer duties and paid employment. An alternative option, as explored by Cornelius et al., is that of a “virtual placement, which offers the benefits of business and industrial work experience within a digital context” (2008, p. 289). Virtual placements present an option that recognizes the changing nature of how students learn and the competing demands on their time; flexible learning opportunities are a welcome alternative to the demands of traditional physical placements (Shirley & Davies, 2007). While, of course, not suited to all disciplines or organizations, the provision of virtual placements offers more opportunities to those students who may be disadvantaged in terms of physical access to placements and could represent an alternative to ‘real’ placements (Cornelius et al., 2008). Virtual placements represent just one example of taking advantage of ICTs and the increasingly digitized workforce to provide more inclusive placement options for students.

Access to Resources

A critical strategy for encouraging inclusive education in service learning and WIL is to provide adequate support and access to resources for both students and staff. WIL and service learning are generally considered to be resource-intensive (Harris, Jones, & Coutts, 2010). Not only is adequate staffing vital for course design and delivery, service learning, students require ongoing and, often, intensive support throughout their placements. In the case of WIL, which faces many similar challenges to service learning, resourcing and equitable rewards and recognition for academic and administrative staff has emerged as a critical issue (Bates, 2011; Patrick et al., 2009). In terms of students with disabilities, the provision of support services is not enough. In their study, Fuller et al. (2004), observed that students with disabilities differed in their willingness to seek support and experienced varying levels of assistance from teaching staff: “these differences in experience of provision were not necessarily related to their level of need” (2004, p. 466). Clearly, having support services available is insufficient on its own. Teaching staff must have a clear understanding of said services to provide students with information and to encourage them to access the services as needed.

Academics Working with Community Partners

A key strategy for encouraging inclusive education in service learning and WIL involves academics closely working with community partners. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggests that four key constituencies are critical to the success of service learning programs: institution, faculty, students, and community. Criteria for successful inclusive education in service learning should be informed by institutional goals, as well as the learning foci of faculty and students, and what the community stakeholders hope to gain from participation. A key resource in developing effective partnerships between academic staff and community organizations can be found in HR professionals at the partner organizations. Given their in-depth knowledge of inclusion and diversity, HR professionals may have a level of familiarity with the challenges facing students undertaking WIL or service learning, as such, they represent a key resource in forming meaningful partnerships for inclusive WIL and service learning (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018). Effective partnerships between the institution and faculty, and community stakeholders are critical to the success of service learning (Carrington & Siggers, 2008; Smith et al., 2009).

A further strategy in this respect is to foster diverse teams of academics and community stakeholders. The range of roles, views, and experiences within diverse teams can greatly contribute to the success of

an inclusive education initiative within service learning programs (May & Bridger, 2010). Building close relationships between diverse groups of academics and community partners is critical for ensuring that an aligned strategy of inclusive education can be implemented seamlessly throughout coursework and practical placements.

University-Led Service Learning WIL Projects as Wise Practice

University-led projects designed and implemented within a wise practice framework facilitate collaboration between students, academics and industry. Participating in a purposefully designed project allows a complete student cohort to engage with industry, not just as passive recipients but instead as active and essential partners (Higgs, 2012). Community-based participatory research projects such as university-led service learning and WIL models seek collaborations, participation, empowerment and transformative change (Petrucka et al., 2016) while addressing disadvantage and accommodating the experiences of the individual and the collective. A wise practice approach suggests creating projects that “are inclusive, locally relevant, sustainable, respectful, flexible, pragmatic and encompassing all worldviews, and [considering] historical, societal, cultural and environmental factors” (Petrucka et al., 2016, p. 181). These projects seek to instill within students with a set of skills that are “not just ‘transferable’, but with a wisdom to foster citizen virtues, those who are able to take active and full responsibility not just in their family life, but in the public sphere as well” (Deane-Drummond, 2007, p. 182).

Review Procedures

The final strategy essential for the implementation of inclusive education in service learning relates to the review procedures. Having taken into consideration predetermined criteria for success, there must be clear procedures to measure progress against these criteria. Smith et al. (2009) suggest that the review process is “transparent to all those involved... it takes into account all of the previous assessment criteria as performance indicators; and demonstrates the extent to which each of these criteria have been met” (2009, p. 48). The findings of review should, naturally, be used to inform future improvements to the programs.

CONCLUSION

Inclusive education remains a critical challenge for tertiary education in Australia, particularly for more specialized pedagogical approaches like WIL and service learning. There are significant challenges inherent to delivery of WIL and service learning courses including sourcing appropriate placements and administration costs. Students face any number of barriers that could impact on their ability to participate in, and fully benefit from, WIL and service learning including language and cultural barriers, transportation, financial implications, family commitments, those barriers faced by students with disabilities, and rural and remote students, as well as the availability of appropriate placements. Fortunately, there are several enablers that inform practical strategies that can be implemented to encourage inclusion in service learning participation. Taking a wise practice approach, recognizing the diversity of student populations and implementing key strategies to overcome barriers to participation, may give all students the opportunity to equally benefit from the transformative potential of service learning.

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