Chapter 16
The Challenges of Implementing Post-practicum Initiatives

Janice Orrell

16.1   Introduction

Practica, the placement of students into health-care workplaces during the course of their studies, have long been a common feature of pre-service health-care education curricula. Workplace placements are used as a primary mechanism for developing graduates' capacity to practise and for inducting the next generation of practitioners into the values and culture of their chosen professions. Educational developers within these professions-based programmes of study have paid significant attention to research and curriculum development to ensure students are well equipped prior to entering practice settings. These efforts are grounded in a shared understanding that students need to be adequately prepared to confront the learning challenges in workplaces and to contribute to, rather than disrupt, their host organisations.

The focus of this chapter is on the individual post-practicum initiatives undertaken by health-care education programmes reported in the early chapters of this volume. The intention is to identify the challenges confronted by the individuals who attempt to develop and introduce post-practicum initiatives in their programmes. All of the initiatives aim to develop and evaluate the efficacy of educational strategies to augment post-practicum clinical learning for health sciences students. These initiatives have occurred within a contemporary higher education context that has an overriding interest in practicum as a contributing factor for graduate employability. While understanding the ubiquitous concern for higher education graduates to learn to work and gain employment, this chapter is primarily concerned with the challenges confronted by the project leaders and managers of these initiatives. Also of interest is the efficacy of the strategies embedded in the larger project design, which have been introduced to anticipate and ameliorate the

J. Orrell (✉)
Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia
e-mail: janice.orrell@flinders.edu.au

challenges that project participants might face, and in an effort to reduce or avoid possible threats these challenges may pose to successful project outcomes. The matter of project implementation strategies is of critical importance in the current environment, which tends to count quality in terms of efficiency and outputs. In contrast, quality in this initiative has remained process- and learning-focused, which is in itself a challenge in an environment increasingly driven by an overriding contemporary interest in graduate employability and employment.

16.2 Background Context

16.2.1 WIL as a University Enterprise

Over the last 20 years, universities have incrementally adopted work integrated learning (WIL) as a key enterprise conceived largely as the provision of learning opportunities in workplaces that will assist students to be well prepared for the transition from university to employment. Previously in Australian universities, placements in which students were expected to apply their theoretical learning in work environments within a programme of study were limited largely to professions-based programmes driven by a requirement for registration or eligibility to enter a particular type of employment or profession. As such, practica were limited mainly to medical and health-care-related professions, engineering, and teacher education. Early institutional research and development interests in WIL were focused on auditing practica in and across university programmes, because it was largely invisible in curriculum design and education policy. As such, little was known about how those programmes were enacted or the extent of student, staff, and industry engagement. WIL and its scholarship largely constituted invisible work in universities.

WIL has become a robust field of scholarship and field of practice, both within and across university institutions. Considerable resources from government-funded institutes for learning and teaching in higher education have been expended on projects to develop curricula and the pedagogical resources that will prepare and support students for learning in workplaces (Orrell, 2011; Sachs, Rowe, & Wilson, 2016). Despite the sophisticated curriculum models for WIL that have emerged and the extent of robust scholarship that has occurred, there still exists a conception of students entering work placements as constituting the full extent of a WIL experience. Audits of WIL curricula across universities and a review of funded WIL innovations have identified that robust attention has been paid to students' preparation for WIL. It has also been noted that there is a singular absence of post-practicum education in WIL curricula (Orrell, 2011). This absence constitutes a significant gap in the focus of funded WIL projects, WIL research, and pedagogical models for WIL.

It is evident that while there are calls for greater participation in WIL from industries and professions, the precise nature of the role of university programmes in

relation to WIL is still not clearly articulated. More pragmatically, how universities may best leverage and enhance students' learning in work placements once they return to university classes has largely remained unexamined.

16.2.2   Post-practicum Research and Development

Billett has long argued (Billett, 2006, 2015) that there is a critical role for university education within the WIL sphere, post-practicum. A significant but overlooked role exists for universities to provide curriculum space, as well as pedagogical designs and practices which will assist students in converting their practice experience into practice knowledge. It is notable that, in research and educational development, little deliberate attention has been directed towards developing post-practicum learning pedagogy that will assist students in transforming their practicum experiences into explicit, elaborated practice knowledge, knowledge that can be transferred to diverse practice settings.

