



**Work Based Learning**  
at Middlesex University

# **Workplace Learning in Higher Education; an overview of pedagogic research**

**Carol Costley, Middlesex University**



# Models of Work Based Learning

- **There are many but some general principles are usually shared by WBL practitioners:**
- **Broader epistemic issues form many of the intellectual and research bases for developments in work situations**
- **pedagogical understanding that people in work situations already have expertise**



# Approaches to learning

can be understood as:

**'horizontal discourse' Bernstein (1999) which is described as everyday or common sense knowledge which is oral, local, context-dependant and specific, tacit, multi-layered, and contradictory across but not between contexts;**

**social complexity of learning in working which has a multiplicity of interconnections (Antonacopalou, 2005);**

**learning which is 'essentially concerned with the individual and their own practice' (Scott et al 2004).**



# The Field of WBL

- **cuts across disciplines, does not merge them and is concerned with knowledge that is generated and used in practice**
- **may draw upon disciplinary knowledge as an empirical or methodological source if justifiably required**
- **uses generic assessment criteria**
- **is concerned with Mode1 and Mode-2 knowledge which Nowotny et al (2001 p89) state, “has reflexivity, eclecticism and contextualisation that make it inherently transgressive”.**



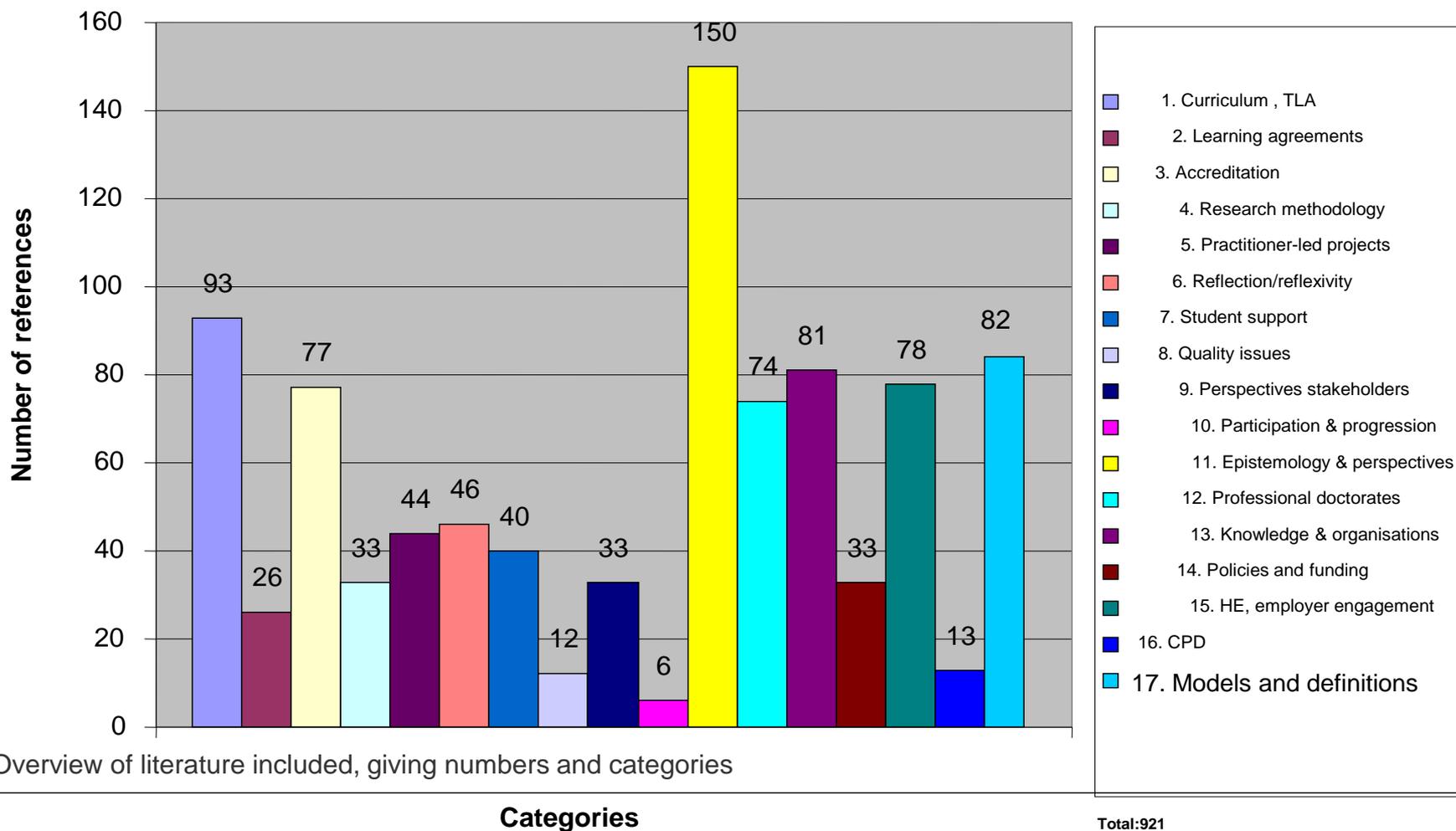
- Confirming the scope of the review & identification of literature
- Searching the literature using a wide range of resources such as online bibliographic databases, journal issues, publication indexes and grey literature sources
- Selecting the literature and creating the database of published and grey literature.
- Creating themes for the literature; producing a range of categories and identifying concepts, contexts, issues relationships between them
- Producing a narrative summary of the review outcomes, and implications for policy and practice



