# The Educational Worth of Post-practicum Processes and Contributions and in Prospect

**Denise Jackson, Janice Orrell, Faith Valencia-Forrester, and Stephen Billett**

## 1 Augmenting Higher Education Students' Workplace Experiences

Globally, providing higher education students with workplace experiences has become increasingly common and, particularly, in countries with advanced industrial economies. Arrangements that earlier characterised niche approaches, such as the cooperative education movement in North America (Grubb & Badway, 1998) and elsewhere (Eames & Coll, 2010), the sandwich approach in United Kingdom and those with a work-based approach (Evans, 2001; Roodhouse, 2007) have now become mainstream. Once restricted to occupations that had specific and regulated performance requirements (e.g. medicine, nursing, teaching), the need for higher education students to have workplace experiences has become universal. This situation has seemingly arisen as the importance of graduate employability has become a central issue for universities, students and governments (Billett, 2015; Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). Commensurate with growing state and personal investment in higher education has come enhanced expectations that this investment will lead to employment aligned

D. Jackson (✉)
School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Joondalup, WA, Australia
e-mail: d.jackson@ecu.edu.au

J. Orrell
College of Education, Flinders University, Adelaide, SA, Australia
e-mail: janice.orrell@flinders.edu.au

F. Valencia-Forrester
Service Learning Unit, Learning Futures, Griffith University, Nathan, QLD, Australia
e-mail: faith.valencia-forrester@griffith.edu.au

S. Billett
School of Education and Professional St., Griffith University, Mount Gravatt, QLD, Australia
e-mail: s.billett@griffith.edu.au

with the focus, level and duration of higher education programs. Consequently, there has become a growing demand from students in all kinds of university programs to have access to workplace experiences as part of their university studies, and for these experiences to be effectively integrated into their degree programs (Patrick et al., 2008). Given the personal and institutional (i.e. education institution and workplace) investment in these experiences, how best they can be optimised has become an educational priority (Billett, 2011; Cooper et al., 2010; Orrell, 2011). As proposed earlier in this edited volume, this concern to optimise these experiences appears premised on four factors (Billett & Valencia-Forrester, 2020).

Firstly, all educational sectors are seeking workplace experiences for their students to either make them aware of the requirements of the world-of-work or preparation for specific occupations. As a result, securing work placements and practicums for higher education students has become increasingly difficult given the demands being made on workplaces by universities as well as vocational education colleges and high schools for their students to access these experiences.

Secondly, often, the available workplace experiences are not of the kind and duration that are sufficient to assist to develop the kinds of employability capacities for which they are being sought by higher education programs. Whereas there are accepted practices and funded arrangements to provide rich and supportive experiences within teaching hospitals to support students in medical, nursing, other healthcare discipline and also in schools to support student teachers, such infrastructure is less available in other sectors that do not have traditions of support and access to funding. Given financial constraints and resource limitations, it is highly unlikely that the kinds of support available in healthcare and education can possibly be extended across the entire range of disciplines that prepare graduates for specific occupations. Hence, alternative approaches to providing support and guidance are required.

Thirdly, providing experiences and supporting the kinds of student learning intended by higher education institutions may not be a priority or a possibility even for many of those workplaces with traditions of support and is a far lower priority in many others. The imperatives of workplaces are focused on the goods and services they generate, and these are their overwhelming priorities. In so far as students' requirements for workplace experiences can be aligned with what ordinarily occurs within workplaces, their needs can be met. However, with the demands for performance in both public and private sector workplaces, increasingly the provision of experiences outside of those that are central to workplace imperatives are unlikely to be provided. For instance, it is often reported that hospitals are unable to provide the specific kinds of experiences desired by nursing and medical faculties.

Fourthly, there is a growing expectation that universities will provide all students with these kinds of experiences and that students will directly benefit from them in ways that promote their employability. Indeed, some universities have practicum experiences as a central element of their marketing to attract students who are increasingly concerned about securing employable educational outcomes by the time they graduate (Cain, Le, & Billett, 2019). As the costs to individuals and the debts they incur to participate in higher education gains a growing emphasis that relates directly to employment, so the expectations increase that such outcomes will be realised. Unsurprisingly, there is a growing emphasis and expectation now on

educational provisions that prepare students to be employable upon graduation. This includes being 'ready' to make the transition from higher education to work practices as smooth and as effective as possible. That is, universities are taking up the responsibility to promote graduates' employability: to develop graduates' ability to secure employment, to be effective in employment and to provide the basis for sustaining and advancing their employment. Achieving this outcome is, of course, problematic, because until they are employed, it is difficult to know the kind of requirements for the specific circumstances of their employment. Nevertheless, providing workplace experiences and integrating them into the course content holds the prospect of assisting graduates to make that transition.

It follows then from these four sets of factors that there is a growing emphasis within tertiary education (i.e. higher and vocational education) on providing experiences that assist graduates' employability. The intention in focusing on augmenting workplace experiences through post-practicum interventions is aligned with the goal of promoting that employability. As noted in the introductory chapters, providing workplace experiences for students is insufficient, these experiences need to be mediated to optimise their educational potential and to direct the learning that arises from them to the kinds of education goals that will assist graduates' employability. Thus, the projects that are reported in this volume all sought to augment, extend or optimise students work experiences through post-practicum interventions that were directed to specific educational purposes. Here, the aim is to draw out findings from these projects and, collectively, identify the contributions that arise from these studies in ways that focus on improving student learning experiences and graduate capability outcomes.

## 2   The Post-practicum Interventions: Purposes and Practices

The 13 projects described and discussed in the contributions to this volume spanned a diverse range of disciplines, such as pharmacy, psychology, business, physiotherapy, education, occupational therapy and journalism. However, they focused on quite distinct kinds of educational purposes and adopted a range of practices, which are worthy of a brief overview.

### 2.1   *Educational Purposes*

There are a range of educational purposes to be achieved through integrating and augmenting students' workplace experience within the overall course of study. In these projects, some focused on broader educational purposes, such as developing occupational identity and capacities in their assessment, whilst others focused on more specific purposes. For instance, Edgar, Sutherland, and Connaughton (2020) provide experiences that would make students aware and ready for the requirements

of physiotherapy work beyond graduation, through the provision of targeted experiences. Gribble and Netto (2020) identify and validate the means by which students could critically appraise their own and others' practice with the intention to improve graduates' effectiveness as occupational therapists. Heck, Grainger, Simon, Willis, and Smith (2020) are concerned to provide a framework for teachers to, similarly, appraise their own and others' practices as teachers with a focus on improving their self-efficacy and capacity to address novel challenges that they might face in classrooms. Following this trend, Murray, Roiko, Sebar, and Rogers (2020) focus on promoting professional identity and efficacy in healthcare students through fostering critical self-appraisal of their experiences as well as peer appraisal of students' experiences. Similarly, Palesy and Levett-Jones (2020) focus on developing professional dispositions within cohorts of student nurses. As with those above, there was often an implied concern about students readiness to face the challenges of practice. This was evident also in Wake's (2020) focus on resilience for journalism students who might be find themselves in confronting situations and, the evidence suggests that there may be little support for them in, or from, their workplaces. In a different, but also broad focus, Patrick and Webb (2020) seek to generate student efficacy through promoting a work ethic as well as a focus on service with the intention of being broadly applicable across a range of occupations.

Some projects have more specific educational purposes. Antwertinger, Larkin, Lau, O'Connor, and Santos (2020) are concerned about developing students' ability to utilise and benefit from feedback. In addition, the initiative was concerned that students should gain appreciation of the role of feedback and how it can be used to support their efficacy and resilience, including their capacity to respond constructively to negative feedback. Boag-Hodgson, Cole, and Jones (2020) develop and validate an instrument to assist provide valid assessments of students' practice learning based on occupational expectations. Their intention is that the instrument could be developed across a series of placements. Valencia-Forrester (2020) uses a group debrief process that specifically focuses on developing informed or wise practice, by highlighting and discussing instances of those practices that were evident in journalism students' placement in major events. Hains-Wesson and Ji (2020) focus on developing team-based work capacities using projects and assessments to develop collaborative capacities for business students. Jackson and Trede (2020) focus on developing the capacities for self-authorship through explicitly engaging students in processes that seek to reconcile personal and professional dispositions.

Through this array of educational purposes selected as the imperatives for the projects there are both broader and more specific focuses. It is noteworthy that the imperatives selected by these educators have some similarities. There is a clear focus on student readiness, assisting them develop and sustain the occupational identity as they engage in work activities and assessments and there are concerns about occupational competence and capacity building are underpinned by strong dispositional elements such as self-appraisal, professional identity, self-efficacy and resilience.

## 2.2   *Educational Interventions*

There was also a range of interventions selected by the project teams, as shaped by their specific imperatives. Some of the projects implemented a post-workplace learning workshop or debrief session where students undertook small group activities to critically appraise their experiences. The foci of these activities differed but they aimed to engage and enhance the students critical thinking and peer learning, as directed to enhancing aspects of student employability, such as self-authorship (Jackson & Trede, 2020), professional identity (Edgar et al., 2020; Heck et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020), resilience (Valencia-Forrester, 2020; Wake, 2020), and seeking, giving and receiving feedback (Antwertinger et al., 2020; Boag-Hodgson et al. 2020). Some used 'informal' learning circles where students were placed into small groups and encouraged to share and discussed their experiences in relation to a specific topic (Jackson & Trede, 2020; Murray et al., 2020). Most interventions took place in a face-to-face environment with only a limited number of exceptions that implemented online modules and reflective activities.

Other projects adopted more of an individual-based approach and their post-practicum intervention encouraged students to critically appraise their workplace experience through a survey (e.g. Heck et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020) or interview (Bacon, Kellett, Ting Chan, & Yong, 2020; Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2020). There were also projects that focused on trialling and/or developing an effective reflective or evaluative tool for future use and wider dissemination. For example, Boag-Hodgson et al. (2020). consulted with key stakeholders to develop a competency assessment tool to gauge workplace performance and improvements over time, while Gribble and Netto (2020) encouraged students to experiment with three different forms of reflective practice (i.e. written, video, artistic) and evaluate their preferred format to inform their future use. As well as implementing, trialling and evaluating a range of different individualised activities, collectively, these interventions encouraged students to consider diverse aspects of their workplace learning experience, as well as evaluate certain capabilities related to their employability.

Irrespective of the individual versus group approach, some of the projects recognised the opportunity presented by the post-practicum intervention to evaluate the transformative impact of the workplace learning experience. Some evaluated the intervention with a pre- and post-capability assessment to evaluate learning gain (e.g. Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2020), while others implemented a one-time post-intervention evaluation (e.g. Boag-Hodgson et al., 2020). There was also a mix in terms of the structure and timing of the interventions. Most projects chose to implement their intervention(s) towards or at the end of the workplace learning experience while some combined this with interventions while students were in the workplace. There were several projects whose students took part in multiple placements, allowing their students' learning during the intervention to inform their future campus-based and workplace learning. Many projects, occured in disciplines in which workplace-based experiences are usually elective and also often include a capstone experience in the course structure. Often, these capstone experiences are

for final year students who have undertaken WIL and do not subsequently return to the workplace as part of their university studies.

Some of the interventions were embedded as compulsory elements of courses and course requirements, whereas others were voluntary activities for which WIL students were encouraged to participate. Approximately two-thirds of the projects embedded the intervention into teaching and learning within the curriculum, while the remainder were implemented on an extra-curricular and voluntary basis, although assigned to a specific academic unit of study. Three of the interventions were embedded into assessment activities. In terms of the facilitation of the interventions, all were led by educators with three of the projects involving collaborative engagement of external or industry partners in the delivery of interventions. Only three of the projects were conducted online and these were implemented as a mix of both face-to-face and online interventions.

So, these 13 projects have quite a range of educational purposes. Although much and many of them are associated with core issues of student readiness to participate in the selected occupations, they represent a range of educational interventions to augment students' work experiences, and their modes of implementation also vary. All this is helpful as it provides a stronger platform to identify challenges, valuing and outcomes of post-practicum interventions. It is these qualities that are now discussed.

## 3   Challenges with Post-practicum Interventions

Identifying challenges associated with the implementation and enactment of these educational interventions is important to inform how practice might progress in the future. For instance, in the first phase of the study (Billett, Newton, Rogers, & Noble, 2019) from which these projects comprise the second, the issue of student engagement was pervasive and ubiquitous. That is, students were reported as being reluctant, cautious or even 'time jealous' in their engagement with these educational interventions. This was reported as being the case even when the students found value or worth in the interventions (Cardell & Bialocerkowski, 2019). Here, in this second phase projects, issues of student engagement were again found to be central. Several project leaders observed difficulties with students understanding the value and importance of the targeted capability or practice in post-practicum activities. For example, students fail to understand the critical importance of giving and using feedback, instead considering feedback as 'telling'.

Edgar and colleagues (Edgar et al., 2020) advocated the importance of embedding interventions and overcome apathy and better engage students. Adding to this approach, Hains-Wesson and Ji (2020) asserted that encouraging students to lead, manage and shape the post-practicum intervention themselves with their peers elicits the highest engagement outcomes. This focus on student engagement is important as it emphasises the quality of outcomes likely to occur from effortful commitment to enhancing their learning. Billett et al. (2019) highlighted the

importance of strategically engaging students when they found that healthcare students preferred facilitator-led activities, rather than those in which there was peer to peer leadership. The importance of an expert facilitator was supported by Wake (2020) who found that the moderation role of an expert in guiding listening circle conversations was welcomed by students and meant that students could be directed to access support networks.

However, some of the challenges noted in the chapters relate to the topic of the intervention, rather than implementing the intervention itself. In psychology, where students undertake multiple placements, it was noted that students need to understand their level of attainment across successive placements in order to manage and regulate their learning (Antwertinger et al., 2020). This project found that it was difficult to implement an intervention and explore development without the same standards linking performance on successive placements. Another frequently noted challenge was students' inability to relate their practicum experiences to their own employability, and in turn to articulate their achievment to industry in recruitment processes. Hains-Wesson and Ji (2020) recognised the lack of support and guidance for educators in making choices regarding how to design post-practicum interventions that will better connect education and work. In a related challenge, they observed the difficulties their students experienced in presenting ideas verbally and the challenges posed by students' perceptions of undertaking teamwork activities as part of post-experience initiatives. Jackson and Trede (2020) found that students did not always capture their deliberations, concerns and emotions during the workshop. They interpret this as students either not following the reflective activity processes or perhaps being uncomfortable in sharing their emotions with others. Further, they found that students whose workplace learning was somewhat limited in terms of access to relevant and challenging work, found it more difficult to engage in worthwhile discussion and sharing of experiences. This suggests the importance of student having experiences that allow them to share them and critically appraise not only what they have experienced, but also other students' experiences. In these ways, there are a series of challenges to make the integration and augmentation of these learning experiences effective. This then leads to the question of whether these are ultimately worthwhile educational experiences and should be promoted and advanced within higher education institutions.

## 4   Worth of Post-practicum Interventions

The worth of the post-practicum intervention was supported by most project teams. They often observed how most students responded positively to the intervention, finding it helpful for connecting the targeted aspect of their employability with future work. Palesy and Levett-Jones (2020) when reporting on the value of interventions across multiple practicums noted they promoted positive changes to students' clinical practice, career progression and increased confidence. As noted, Antwertinger et al. (2020) found that the worth of these interventions was

particularly apparent among students with multiple placements as they could use their learning iteratively between the experiences in workplaces, the interventions in the education situation when they returned to workplaces. Some of the projects noted a change in student attitude and behaviour as a result of the intervention and the importance of the intervention for giving students dedicated time to process their experiences on placement (Heck et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2020; Valencia-Forrester, 2020; Wake, 2020).

Consistent with many others who strongly advocate that students should engage in a critical appraisal of their experience or reflection as a foundational element of effective work integrated education (Billett et al., 2019; Smith, 2012), the quality of the post-practicum intervention is quite salient in encouraging or promoting students' engagement in that kind of activity. In different ways and forms, critical appraisal or reflective activity was widely reported across the projects. Valencia-Forrester (2020), in her implementation of a university-led work integrated education event included a group reflective debrief. She found the debrief activity to be critical for students to gain a greater contextual understanding of the activities in which they had been engaged and its links and association to the journalism course and journalism practices. Similarly, Murray et al. (2020) found the learning circles were critical for confronting dysfunctional or defensive behaviours that may otherwise prevent students from realising the full potential of the placement experience in relation to role transition. Significantly, the projects found that these kinds of experiences press students into considering issues that they might otherwise not have wanted to engage. However, the process of engaging students in critical appraisals is important, and not all are as welcomed or deemed to be as effective as others. Despite the widely recognised value of reflection, Gribble and Netto's (2020) intervention was driven by the mode of reflection commonly used in university education (i.e. a written form) and this was not always well aligned with critically appraising the professional practice they have just encountered. Their intervention recognised that universities need to provide multiple modes to cater for diverse learning needs and preferences particularly in relation to reflection. They found that students prefer verbal reflective format as it is easier for reflecting on emotional responses and aligned better to reflection in their industry setting (healthcare). This finding is similar to what (Levett-Jones, Courtney-Pratt, & Govind, 2019) found in the earlier phase of this project. That is, by using oral-based approaches to articulate their clinical reasoning, student nurses were able to practice and develop capacities associated with their professional practice through these post-practicum interventions.

There was some evidence that these post-practicum interventions could lead to adaptable outcomes. Some interventions, for instance, were recognised as important for encouraging students to connect 'theory with practice', by encouraging them to consider what they had experienced and learnt in their work placements and identify the conceptual premises that would allow them to adapt and apply in different ways and contexts than what they had experienced during the practicums (Antwertinger et al., 2020). Other interventions also prompted students to consider and share moments of conflict and unforeseen incidents which challenged them while in the

workplace. Sharing of these encounters and situations may better equip these students to deal with similar circumstances in the future and prepare them for their transition to the workplace (Gribble & Netto, 2020; Jackson & Trede, 2020; Murray et al., 2020; Valencia-Forrester, 2020). More to this, Jackson and Trede (2020) noted the congruence amongst students' experiences prompted vibrant and engaged discussions during their post-practicum workshop. Many of them had experienced reactions that were negative (e.g. tension, uncertainty, frustration etc) and students welcomed the opportunity to share these and hear that others experienced similar issues. Through that sharing, they came to understand that these issues were not their fault or a personal issue, but rather a consequence of practice. Again, this finding is similar to earlier work in which Forde and Meadows (2011) found that the opportunity of journalism students to discuss their experiences permitted them to understand some of the practices within media workplaces that cause individuals to be dissatisfied and frustrated with their practicum experiences.

Heck et al. (2020) highlighted the worth of these interventions for the educators, as well as students. They noted how educators have gained insights through engaging with the collective experience of the students and across a range of practice teaching contexts which provided rich analogies and examples for theory-practice connections when delivering course content. So, it seems that their post-practicum interventions are likely to be perceived as educationally worthwhile when utilised in ways that engage students in activities that are central to their immediate concerns. Moreover, projected plans for employment can be more easily aligned with the occupational practice for which they are being prepared.

These deliberate post-practicum interventions have the potential to address some of the difficult aspects of preparing students for professional practice and seeking to make their transition to practice as smooth as possible. The ability of these interventions to assist students to align their conceptual understandings (i.e. theory) with what is occurring within the occupational practice provides a vehicle to develop a level of understanding that can assist them adapt and utilise that knowledge in circumstances other than those in which they were initially learned. This of course is very important, educationally, for several reasons. Firstly, one of the first challenges the students will confront is applying what they have learnt in the program to their first job. Most likely, that job and the circumstances in which it is enacted will be different to that which they have encountered in their practicums. So, the ability to not be constrained by what they have initially experienced, and to have understandings which can extend the reach of what they have learnt to other circumstances, is an important initial step into paid work and effective practice. Moreover, as the kind of activities that they will engage with will most likely be different and more demanding than those in which they engage in their practicum, their capacity to apply their professional knowledge will be premised upon having the ability to adapt to those circumstances. Then, there is the important goal of learning across working life that is most likely to be supported by these kinds of understandings. Hence, anything that educational provisions can do to develop principle-based understandings that permit the adaption of what has been learnt in the practicum and educational settings to other circumstances, is worthwhile.

It is also noteworthy that many of the students' concerns are associated with their sense of self, evolving capacities and nascent identity as an occupational practitioner. It is these concerns that have been the focus of many of the intended purposes of the post-practicum interventions selected for the projects. Again, these are often difficult and confronting outcomes to achieve and, are unlikely to be met by didactic presentations and reading of text, although these may help. Instead, the opportunity for sharing, comparing and critically appraising experiences provides means for students to develop insights, tolerance and resilience for what they encounter and for what they might find professionally and personally confronting. The important point here is that these intra-personal and inter-personal educational outcomes are often very difficult to articulate and achieve. Therefore, if these post-practicum interventions can assist address them, there is the potential for achieving significant educational benefits.

Finally, it is worthwhile noting that whilst only a small number of projects involved industry partners in their intervention (Edgar et al., 2020; Hains-Wesson & Ji, 2020; Valencia-Forrester, 2020), the value of this connection was strongly advocated by one project as a means of enhancing authenticity and improving student engagement. Making this connection aligns with a wider recognition of the value of industry and educator collaboration in the design and delivery of higher education programs – particularly work-integrated learning – for preparing students for future careers (Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014). These collaborations, however, do present challenges. Industry may be reluctant or unable to participate due to time and resource constraints. There also may be an inability to identify projects that are meaningful for all stakeholders, and there are concerns with the level of administration and risk management processes (Department of Industry, 2014; Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns, & McLaren, 2017). So, beyond the immediate experiences and learning of students, there is the potential for connections with industry partners that will inform and shape the qualities of experiences that students have within higher education institutions. When these connections are developed in ways that are collaborative and offer benefits that make worthwhile contributions to education programs and workplaces, then they are the basis for mature and productive engagements of the kind that are central to education provisions that respect, utilise and integrate education and the workplace experiences.

All this points to a set of broader implications for the ways in which post-practicum experiences can support the quality of students experiences and assist in guiding how students come to reconcile, utilise and direct what they have learnt in both the formal education and workplace settings towards attaining both their personal and occupational goals.

## 5   Implications for Broader Education

Industry desires graduates to be active and competent practitioners, who have the capacity to perform effectively, which includes the ability to respond to new challenges and to critically appraise and adapt to new circumstance. From the projects discussed here, there is some evidence that post-practicum interventions provide a valuable opportunity for students to engage in reflection, with the support of educators and industry partners, to better prepare them for their transition to the workplace. The projects highlighted the value of deliberately designing interventions that engage students with diverse learning styles. They also affirmed that assessment and evaluation can be designed to contribute to critical reflection on the practicum experiences and learning.

These various projects highlighted the importance of fostering student agency to fully engage with post-practicum interventions, along with the other initiatives and activities designed to enhance students' employability. Embedding post-practicum interventions into the curriculum, including assessment activities, may encourage students to be proactive with respect to not only taking part in the intervention, but also relating their experiences and outcomes to enhance their own employability. In particular, the interventions may serve as an important connection between students' workplace learning and their awareness of their own capabilities and achievements and articulating these two key stakeholders, including prospective employers. Also important was the need to engage not only students, but also industry in both the design and implementation of post-practicum learning. Involving industry may serve to foster students' perceptions of the authenticity of the activities as well as the relevance to their future careers and, as a result, enhance students' engagement in the post-practicum programs.

### 5.1   Post-practicum Intervention: Augmenting Students' Workplace Learning Experiences

In the first phase of projects (Billett et al., 2019), all of which were conducted in the healthcare sector, four key factors were identified arising from the findings of those projects that were salient for shaping the effectiveness of post-practicum interventions. These were:

- students' readiness to engage in these interventions
- managing student engagement
- considerations about both voluntary and compulsory activities
- having a safe social and psychological environment in students can share and compare their experiences.

To appraise the salience of these four factors, each of these factors is now considered briefly to advance understanding of how considerations for implementing post-practicum interventions might progress in the future.

### 5.1.1 Students' Readiness to Engage in These Interventions

Learner readiness refers to the degree by which what learners know, can do and value allows them to engage with new experiences and learn effectively from them. That is, the extent and qualities of their conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge that are helpful in how they can construe and construct knowledge from that which they currently possess. Whilst some theories of readiness are associated with developmental stages, more broadly, the existing capacities of individuals will shape the degree by which they can construct knowledge from what they experience. Moreover, and of essence, this process is likely to be person-dependent in some ways. That is, students, like all kinds of other learners, will bring their person – particular configurations of conceptual, procedural and dispositional knowledge to the experiences that they encounter. Their readiness shapes both what they experience and the process of experiencing, which leads to change in what they know, can do and value. There is evidence of student readiness being a salient concern in these studies. For instance, Antwertinger et al. (2020) found that many of their students (and supervisors) fail to understand the value and the processes for giving and using feedback. Consequently, because of this, they report that students fail to actively seek feedback and to use it effectively. What these authors suggest is that, for feedback to be effective, students need a positive mindset and resilience to deal with it positively. However, as with Noble et al. (2019) project in the first phase of this teaching grant, Antwertinger et al. (2020) found that students' attitude to feedback changed as a result of the workshop from uncertain and anxious to understanding feedback as a tool for learning. This finding emphasises that student readiness to learn effectively can be supported through specific interventions directed towards the kind of experiences they are likely to encounter in the program of study.

Preparing students to be ready for their employment beyond graduation was reinforced in the findings from Edgar et al (2020) project that concluded students did not know how to relate their practicum experiences to the specifics of a job application. That is, they were unsure about how their experiences related to the field of practice and what might be expected of them by those who might be interviewing them for jobs within healthcare. Aligned with this concern is that the experiences in higher education institutions may not lead to the kinds of capacities that are required for work. For instance, Hains-Wesson and Ji (2020) found that many of their students have difficulty presenting ideas verbally and communicating personally and professionally through appropriate written and oral forms. Because of this, these authors advised of the importance of understanding and accommodating students' perspectives regarding challenges and obstacles they might encounter in undertaking team-based activities as part of post-experience initiatives.

Heck et al. (2020) also identified a different kind of issue of readiness that needs to be considered in efforts to optimise post-practicum experiences. Because of students' specialised undergraduate studies, previous work experience and family responsibilities, they found that postgraduate students were different from undergraduate teacher education students and how they came to experience teaching practicums and discussions around them. Yet, despite these differences, these authors note that little is known about their distinctive learning needs and how they best can be utilised and optimised in post-practicum events. These differences may extend also to how students view and engage in their practicum activities. Murray et al. (2020) noted that the extent of medical students' prior experience in placements impacted on how they rated their personal capacities and skills and is central to how they engage in and learn through placement experiences. In terms of the practicum experiences itself, Wake (2020) advises that interns and junior staff in journalism workplaces are the most vulnerable people in most news organisations. They are not only subject to intense competition for work, but also, while covering stories, have experiences that are highly confronting and have significant personal impacts. She makes this point that this personal impact occurs in the context of an industry in which it is largely unknown, and seen to be ill-advised, for staff to be comfortable about reporting such impacts. These projects have illustrated that these ways of preparing students, making them ready for work placements and developing their ability to reconcile their experiences stands as an important educational consideration. These set of concerns also leads to how students' expectation about and engagement in practicums might best be managed.

### 5.1.2   Managing Student Engagement and Learning

Much of the focus of these projects has been about engaging students in activities from which they will learn and through post-practicum interventions that aim to promote specific learning outcomes and address or overcome potentially unhelpful, perilous or confronting learning. So, beyond readiness is a concern about how students learning can be mediated to be as effective as possible. Within these projects there has been much evidence to suggest that interventions are able to achieve these kinds of outcomes. For instance, Antwertinger et al. (2020) report that students from across a number of disciplines responded positively to the workshop on feedback as it was perceived by them to be helpful in understanding their role in the feedback process and the workshop provided the tool for how they could seek, use and learn feedback. This feedback was reported as being especially helpful where students had multiple placements as they could use the information in subsequently placements. That is, this approach positioned them to be active participants in the feedback process, in which they could be confident in seeking and securing feedback to assist them reconcile those experiences across different placements. Edgar et al. (2020) also reported that students wanted assessment feedback on their workplace performance; and then based on that information make choices about how this influenced their career options and selecting specialisations and, thereby, became a focus on identifying how their

engagement in and feedback from work experiences could increase employability. Arising from this project was the need for tools for both supervisors and students to engage in and secure appropriate feedback and, aligned with this, a mechanism by which they could assess and appraise their levels of attainment towards being effective in nursing practice and how this could develop across their five placements.

A similar concern to support student engagement and expectations was reported by Boag-Hodgson et al. (2020) who also articulated the need for a tool that could be used by student supervisors across multiple placements to assist organise and guide student experiences and provide the basis for assessing their attainments and progress across a series of placements. Understandably, they proposed that this tool would lead to productive educational partnerships between students and supervisors. Valencia-Forrester's (2020) findings also emphasised the importance of engagements amongst students and with supervisors after practicum experiences. In particular, she proposes that debriefings are essential. Those debriefings should be structured in a way that explicitly engage students in drawing out what they have learned from those experiences because otherwise it may not be obvious or clear to students what they have learnt through those practicums. Her goal here is not just short-term resolution of experiences but leading to the development of capacities that will be helpful for these journalism students when they come to practice their occupation. In particular, she proposed group-based post-practicum debriefing using a 'wise practice' framework, which assists students explicitly address and be conscious of contextual factors and contributions provided by experiences of practice that can assist, both in the short and long-term, and further develop capacities associated with effective journalistic practice. Gribble and Netto (2020) also concluded that post-practicum experiences linked to occupational practice are likely to be more effective, than those associated with educational institutions processes and outcomes. Here, they found that student preference for a verbal reflective format was linked to how nurses work practices and engagements progress in healthcare settings. Added here was that the verbalisation of emotions was more effective than representing them in written formats. Hence, they were requesting processes whose efficacy was founded in they use and translation to health care practice.

Considerations of engagement in authentic experiences was also emphasised in Heck et al. (2020) study in which postgraduate teacher education students reported they learned more from participating in professional activities than in observational activities and they began to develop a sense of mastery of necessary skills and resilience as they continued through subsequent practicum experiences. This perspective emphasises the importance of authenticity and active engagement. Once more, it is worth mentioning the observations made in Hains-Wesson and Ji's (2020) chapter that actions by educators in encouraging students to lead, manage and shape the experiences for themselves and their peers elicits the highest engagement outcomes.

Jackson and Trede (2020) noted that students' engagement in collaborative processes appeared to encourage students to reflect on and share their experiences in developing self-authorship during their workplace experience. It successfully prompted students to consider how they may further develop this as they prepare for their transition to the workplace. They noted that when the experience was

organised, this provided the opportunity for students to engage in vibrant discussions because many of them had experiences that were similar. Also, because many were conscious of their negative reactions during times of conflict in the workplace (tension, uncertainty, frustration etc) they welcomed the opportunity to share these and hear that others experienced similar responses. All of this merely underpins the obvious fact that, as Murray et al. (2020) explicitly state, placement can be demanding and stressful for students and they need help to manage these demands and stressors. These authors also noted that students' sense of self arose from how they experienced and negotiated those encounters, which, if unsatisfactory, had an impact upon ratings of confidence. They concluded that placement supervisors need to encourage students to trust the experience, the learning process and redefine what they might construe as failure. Consistent with all of this is Palesy and Levett-Jones' (2020) finding that while students view favourably both written and interactive reflective activities, they prefer the face-to-face format of the Clinician Peer Exchange Groups(CPEGs). Quite profoundly, students reported that these interventions promoted positive changes to clinical practice, career progression and increased confidence. In preparation for another occupation that can be turbulent (i.e. journalism) Wake (2020) reported that the use of listening circles was judged to be valuable by students and staff. Students found the listening circles interesting and worthwhile, enabling them to incorporate some of the learnings/strategies from the discussions into their future internship work. Yet, as in other areas and experiences, students wanted the process moderated by an academic or facilitator, rather than an entirely peer led process.

All of this suggests that supporting student aspirations, guiding their learning and intervening in situations in which they may not learn without support and direction is likely to be helpful in securing employability related outcomes for these students. This support also has the potential to assist with students' well-being in situations and educational experiences that might otherwise lead to negative or unsatisfactory outcomes.

### 5.1.3  Having a Safe Social and Psychological Environment in Students Can Share and Compare Their Experiences

As has been presented and elaborated above, students often reported a desire to engage with peers when discussing their experiences in workplace and, never more so when those experiences have been confronting in some ways. The opportunity to share, compare and contrast experiences when students found them confronting serves a range of purposes. These include students being able to appraise whether it was just their experience that was confronting/difficult/humiliating or whether others had encountered such experiences. Certainly, earlier studies indicated that the opportunity to engage with peers, overall, is viewed as being helpful. However, this is not universally the case. There is much about revealing experiences that can be confronting and possibly isolating or risking deepening concern is that students

might have. For example, a student might discover that they were the only one who had such a negative experience?

If students have made mistakes or participated in errors, they may well not want to share that within a social environment unless they felt confident about trusting that confidentiality would be maintained. For instance, in the earlier studies, Cardell and Bialocerkowski (2019) engage students in a process that went from individual, small group to whole class sharing. That is, students firstly shared with just one other person, before then progressing to share their experience with a small group. Finally, there was a sharing across the entire class group. One of the rationales for such an approach is that students might want to share some experience with another person whom they trusted, but not a small group and certainly not a larger gathering were their confidences might be violated. So, organising a social environment in which students can feel confident that their experiences will not be exploited or abused and only shared within limits that they find permissible is likely to be helpful. For instance, Jackson and Trede (2020) found that students sometimes did not record their emotions on the provided butcher paper during the huddle workshops. This could be interpreted as either not following the activity instructions or not feeling comfortable in sharing their emotions. Certainly, there is a risk that confidences might be betrayed in larger groups. Also, in the earlier studies Harrison, Molloy, Bearman, Ting, and Leech (2019) noted that medical students were comfortable in sharing their experiences, including potential errors or mistakes they have made in small groups, but were reluctant to share experiences more widely with large numbers of students. In a very competitive field like medical education, students, whilst wanting and perhaps needing to share their experiences with others, also need to be cautious about how their disclosures might be used.

Perhaps, the most clear principle here is that it is the role and prerogative of the educator to assume that some students will want to be assured about the maintenance of confidentiality in small group process work and that, as a starting point, being discreet and confidential is a premise for these groups to progress. As a starting point it is important to put in place arrangements and established practices that will ensure that the environments in which this information is shared is socially and psychologically secure. All this is central to respecting students, their confidentiality and their right to be discreet with their sharing and appraisals of experiences.

## 6   In Conclusion

The suite of projects described above and synthesised in this chapter illuminate the value of post-practicum interventions in assisting students to be more aware of their development of their professional identity, professional behaviour, self-efficacy and confidence, as well as actually aid their development. Professional identity and professional socialisation are widely considered pivotal elements of students' preparedness for their future careers (Holmes, 2013; Jackson, 2016). This is particularly important for international students or those of low socio-economic status who are

often less professionally connected and, therefore, have relatively less exposure to, and consideration of, professional environments. These students need to be prepared for understanding workplace etiquette, familiarisation with codes of conduct, and managing potential misalignment between personal and professional values. Self-efficacy and confidence are also important for all students' effective transition to the workplace, and their ability to enact acquired capabilities flexibly and across different contexts (Open Universities, 2019). From these projects, student readiness is an important consideration. Therefore, preparation for effective experiences are likely to be a necessary consideration in the use of post-practicum interventions. Through this approach, the prospects for aligning authentic work practices with post-practicum learning activities are likely to be optimised. It is also noted that helpful, wise and critical feedback and reflection is a critical element for transformational learning that can achieve through well-conceived and implemented post-practicum experiences.

Finally, across these contributions there is a strong argument for peer -based learning experiences organised by, and enacted through, supervisor facilitation. Peer engagement can be a great leveller in understanding workplace behaviour and expectations. Diverse employment options can be brought into the classroom and important learning outcomes secured from critically reflective discussions based on the wide range of students' workplace experiences.

Therefore, it is intended that the individual and collective findings of these projects will provide some different models and approaches from practice, for others to reflect on, adapt, trial with and for their own students and circumstances. Hopefully, as a result the project described in this publication will help disseminate and deliver the kinds of outcomes that students want, and likely need, to enhance their employability upon graduation.

# References

Antwertinger, Y., Larkin, I., Lau, E., O'Connor, E., & Santos, M. (2020). Transition to a successful career: Pharmacy, psychology and business students reflecting on practicum feedback. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Bacon, R., Kellett, J., Ting Chan, Y., & Yong, J. Y. (2020). Post-practicum project: Its educational purposes, importance, and roles. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Billett, S. (2011). *Curriculum and pedagogical 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., Newton, J. M., Rogers, G. D., & Noble, C. (Eds.). (2019). *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Billett, S., & Valencia-Forrester, F. (2020). Post-practicum project: Its educational purposes, impor-
    tance, and roles. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching
    higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht,
    The Netherlands: Springer.

Boag-Hodgson, C., Cole, K., & Jones, L. (2020). Chapter title. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson,
    & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-
    work placement intervention*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Cain, M., Le, A., & Billett, S. (2019). Student preferences for purposes and processes of post pract-
    icum interventions. In S. Billett, J. M. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting
    health and social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes*
    (pp. 27–53). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Cardell, E., & Bialocerkowski, A. (2019). Bouncing forward: A post-practicum workshop to
    promote professional identity, self-efficacy, and resilience in master of speech pathology stu-
    dents. In S. Billett, J. M. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting health and
    social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes* (pp. 211–234).
    Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective prac-
    tice*. London, UK: Routledge.

Department of Industry. (2014). *Engaging employers in work integrated learning: Current state
    and future priorities*. Canberra, Australia: Department of Industry.

Eames, C., & Coll, R. (2010). Cooperative education: Integrating classroom and workplace
    learning. In S. Billett (Ed.), *Learning through practice: Models, traditions, orientations and
    approaches* (pp. 180–196). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Edgar, S., Sutherland, S., & Connaughton, J. (2020). Implementing post-practicum strategies to
    enhance the professional identity and employability of final-year physiotherapy students. In
    S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education
    students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands:
    Springer.

Evans, N. (2001). From once upon a time to happily ever after: The story of work-based learning
    in the UK higher education sector. In D. Boud & N. Solomon (Eds.), *Work-based learning: A
    new higher education* (pp. 61–73). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Forde, S., & Meadows, M. (2011). Industry placements in journalism education: Exploring
    enhanced learning and professional growth for interns. *JRE Journal, 4*(1), 1–26.

Gribble, N., & Netto, J. (2020). The preferred method of reflection for occupational therapy stu-
    dents: Video, written or artistic? In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester
    (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interven-
    tions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Grubb, W. N., & Badway, N. (1998). Linking school-based and work-based learning: The impli-
    cations of LaGuardia's co-op seminars for school-to-work programs. Berkeley, CA: National
    Center for Research in Vocational Education. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED418230.pdf

Hains-Wesson, R., & Ji, K. (2020). Business students' perceptions of completing teamwork for
    post practicum learning experiences. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester
    (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interven-
    tions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Harrison, J., Molloy, E., Bearman, M., Ting, C. Y., & Leech, M. (2019). Clinician Peer Exchange
    Groups (C-PEGs): Augmenting medical students' learning on clinical placement. In S. Billett,
    J. M. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting health and social care stu-
    dents' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes* (pp. 95–120). Dordrecht, The
    Netherlands: Springer.

Heck, D., Grainger, P., Simon, S., Willis, A., & Smith, K. (2020). Becoming a teacher: Frameworks
    for master of teaching practicum reflections. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-
    Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement
    interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Holmes, L. (2013). Competing perspectives on graduate employability: Possession, position or process? *Studies in Higher Education, 38*(4), 538–554.

Jackson, D. (2016). Re-conceptualising graduate employability: The construction of pre-professional identity in the higher education landscape of practice. *Higher Education Research and Development, 35*(5), 925–939.

Jackson, D., Rowbottom, D., Ferns, S., & McLaren, D. (2017). Employer understanding of work-integrated learning and the challenges of engaging in work placement opportunities. *Studies in Continuing Education, 39*(1), 35–51.

Jackson, D., & Trede, F. (2020). The role of post-work placement reflection for developing self-authorship among higher education students. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Levett-Jones, T., Courtney-Pratt, H., & Govind, N. (2019). Implementation and evaluation of the post-practicum clinical reasoning exam. In S. Billett, J. M. Newton, G. D. Rogers, & C. Noble (Eds.), *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences: Outcomes and processes* (pp. 57–72). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Murray, Z., Roiko, A., Sebar, B., & Rogers, G. (2020). Augmenting practicum with in-class activities that foster shared learning and self-reflection. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Noble, C., Sly, C., Collier, L., Armit, L., Hilder, J., & Molloy, E. (2019). Enhancing feedback literacy in the workplace: A learner-centred approach. In *Augmenting health and social care students' clinical learning experiences* (pp. 283–306). Cham: Springer.

Open Universities. (2019). *The definitive guide to thriving in the future of work*. Melbourne, Australia: Open Universities.

Orrell, J. (2011). *Good practice report: Work integrated learning*. Canberra, Australia: ALTC.

Palesy, D., & Levett-Jones, T. (2020). Reflection revisited: Educational interventions for advancing the professional disposition of postgraduate nursing students. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Patrick, C.-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). *The WIL (work integrated learning) report : A national scoping study*. Canberra, Australia: ALTC.

Patrick, C. J., & Webb, F. (2020). Post-practicum experiences promoting service learning. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Roodhouse, S. (2007). Special issue introduction. *Education + Training, 49*(3), 161–169.

Smith, C. (2012). Evaluating the quality of work-integrated learning curricula: A comprehensive framework. *Higher Education Research and Development, 31*(2), 247–262.

Smith, C., Ferns, S., & Russell, L. (2014). *The impact of work integrated learning on student work-readiness*. Canberra, Australia: Office for Learning and Teaching.

Valencia-Forrester, F. (2020). Reflective group debrief: Putting "wise" into a wise practice framework for university-led work-integrated learning. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Wake, A. (2020). Listening to and supporting journalism students in an age of disruption. In S. Billett, J. Orrell, D. Jackson, & F. Valencia-Forrester (Eds.), *Enriching higher education students' learning through post-work placement interventions*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.