This lack of attention to research and curriculum development is the basis of a significant omission in education for practice. The current project, led by Billett (in this volume), has systematically addressed this gap. The project's focus was to explore the range of possibilities in designing post-practicum programmes to augment and enhance the learning that has already occurred in workplace settings and which will assist students in making the transition from university to employment (Perrone & Vickers, 2003).

Learning in practicum settings is notably variable, experiential, transient, largely ad hoc, and always unpredictable and difficult to capture. The philosopher Heraclitus' claim that "man (sic) can never step twice into the same river" is never truer than in learning in workplace settings. This is not a challenge to the validity, utility, or quality of learning that occurs within a practice setting. It is merely to argue that students' practice-based experiences are highly variable because they are impacted by quite diverse and unpredictable influences. As a result, it is important that the learning itself should be contextualised, critically scrutinised, and deconstructed, so that the experiences can be transformed into practice knowledge using the theoretical constructs learned in formal studies.

Such transformative learning opportunities enable practice knowledge to be organised and robust, as well as being transferable and translatable to novel settings. In contrast, there is a common assumption that students will naturally apply their theoretical knowledge to practice in a workplace setting. While this may be true in part, we have also learned that most students go into practice settings with an expectation that they are there to learn from, and model their practice on, expert practitioners and in the process often discount their theoretical learning. Whether this actually occurs is rarely clear. What is clear is that the experience of practice – and the learning derived from it – is more resilient if there have been opportunities to debrief and deconstruct the experience with the guidance of an expert outside of the

setting itself, someone to scrutinise it and evaluate its salience and long-term applicability (Murphy, Halton, & Dempsey, 2008).

Enabling the augmenting of post-practicum learning is a legitimate and critical role of universities that Billett has long advocated (Billett, 2006, 2018). He has now enabled and supported the development and implementation of projects described in the preceding chapters in this volume. This underscores in no small way the valuable contribution of the potential impact of this project for curriculum design and the enduring importance of universities' contribution to practice-based education.

16.2.3   Conditions for Successful Implementation of Educational Innovations

The introduction of innovations into existing programmes of study in higher education inevitably requires changes to be made to established practices; and change, regardless of its apparent value, needs careful management because it upsets the accepted order. This is not a negative aspect of change, but, as claimed by Fullen and Miles (1992, p. 749), "Change is learning, loaded with uncertainty". Managing uncertainty within the process of introducing innovation is critical. Lane (2007), examining the challenges and resistance to the introduction of change in health-care professions, noted several factors that contribute to uncertainty and the resulting resistance. These factors include the presence of strong traditions, failure to perceive the need for the change, disciplinary protection of curriculum time, and lack of time to study or implement change (Lane, 2007, p. 87). Amongst an extensive list of suggestions for managing resistance and uncertainty, Lane suggests that it is important to manage the change process by maintaining knowledgeable, consistent leadership, providing sufficient evidence for the change, using demonstrations and pilot studies, implementing frequent communication, and encouraging wide participation inclusive of students and external stakeholders.

A number of studies have been conducted over the last decade to identify the conditions necessary for managing the successful development and introduction of educational development projects (see, e.g. Southwell, Gannaway, Orrell, Chalmers, & Abraham, 2010; McKenzie, Alexander, Harper, & Anderson, 2005). Common recommendations have been identified in these studies that are relevant to this study. They include effective leadership, a climate of readiness for change, supportive peer networks, and availability of resources and funding.

In examining successful educational innovation projects in higher education, these studies concluded that a particular style of leadership is needed to enhance the chance of successful implementation. Such leadership is sustained and consistent at each level of the project, focuses on the development of a shared vision early on, and sets clear goals; there is a high level of commitment to the success of the project by leaders across the board and a high level of promotion of capacity building. There is also a need for a clear understanding regarding what constitutes the roles

and responsibilities of both leadership and management (Marshall, Orrell, Cameron, Bosanquet, & Thomas, 2011). Under such leadership, it is possible for a fertile environment that is ready for change to flourish. A climate of readiness includes shared recognition of the need for change, tolerance and support for risk taking, sound scholarship of teaching and learning, and a capacity for reflective critique. These conditions constitute a conceptual background to understanding the ways in which the design of Billett's 2016–2017 "Augmenting Post-practicum Learning" project was able to anticipate some of the challenges of the subprojects and minimise uncertainty and resistance.

16.3 The Project

The design of this post-practicum learning augmentation project was based on a proven model developed by Billett in previous WIL projects. Billett has developed a unique approach to executing educational development grants. He selects a particular issue that has emerged in his research as an aspect of WIL practice that is in need of examination or change (see, e.g. Billett, 2011). In each case, the focus is on a challenging aspect of the integration of education and learning to practice in the workplace. In this case, he focused on post-practicum augmentation of learning with a view to enhancing graduate employability. In executing these projects, Billet recruits participants engaged in WIL from universities across Australia, largely from the health-care education sector, who become partners in the project. Once the participants are identified, Billet then establishes a community of practice with these partners who will have access to his expert support in designing, developing, executing, and evaluating pilot projects that will best suit their own particular discipline and workplace context. The goal is to explore the impact and efficacy of new strategies that address the specific WIL practice under examination.

In this post-practicum project, 14 project leaders or leadership teams were recruited and inducted in regard to the challenge. Following this, they were supported in developing their own projects. A year later, each of these project leaders reported their learning and project outcomes to a further 18 recruited WIL practitioner teams. In this second stage, the partners were not necessarily involved in health-care education but were able to use their project experiences as a basis for developing a second generation of post-practicum learning designs.

16.3.1 Project Participants

A number of roles were established in the project design, as follows:

Project leader: The role of project leader, held by Stephen Billett, the grant recipient, was a critical factor in the design. As noted already, Billett is a national and

international leader in this field of workplace learning and employment. This was an important factor in generating trust and confidence in regard to the importance of what the project set out to achieve. His primary role in this project was to provide vision, intellectual leadership, guidance, and support to the subproject participants.

Project manager: A project manager role was also established and carried out by Melissa Cain, who possesses significant expertise in WIL and higher education scholarship. Her role was to manage the processes of each phase and triage challenges so that they could be addressed appropriately in a timely manner. Billett and the project manager were the initial team, together conducting an initial environmental scan to produce an information base to inform the design and development of the individual projects and to extend the subproject leaders' knowledge and awareness of the potential value of, and possible models and strategies for, post-practicum education.

Subproject leaders: Leaders for the subproject participants in the first stage (Class of 2016, n = 14 projects) were health-care practitioners or educators or in fact people who held both roles in health-care-related professions. Leaders for the non-health-care disciplines in the second round (Class of 2017, n = 18 projects) were largely academics from practice disciplines, some still health-care-related, for example, Dental Technology, Pharmacy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Pathology, Public and Environmental Health, and Midwifery, while others were from disciplines such as Education, Design, Science, Media and Communication, Business, and Exercise Science.

External evaluator: A final participant was an external evaluator, myself, Janice Orrell, the author of this chapter. This role was enacted formatively as participant observer at project events and in constructing, administering, and analysing surveys of subproject leaders regarding their progress and the challenges they were confronting.

16.3.2   Project Processes

The project design included quite diverse processes that recognised the need for:

- *Shared learning* to establish a common understanding of the need for, and efficacy of, the introduction of the post-practicum innovation and the evaluation of its impact
- *Social interaction* via communication and formation of cooperative networks
- *Clear goals* against which there would be regular and timely reporting
- *Ongoing supportive tools* to assist in developing and communicating individual projects and in reporting progress

The Learning Phase   Information used to initiate the project's participants was derived from two sources, both of which sought to identify and appraise the effectiveness of the newly introduced post-practicum interventions in promoting

outcomes associated with students' employability, including readiness to practice. This phase included:

- A critique of theoretical, research, and educational development literature pertaining to post-practicum pedagogies for supporting students' transition from their studies to employment in the health-care workforce.
- A survey of students' perceptions of what will best assist them to improve and enhance their employability post-practicum. The students were recruited from multiple institutions and from diverse health professions' programmes of study.

The outcomes of these two measures were published in a project handbook, which formed the basis for elaborated and critical discussion with the leaders and participants of the first 14 projects on day 1 of the *Dialogue Forum*. The in-depth discussions regarding the theory and the students' perceptions at the two-day *Dialogue Forum* formed the basis for the projects' identification and design. The tentative subproject designs were subject to constructive peer review.

Social Interaction The participants came together in the project design for two major project events. The first was a *Dialogue Forum* (February 2016) for the first round of projects, and the second was a *Development Conference* (February 2017) for the next round of projects 1 year later. The purpose of the 2017 conference was for the first round project leaders to report back publicly to enable the second group, which constituted 17 project leaders and teams, to draw from, and build on, the work of the first round of projects. Apart from information sharing and conceptual development, the forum and the conference made a significant contribution towards building strategic peer networks and a nationwide, interdisciplinary community of WIL practice.

Project Reporting Templates were provided to assist subproject leaders to prepare for on-line meetings and for the reporting of their findings 1 year later at the *Development Conference*. Specific dates were set for either on-line or face-to-face interim review meetings to discuss progress and problems.

Formative Evaluation My own scholarship with regard to WIL in Australian universities has been an asset in carrying out the role of evaluator. I enacted a role as an observer to correspondence from the project leaders of the subprojects and as a participant observer at the *Dialogue Forum* and *Development Conference*. In addition, I consulted with the project leader, Stephen Billett, in the development of a survey to be completed by the leaders of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 projects. This was done to help him ascertain the challenges and needs of subproject leaders as they developed their projects and the nature of their expectations, as well as identifying what further support they may need. He was then able to anticipate the project leaders' needs prior to their follow-up meetings. The following list is a synthesis of the questions posed in the survey:

1. What was it that had first attracted them to participate in this project, and were their expectations being fulfilled?
2. How might they rate and explain the ways the *Dialogue Forum* helped them to understand their role and contributions to the overall program; advance their own project with competence; form networks with others who are engaged in similar or related activities; and prepare them for the task of leading a project?
3. How had the leader, Stephen Billett, assisted them with their roles and work within the overall teaching grant and in developing their project, and did they have further needs or suggestions for Stephen to consider in supporting the next group of projects?
4. What key factors had assisted and what factors had inhibited their enactment of their project?
5. What advice would they give to the projects commencing in 2017?

16.4 Evaluation Outcomes

The outcomes of the overall evaluation process have provided the basis for the identification of the challenges experienced by the subprojects and the features of the project design that helped mitigate them. The survey outcomes are not reported in full; however a synthesis of what was learned regarding the challenges and the mitigating factors is outlined.

16.4.1 Challenges Faced by the Subprojects

The key challenges experienced by the subproject leaders were identified in the follow-up surveys of both Stage 1 and Stage 2 projects and in the reporting of the Stage 1 projects. The key challenges reported by the project leaders are as follows.

Time Having sufficient time for the project was one of the most troublesome issues raised. There were a number of different ways that time was construed as problematic. Firstly, engaging with the project competed with project leaders' and their teams' primary work responsibilities. While this challenge applied to both health-care practitioners employed in service delivery and academic staff from the universities, the health-care practitioners felt it especially keenly. It was less of a problem for academic participants in some cases, especially when there was endorsement for, or in some cases delegation of the project by a head of school and the pressure of time was reduced.

Secondly, participants reported that there was a relatively short time frame for them to conceptualise the educational problem and then design and enact the project. A number of these participants, while having a commitment to contributing to effective education of their next generation of practitioners, did not have a primary

role in education and had not previously engaged in educational development and project design. While considerable support was available in project management and design, their awareness of what they did not know in terms of educational design and evaluation contributed to their sense of time pressure.

Managing and Overseeing Projects Leaders especially noted the challenge of recruiting and building a project team and managing the input of busy team members who had varying levels of engagement with the project. Clearly this was felt more strongly by some who had experienced problems due to recruiting team members who had reneged on their agreed commitments, which had created setbacks to timely progression of their projects. Advice proffered by these leaders to the next generation of projects included being highly circumspect in the recruitment of their team and ensuring that all potential team members were clear as to what was required of them.

Managing an Educational Project in Isolation The leaders reported that despite all the support and preparation they received from the project's initial *Forum* and *Conference*, they felt particularly anxious once they returned to their worksite and had to commence conducting the project in isolation from the networks they had established at these events. They looked for, and in some cases engaged in, ongoing contact with other project leaders, especially where they felt there was some synergy between their project designs and strategies.

Gaining Ethics Approval The necessity for gaining ethics approval to conduct the projects and publish the outcomes was a significant challenge for the project leaders. Developing the kind of ethical imagination needed to provide a cogent defence to an ethics committee can challenge the most experienced researcher. In this case, some project leaders were novices to this task, and some had the additional challenge of having to manage the requirements of two jurisdictions, namely, that of a health-care service organisation and that of a university. It is difficult to imagine how this challenge could be constrained in the project design because each innovation has its own unique ethical considerations. Furthermore, ethics committees have their own unique assumptions and interpretations of what matters most in considering what the ethical threats may be and how they should be mitigated.

Recruiting Student Participation The project leaders, both in the survey and in the reporting of their projects at the *Development Conference*, reflected on the complexities of recruiting students and conducting the intervention in the clinical environment (see Grealish et al., 2018). Following on from the previously mentioned challenge of gaining ethics approval, there was much to be mindful of, particularly if the project was a pilot that was not yet a required element within the curriculum.

Locating Appropriate Space for Meeting Many programmes were held in hospitals and health-related facilities, where it was often difficult to find the kind of

spaces that were appropriate for meetings with groups of students and with enough space for "breakout" for small group interactions (Grealish et al., 2018).

Leaders Learning New Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills Participants in the projects also referred to the challenge of having to learn new pedagogies in which they shifted from leader (teacher) to observer and coach in order to encourage students to interact and communicate with each other in learning circles (see Grealish et al., 2018; Rogers, Parker-Tomlin, Clanchy, & Townshend, 2018).

No Constraints or Challenges It must be noted that a couple of the project leaders reported experiencing no constraints. In reflecting on this, it must also be noted that these were, in all probability, seasoned academics who may well have worked on similar projects in the past.

16.4.2 Participant Evaluation of Supports for Successful Project Outcomes

As a counterbalance to the aforementioned challenges, the subproject leaders identified, both in the surveys and in the reporting of their projects, factors that helped achieve their projects' outcomes. The following is a summary of their formal and informal evaluations and explanations of what contributed to the success of their projects.

Ongoing Leadership Support The project leaders were consistent in their appraisal that it was invaluable to have a project leader (Billett) who had an established reputation in the scholarship of workplace learning, as well as a sound track record in leading similar practice-based projects that had multiple subprojects. The project leaders reported that they experienced ongoing support from Billett in developing their project from the outset, which provided opportunities to discuss the overall project with him. In his leadership role, he met with them or provided email guidance on what they might do, how they might do it, and how they might report it. That was particularly the case in reviewing the selected methodology, given that some were novices in educational design and evaluation. Billett's willingness and availability to discuss the project and provide feedback on presentations, abstracts, ethics applications, and interview questions were highly valued. He was regarded as a good critical friend with a wealth of expertise on pedagogy and educational activities.

In addition, support from leaders in the health services and the heads of school in the universities was noted as significant in enabling success. The ongoing support provided by the project manager (Melissa Cain) to the leaders running the subprojects added a sense of security because potential problems were triaged efficiently and effectively.

Good Partnerships Considerable time and resources were allocated to ensuring that participants would know who would be participating in the wider project and how to connect with them. Also, time was allocated at the first meetings to allow for significant attention to formal and informal introductions. These strategies promoted both intellectual and social engagement from key staff at the partner health-care institutions and universities. Having strong peer networks between these different participant cohorts enabled potential barriers to be broken and partnerships established.

Effective Teamwork The establishment of working teams was underscored as being a major factor in enabling success, as noted earlier in the reporting of the significant challenges. This was particularly the case when the teams had representation from both universities and health-care service providers. Accompanying this observation was cautionary advice that future subproject leaders needed to be highly circumspect in the recruitment and building of project teams. Ensuring that those recruited to the project teams understood and valued the expectation of regular team meetings to discuss progress against the timeline was noted as being a significant enabler.

Community of Practice The project leaders reported that they highly valued opportunities to discuss the overall project with their peers and that they were given the chance to have their proposal peer-reviewed, as well as to conduct a peer review themselves. Similarly, they appreciated the presence of a larger community of practice of similar people coming together to develop similar projects that grew from being part of the bigger collegial environment created by the February 2016 *Dialogue Forum*. This aspect of the project design was highly underscored, as was recognition of the teams' palpable willingness to collaborate and work together and their evident enthusiasm and belief in the value of the work. Particular mention was also made regarding the inclusion of clinical and academic teams in project development and delivery and recognition that the individuals at the coalface should be given the opportunity to gain publications as outputs.

Commitment to Quality Student Learning The discourse at the *Development Conference* and in the survey of project leaders recognised that within the project as a whole there continued to be a commonly shared concern for the quality of student learning. This concern was transferred within the individual subprojects. The presence of strong motivation and desire to maximise students' learning in meaningful ways was a significant factor in successfully enacting the project.

Regular Reporting Subprojects were expected, and required, to engage in regular reporting to the central project team. Templates and clear guidelines were provided for each report so that such reporting was focused and efficient. The project leaders reported that this aspect of consistent, structured project management was highly enabling and encouraged compliance.

Funding The project leaders underscored the importance of funding support for the projects. This was a strongly felt issue because it gave credence and a sense of worth to their projects, both in the practice and university settings, and justified the allocation of their time to their projects' execution.

Student Participation Recognition was paid to students' willingness to volunteer to participate in the subprojects, some of which were only pilots at the time and not part of a core curriculum. Recruiting students for piloting innovations had the potential to be a major stumbling block. In both the survey and in the reports at the *Development Conference*, the willingness and level of student engagement was a highly motivating factor.

16.4.3 Advice from Stage 1 Participants to Future Project Leaders and to Billett

Finally, what follows is the advice to the Stage 2 project leaders provided by the Stage 1 participants (Class of 2016, the Health Care profession project leaders):

1. *Grasp and value the opportunity to participate*. The overall message throughout the responses was that engagement in this project, with the benefit of Billett's expertise in the field, his style of providing support and guidance, and the accompanying resources, provided a significant opportunity to be embraced whole-heartedly. In particular, they recommended full engagement and deliberate use of the two-day conference to get their project started. They also advocated staying linked to the bigger project over time while conducting their individual projects.
2. *Selecting the right project*. The importance of selection of the right project was underscored, and careful, focused consideration was recommended. Stage 1 project leaders recommended that it was important to keep the big picture in mind as ideas for its execution were developed. This focus on the big picture needed to be balanced against a focus on issues of current concern, especially those relevant to the students. The class of 2016 argued that the new project leaders should base their final choice on early consultation with end-users and build on the work of others where appropriate. Finally, they underscored the importance of ensuring that the project was doable within the limits of the time frame and available resources.
3. *Selection of the team*. The project leaders were adamant regarding the importance of team selection. They advocated choosing people who would be active and engaged participants, would meet deadlines, and would ensure that stakeholders such as students and other end-users were included in the communication and processes. They advised that these groups should be consulted and engaged from the outset.

4. *Planning*. The project leaders advised that planning and goal setting, involving time frames, meeting deadlines, and clear division of labour amongst the project team members, were all important for successful achievement of the project. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of ensuring that time was used wisely at the initial workshop (*Development Conference*) to clarify and scope the project.
5. *Communication*. Remaining in communicative contact with the project leaders and participants was perceived as very important to ensure their awareness of any issues that may arise. In addition, it was emphasised that communicating and collaborating with similar projects was helpful in debriefing on progress and in gaining ongoing peer feedback.
6. *Early planning for evaluation*. The Stage 1 leaders had come to realise that evaluation design and its processes needed to be planned and established from the outset. They understood that information could be collected and used to ascertain the effectiveness of the intervention and justify its continuation in order for it to become embedded in the ongoing educational programme. They emphasised the importance of early attention because ethics clearance may be required, which may take time. It was also advocated that they look to similar projects when designing the evaluation, so that some cross-project comparisons could be made.
7. The advice Stage 1 project leaders had for Billett for leading and managing the next generation of projects included the need to:

   • Provide links to research in similar fields.
   • Foster small working groups of like projects.
   • Publicise quarterly updates on all projects.
   • Follow these students over the first 2–3 years of their graduate work to understand how activities in their studies may have met their employment needs.
   • Continue to be available for formal and informal discussions.

16.4.4   Challenges Accommodated in Project Implementation

Clearly, Billett had anticipated many of the challenges raised by participants. This is possibly due to his prior experience in conducting similarly designed WIL educational development projects in health science programmes. Through his anticipation, he ensured that the design of the project attended to his predictions. From the outset, time was allotted for considerable discussion with participants regarding the need for post-practicum augmentation of the learning. He also enlisted the students' voices on the matter, which helped to persuade participants that students would be amenable to the introduction of further learning activities related to their recent workplace engagement.

16.4.5   WIL Leadership

Both the intellectual and supportive leadership was a major strength of this project. Billett's leadership in WIL has had a significant impact nationally and internationally on research, programme development, and practice disciplines and professions. Through his scholarship, academics and practitioners in partnership have come to consider that there is a place within a university degree for the deliberate integration of theoretical knowledge and opportunities for practice in workplace settings that are not limited to graduate professional accreditation. This means that the subproject participants knew Billett to be a leading scholar in Australia in adult learning, the integration of work and learning in the VET sector, and then in higher education. It is notable that in the evaluation survey, a significant proportion of the subproject leaders noted that their respect for Billett's academic standing in the field was an important motivation for their engagement in the project. From the outset, in no small measure, his known expertise helped to establish trust and confidence amongst the subproject leaders.

16.4.6   Readiness for Change

Despite the fact that scant attention has been paid to post-practicum augmentation of learning, for some time, Billett has been known for publicly noting its absence (Billett, 2006, 2018). Increasingly, universities have been turning their attention to the question of graduate employability, and the health-care sector itself has been seeking to recruit graduates who were ready and fit for autonomous practice upon appointment and who they could retain in practice settings to achieve more sustainable development of accumulated expertise. Trust in Billett as a leader due to his track record of enabling successful project outcomes and his flexibility and autonomy of individual projects augmented by ongoing support, combined with a ubiquitous concern regarding graduate employability and staff retention, helped to create an environment that accepted the need to address the invisibility of, and gap in, WIL practices in regard to post-practicum learning. Hence, the targeted audience was ready to engage in the project and was largely supported by their institutions at leadership level.

16.4.7   Availability of Resources

Attempting to achieve such a comprehensive and sustained project over 3 years requires significant resources. This project was one of the last funded by the now disbanded Office of Learning and Teaching, itself funded by the federal government. The project leaders all noted that a motivating factor for their engagement was

the availability of funds to carry out this project. This, of course, is an important factor at the inception of a project. It remains to be seen just how much the project resources and outcomes will be sustained, embedded in work practices, and upscaled to other programmes once the funds and the project are completed. The programme was also based on a distributed leadership model, in which subprojects were provided with funds and support for leaders to devise their own focus and strategy for developing a post-practicum learning project.

That said, measures to promote the sustainability of the project's focus and outcomes have been carefully staged to incrementally develop frameworks and strategies generated from practice by the practitioners to foster embedding and upscaling of new initiatives in post-practicum learning. For example, the literature review, survey analysis, and templates for developing the reporting progress ensured that learning within the projects was grounded on what was already known and captured and recorded new learning for future implementation.

16.4.8   The Development of Peer Networks

It is quite clear in the design of the project as a whole that fostering and maintaining supportive peer networks was a high priority. Email communication prior to the Stage 1 project group coming together ensured that participants would know who would be present. In addition, the activities at the *Dialogue Forum* ensured that its title reflected its intention. The *Development Conference* format sustained the development of peer networks and peer feedback, as well as enabling Stage 2 to build on the learning from Stage 1 projects.

16.5   Conclusions

The participants in this project were challenged in their attempts to introduce a new and neglected aspect of WIL, namely, the augmentation of learning post placement. This will always be the case; this project was no exception. If a new education project is to be innovative, it is always going to require changes to everyday practices and ways of thinking, in this case, seeking a place in contested and overcrowded curriculum space and requiring additional practices by time poor and time jealous teachers and students. There is no easy project design formula for designing approaches that will ensure success. Each WIL project occurred in a different context and involved participants with diverse histories, dispositions, and constraints. The intersections of these factors contribute to project design and development being a wicked problem. Just because a solution is found in one instance, there is no guarantee that it will be a good fit in another instance. The interpersonal interactions, motivations, and dispositions do matter. There are, however, some key principles that were enacted that enabled this project and its 32 subprojects to experience

success. Firstly, the design of this overall project took account of the need to ensure that there was a valuing of human interaction and mutual support. Secondly, it regarded project participation at each level to be a learning experience for all participants. Thirdly, it was driven by a clear, unambiguous, and explicit vision that was explained and justified. Fourthly, it was supported by supportive leadership as well as management, both of which had clearly defined roles that focused on their unique contribution to achieving the project's intended goals. Fifthly, it established clear goals, with expectations that engagement with the project should adhere to its original intention and do so well within its planned time frame, providing clear guidelines and resources for doing so.