# Nature of literature (two sets)

- Those concerning employee learning normally undertaken by researchers specialising in researching work and learning
- Research and evaluation that refers to the learning undertaken through university-led programmes or courses.
- <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/o...>

## Numbers and categories of research literature on work based learning





# Learning strategies in WBL

- **reflection/reflexivity;**
- **research methodology/ strategies for enquiry;**
- **Planning;**
- **learning agreements/ contracts;**
- **practitioner–led projects;**
- **accreditation of prior and experiential learning (APEL) claims**

# Gaps in the literature



- Limited literature based on empirical evidence
- Little written about various learning strategies e.g. curriculum
- Growing literature on reflection as a concept but less on reflection in practice
- Growing literature about APEL as a concept but very little about making individual claims for credit/accrediting courses outside universities e.g. in-company training schemes.
- Very little literature on research methods that is directly related to employee learning (Action research often used)



## Gaps in the literature cont

- Limited literature on the impact that work-based/employee learning had on individuals as employees, employers and other stakeholders
- Limited literature on the critique of work based learning programmes/courses in higher education even though there are reservations about the substance of some of the programmes and courses.



# Implications for policy, practice and research cont.

-There is significant gap in literature that would be of direct use to work-based learners and tutors designing programmes and supporting wbl students.

-The lack of literature on the impact of work based learning could negatively affect employers and employees perceptions of the impact of work based learning.



# Implications for policy, practice and research

- Academics and managers do not always have a clear understanding of employee learning and its different strategies and models.
- This lack of clarity cast doubts on the practical usefulness of employee learning strategies
- Although there is great deal of research and scholarly work in the broad area of work and learning they do not focus directly on enhancing higher education level employee learning.

# Areas for further inquiry



Work Based Learning  
at Middlesex University

- Employee learning and organisational development requires strong evidence that wbl modules & programmes in universities are making a difference to work situations
- More research that examines the area of employee learning where knowledge content and knowledge-making arises from the workplace
- More research that focuses on both individual and group pedagogies to enhance employer engagement, productivity and innovation.
- A need to for research and development strategies to support tutors and facilitators of work based learning.

# Co-production and collaborative work is needed



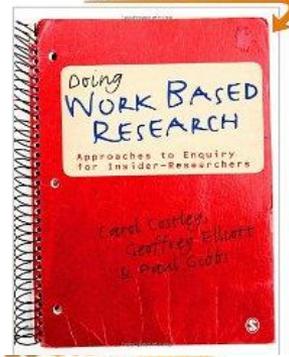
Work Based Learning  
at Middlesex University

- WBL literature is widely published in Education and Health journals: need to publish in other related journals such as Business and general Higher Education to widen scope of interaction between researchers.
- More interaction between researchers in work and learning and practitioners in higher education work based learning.
- More funding for research in the area of work based learning (lack of specific subject disciplines prevents researchers in the area from bidding for research funds)

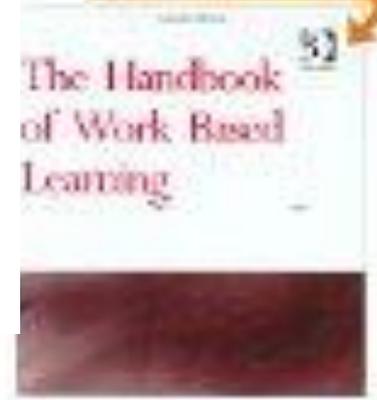


ing  
ersity

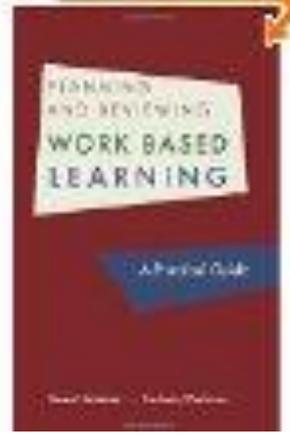
Click to LOOK INSIDE!



LOOK INSIDE!

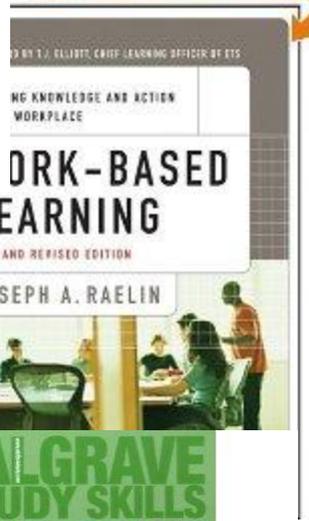


LOOK INSIDE!