While Billett's influence is due in no small part to his own scholarship through funded research and fellowships, it has also been directly impacted by his consistent approach in such projects, focusing on niche issues and exploring their development directly with those who will lead its practice in the longer term. He and the participants of other similar projects of which this is just one instance grapple with a single issue and then explore and document multiple ways in which it may be confronted through supported implementation of innovations within the practice area.

The projects themselves are well on the way to establishing and embedding new practices in related practicum education and have been systematically evaluated so that they are evidence based and can then be shared, embedded, and upscaled. Most projects were evaluated systematically using summative assessment, which can be used to justify their uptake by others. It is noted that many of the projects had devised sound learning activities. However, aside from the achievement of the project goals, the projects were productive learning experiences in and of themselves for both students and their teachers. In addition, these projects have been vehicles for the enhancement of mature, productive relationships between health-care providers and academic educators of the next generation of health-care practitioners.

Given the significant resources expended on securing work experience for students across the full range of university programmes, this project has direct relevance and utility across the Australian higher education sector. Hopefully, the sector will welcome and value its outcomes and will support its impact through embedding, adapting, and upscaling the new models of post-practicum learning in curricula across diverse academic programmes.

References

Billett, S. (2006). Constituting the workplace curriculum. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 38*(1), 31–48.

Billett, S. (2011). *Curriculum and pedagogic bases for effectively integrating practice-based experiences*. Strawberry Hills, Australia: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

Billett, S. (2015). *Integrating practice-based experiences into higher education*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Billett, S. (2018). Augmenting post-practicum experiences: Purposes and practices. In S. Billett, J. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Fullen, M., & Miles, M. (1992, June). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan, 73*, 745–752.

Grealish, L., Mitchell, M., Armit, L., van de Mortel, T., Shaw, J., Mitchell, C., et al. (2018). Using learning circles to develop intersubjectivity. In S. Billett, J. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & W. Nijhof (Eds.), *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Lane, I. (2007). Change in higher education; understanding and responding to individual and organisational resistance. *Journal of Veterinary Medical Education*, *34*(2):85–92, Spring, AAVMC.

Marshall, S. J., Orrell, J., Cameron, A., Bosanquet, A., & Thomas, S. (2011). Leading and managing learning and teaching in higher education. *Higher Education Research and Development, 30*(2), 87–103.

McKenzie, J. A., Alexander, S. A., Harper, C., & Anderson, S. (2005). *Dissemination, adoption and adaptation of project innovations in higher education*. Report commissioned by the AUTC for the Carrick Institute, Sydney.

Murphy, M., Halton, C., & Dempsey, M. (2008). The transfer of reflective engagement from social work education into the workplace: A study of the value of scaffolded reflection. *Irish Educational Studies, 27*, 71–80.

Orrell, J. (2011). *WIL good practice report*. Sydney, Australia: Office of Learning and Teaching.

Perrone, L., & Vickers, M. (2003). Life after graduation as a "very uncomfortable world": An Australian case study. *Education & Training, 45*(2), 69–78.

Rogers, G. D., Parker-Tomlin, M., Clanchy, K., & Townshend, J. (2018). Utilising a post-placement critical assessment task to consolidate interprofessional learning. In S. Billett, J. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Sachs, J., Rowe, A., & Wilson, M. (2016). *2016 good practice report: Work integrated learning (WIL)*. Sydney, NSW: Office for Learning and Teaching, viewed 11 Jul 2017 at: http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/resources/WIL%20Report%20final%202017.pdf.

Southwell, D., Gannaway, D., Orrell, J., Chalmers, D., & Abraham, C. (2010). Strategies for effective dissemination of the outcomes of teaching and learning projects. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 32*(1), 55–67.