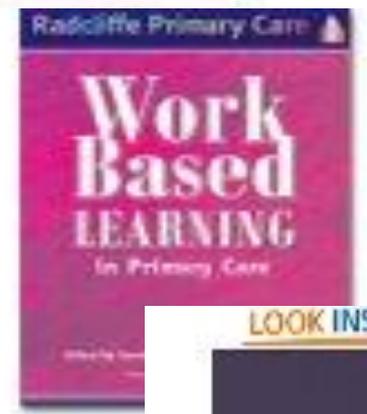
The Politics of Work-based Learning

Click to



WORK-BASED LEARNING NEW AND REVISED EDITION JOSEPH A. RAELEN

Click to



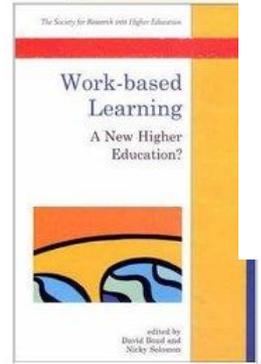
Work Based Learning in Primary Care

LOOK INSIDE!



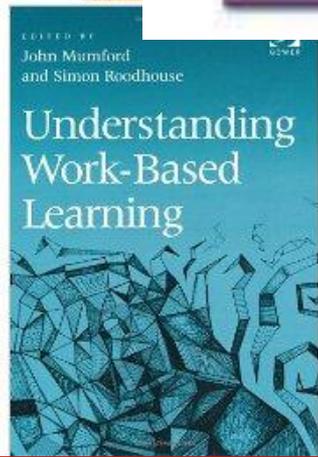
The Designer's Contribution to the Understanding of Work-Based Studies

Click to LOOK INSI



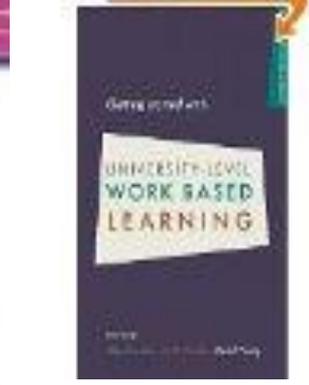
Work-based Learning A New Higher Education?

Click to



Understanding Work-Based Learning

LOOK INSIDE!



UNIVERSITY-LEVEL WORK BASED LEARNING

# WBL pedagogies for academic development



Work Based Learning  
at Middlesex University

**Aim** To gain a better understanding of the pedagogical practices in use in WBL programmes, the underlying rationale/s for these practices and how they are similar to/ differ from other academic programmes.

**Outcome** To provide the basis for the development of guidelines and resources for new and existing HE staff working in the field of WBL.



# Methodology

---

- **Interviews with WBL tutors and other stakeholders**
- **Focus groups**
- **Ongoing dissemination and feedback**



# Constituents of the conceptual knowledge and skill base in WBL

1. Work and context
2. Learning consultancy
3. Transdisciplinarity
4. Enquiry
5. Reflexivity and reviewing
6. Learning strategies used in WBL



# Pedagogical issues

- **Learner-focused**
- **Learner-managed**
- **Adviser rather than supervisor**
- **Expectations are negotiated**
- **Shift to focus on total learning environment**
- **Acknowledges importance of context**
- **Active judgements**
- **Power dynamics**



# Bibliography

- BIS. (2009). *Higher Ambitions: the future of universities in a knowledge economy (09/1447)*: Department for Business Innovation and Skills.
- Boud, D. (2001). Creating a Work-based Curriculum. In D. a. S. Boud, Nicky (Ed.), *Work-based Learning: a new higher education* (pp. 44-58). Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education / Open University Press.



Boud, D., & Costley, C. (2007). From project supervision to advising: new conceptions of the practice. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 44(2), 119-130.

Brennan, J., & Little, B. (2006). *Towards a strategy for workplace learning*: CHERI and KPMG.

Connor, H., & Hirsh, W. (2008). *Influence through collaboration: employer demand for higher learning and engagement with higher education*. London: Council for Industry and Higher Education.



- Costley, C., Abukari, A., & Little, B. (2008). *Literature Review of employee learning*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Costley, C., Elliott, G., & Gibbs, P. (2010). *Work-based Research; approaches to enquiry for insider-researchers*. London: Sage.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks (Calif.): Sage Publications.
- Helyer, R. (2010). *The Work-based Student Handbook*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nixon, I. (2008). *Work-based Learning Impact Study*. York: Higher Education Academy.



---

Rhodes, G., & Shiel, G. (2007). Meeting the needs of the workplace and the learner through work-based learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 19(3), 173-187.

Stephenson, J., & Saxton, J. (2005). Using the Internet to gain personalized degrees from learning through work: some experience from Ufi. *Industry and Higher Education*, 19(3), 249-258.

Wedgwood, M. (2006). *Higher Education for the Workforce: Barriers and Facilitators to Employer Engagement* (DIUS Research Report 08-04): Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills.