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# WIL24

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**3-5 APRIL 2024**

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
— SOUTH AFRICA —

# ABSTRACT BOOK

Abstract book WIL Conference 2024: 2<sup>nd</sup> International conference on Work-Integrated Learning



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# Doctoral student's session



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## **Shifting roles, dynamic tasks, and workplace learning insights: A closer look at managerial work and their perspectives**

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**Keywords:** *Managerial Work, Leadership, Workplace Learning, Grounded Theory*

### **Abstract**

#### *Research topic*

This research openly explores managers own perceptions about their work, their leadership, and their impact on workplace learning in two similar albeit separate manufacturing companies situated in Sweden with a global presence.

#### *Theoretical framework*

Tynjälä's 3P model of Workplace Learning in combination with managerial work and leadership definitions was used to compare with the theory created in this study.

#### *Relevance*

The main relevance and novelty of this study comes from the strategic and social impact of managerial work upon workplace learning, the presumed potential of leadership to influence learning processes and its social development impact.

#### *Research questions*

How do managers perceive their role, their leadership, and their influence on workplace learning?

#### *Method and Methodology*

This study used a grounded theory approach to create a theory about managerial influence on workplace learning

#### *Results*

The theory of this study suggests that managers influence mainly the learning context of the workplace learning environment, potentially leading to learning outcomes.

#### *Future research paths*

To create more balanced and complete knowledge about workplace learning, future studies should include the employee experience and other industries, companies, and countries which can further influence a shift in our industry towards increased sustainability and social fairness.

## **Professional socialisation of diagnostic radiography students at a higher education institution in South Africa**

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**Keywords:** *Health professions education; Diagnostic radiography; Professional socialisation; Professional development; Clinical learning*

### **Abstract**

This research aimed to explore the professional socialisation of students in diagnostic radiography, with a focus on clinical learning, in order to develop a model to guide clinical radiographers in the professional socialisation of diagnostic radiography students. Individuals acquire and internalise knowledge, skills, and values necessary to become effective members of their chosen profession during professional socialisation. For health professions students, professional socialisation takes place through academic and clinical learning. The clinical learning environment is significant for professional socialisation, and thus clinical radiographers play a major role in socialising students into the radiography profession.

A qualitative, theory generating approach was employed to explore professional socialisation of students into diagnostic radiography. Data analysis resulted in the development of five themes: learning in the clinical environment; radiography community involvement; approaches to student learning; dynamics positively influencing professional socialisation; and dynamics negatively influencing professional socialisation. This paper will present the findings and a discussion of the themes generated.

Effective socialisation into diagnostic radiography is imperative for students to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and values. Through the thematic analysis this study provided insights into different facets of diagnostic radiography students' professional socialisation, including strategies for effective learning in the clinical environment. The identification of these strategies and factors that influence professional socialisation is valuable as it will assist with the next stage of the study which will be the development of a model to facilitate effective professional socialisation of diagnostic radiography students.

## **Participation in industry-academy collaborative research projects: Towards a model to increase attraction**

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**Keywords:** *Industry-academy collaboration, knowledge creation, employability*

### **Abstract**

The interest in collaborative research projects between industry and academia is growing, but the understanding of knowledge creation and how work-integrated learning takes place, requires further attention. A deeper understanding of learning is needed since interactions between industry and academy show both complicated and complex patterns. Since collaborations consists of different persons with different backgrounds, the conditions for fruitful interactions are challenging. An overall goal of the research proposal is to increase the understanding of collaborative projects and dig into how academy and industry equally can contribute to knowledge creation and make participation attractive. The planned studies are based mainly on qualitative approaches and includes data collection through triangulation from interviews, surveys, and observations. One interview study has been completed with company representatives concerning their experiences of collaboration with the academy. Findings indicate that recipient competence and academic knowledge of technical matters affects abilities to contribute to the learning process. If higher technical education is lacking, motivation and attractiveness of participating drops. An upcoming study will add the academics experiences of collaboration. A third study is planned to include both practitioners and academics and focus on facilitating matters of collaborative learning to make participation attractive.

## **Learning during Disruptive Technological Changes in Production**

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**Keywords:** *Disruptive technological changes, organizational learning, interpersonal interactions, production development*

### **Abstract**

The production development in the era of industry 4.0 is by adoption of continuously developing disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence, additive manufacturing, virtual reality etc. These technologies affect the job design, work structure, knowledge and skill requirements and organizational culture. Hence it becomes crucial for the organizations to learn continuously in order to adopt these technologies successfully. Learning is viewed to occur through socialization among the members of the organizations in which interpersonal interactions occur. Interpersonal interaction allows members to learn and share knowledge in order to develop their work. In this doctoral research the purpose is to study interpersonal interactions in order to understand what facilitates learning during disruptive technological changes in production. The research is planned to understand the characteristics of interpersonal interactions as well as to understand what facilitates learning during such production developments. Understanding that will help to understand how manufacturing industries can organize for learning during disruptive technological changes.



## **Engineering students' experiences of Work Integrated Learning: A comparison between South African and Swedish higher education context**

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**Keywords:** *Engineering education, Higher education, Work-Integrated-Learning*

### **Abstract**

In most South African and Swedish Higher Education Institutions (HEI) with an Engineering program, Engineering students partake in work-integrated learning (WIL) through work placement. Work placement is a pedagogical practice that forms part of WIL and combines classroom learning with workplace experience.

In South Africa, researchers and policymakers focus on graduate attributes development through WIL in HEI, e.g., numeracy, communication skills, social responsibility, etc. One of the intentions is to broaden graduates' employability with generic skills. This intention is also the case for Engineering programs, where it was found that generic skills development will enhance graduates' productivity and employability early on in their careers. Thus, WIL is essential in South Africa to assist students in gaining generic skills and becoming employable. The need for graduates' early productivity and employability stems from the economic climate in South Africa, where economic growth is needed for development and eradicating poverty. Governments, employers, and professional bodies in South Africa expect universities to prepare their students for a smooth transition from their studies into professional practice. Occupational competency and self-efficacy in South Africa specifically inhibit a contradiction between the engineering skills shortage that poses a significant threat to the South African construction sector and the unemployment of graduates, including engineering graduates.

In Sweden, policymakers and the manufacturing sector report on a significant lack of engineering competencies. Recent statistics by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2023) show that engineering education has one of the lowest numbers of graduates and fulfilled graduations, with every other student finishing their education. In contradiction, Swedish enterprises and the public sector cannot hire enough people due to a shortage of graduates. In the long run, the lack of students and graduates potentially risks Sweden's ability to reach goals in terms of climate and digitalization. Notably, Engineering in Sweden has seen an emerging gap between the largely separate worlds of engineering education and engineering practice. There are convincing reasons why the two worlds need to enter constructive dialogue.

**Developing more sustainable municipal healthcare services through work integrated learning: employees and middle managers at municipal nursing homes and their learning of innovation skills using the Innovation Guide as a systematic tool**

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**Keywords:** *Sustainable Municipal Healthcare Services, Work Integrated Learning, Systematic Tool, The Innovation Guide, Qualitative Method*

**Abstract**

The paper presents findings from a longitudinal study investigating the impact of participatory workshops using the Innovation Guide on learning and innovation skills among employees and middle managers in municipal healthcare institutions. The study, conducted in municipalities in Norway and Sweden, employed engaged scholarship to involve stakeholders in the research process. Qualitative data from interviews and participatory observations were analyzed thematically. Results indicate that participation in co-creative workshops led to increased awareness among employees regarding their role in addressing workplace challenges and fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation. Both managers and employees developed innovation skills, facilitated by the systematic approach of the Innovation Guide. The tool contributed to a culture change and the establishment of a sustainable learning environment within healthcare organizations. This research underscores the importance of participatory approaches in driving sustainable change and innovation within healthcare settings, emphasizing the role of tools like the Innovation Guide in facilitating collaboration and workplace learning.

# Track 1



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Industrial Work Integrated Learning –  
Bridging WIL with Industrial  
Transformation

## **Work-integrated learning in collaborative research projects: For whom and for what?**

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**Keywords:** *Knowledge creation, collaboration, industry-academy, participant competence*

### **Abstract**

The interest in collaborative research projects between industry and academia is growing, but the understanding of knowledge creation and how work-integrated learning takes place between these arenas, requires further attention. A deeper understanding of collaborative research projects and the learning processes is needed since interactions between industry and academy show both complicated and complex patterns. The study is based on a qualitative, explorative approach. Seven company representatives were interviewed concerning their experiences of collaboration with the academy. The results shows that the company participants' competence level is crucial concerning motivation and abilities to contribute to the collaborative results. The communication between the academics and the practitioners is mainly performed by top-down processes, which gives advantages in the learning process to practitioners with high academic knowledge. A model is presented showing possible ways to increase the learning process, from top-down processes to bottom-up, that will include all the participants regardless of competence. To attract academics and company partners in participating in collaborative projects, this paper shows that it is essential that the project management is knowledgeable about individual participants' knowledge level and take this into account when jointly designing the project setup.

## **Work-Integrated-Learning by Inaction – Exploring Organizational Reflections on AI-Transformation in the Manufacturing Industry**

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**Keywords:** *AI-transformation, action, inaction, work-integrated learning, manufacturing industry*

### **Abstract**

Artificial intelligence (AI) has for the last decade been expected to revolutionize the way we work. However, as many industries are facing more complex problems as an effect of technological development and globalizations, companies are experiencing challenges in finalizing AI-projects and fully integrating AI into their operations, not least in the manufacturing industry. To face these challenges, it is suggested that manufacturing industry could benefit from enhancing their work-integrated learning related to AI and AI transformation. In addition, one of the considered success factors in technological development and organizational change is the way that it is reflected on by the organization. This paper employs an action-based perspective, in which learning is generated by and in action, that is, in the reflection on experiences. And so, with a qualitative focus group study, we sought to explore how manufacturing industry organizations reflect on action in a potential AI-transformation. However, the results showed that the participating organizations instead displayed an inaction stance when discussing AI-transformation, demonstrating a general passivity towards the transformation as a concrete change process. We employ theories of psychological safety, maneuver space and sense of coherence to analyze our empirical results. Moreover, we discuss our findings based on the idea of action and inaction as contradictory forces that adverse each other in terms of learning as well as the theoretical and practical implications of our study.

## **Breaking the mold: Reinterpreting industrial digital transformation and co-workership**

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**Keywords:** *industrial digital transformation, co-workership, human-centric, industrial work-integrated learning.*

### **Abstract**

This paper builds on the need to reinterpret industrial digital transformation and co-workership with the starting point that introducing and implementing digital initiatives is a multifaceted challenge for the manufacturing industry. Hence, this paper addresses how co-workership in manufacturing can be reinterpreted when navigating organizational and technological aspects of industrial digital transformation. To answer this, co-workers at different organizational levels have participated in five focus groups with a total of 25 participants to reinterpret industrial digital transformation over time, collaboratively structuring what the endeavors might entail. The results show that participants are positive towards digital technologies but critical towards organizational changes. It is argued that this affects the four conceptual pairs of the co-workership wheel. Thus, this paper contributes a revised model for co-workership for industrial digital transformation that contributes to the needed technological and organizational innovation.

## **Competence provision in the metal industry -a work-integrated-learning research approach**

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**Keywords:** *Competence provision, work-integrated learning, process studies, collaborative research*

### **Abstract**

This study includes the design and testing of a model of research inquiry with the purpose of exploring how agency as well as learning can be increased among industrial companies within the context of competence provision. We apply the model to an interactive, collaborative research project including researchers, industrial firms and trade organizations and report on the design of the model as well as the evaluation of its ability to increase agency and generate learning. By applying and integrating theories of agency and effectuation logic within the framework of work-integrated learning, our study contributes to the call for developing the micro-practices of interactive research methods and deepen the knowledge on the role of agency, joint learning, and reflection for organizational learning as key prerequisites to sustainable changes in how competence provision challenges is approached by organizations.

# Track 2



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Sustainable Co-Creative Innovations  
for Entrepreneurial & Community  
Development



## **Work Integrated Learning and Internationalisation through Digital Education: Exploring the Facilitating Factors and Obstacles for Virtual Learning-centred Engagement**

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**Keywords:** *Work Integrated Learning, Digitalisation, Virtual Learning, Internationalisation, Global Citizenship, Global Citizenship Education*

### **Abstract**

A Work Integrated Learning (WIL) approach can prepare students for an increasingly complex international labour market and help them to become global citizens. The objective of such a broad view of education is to equip individuals with the skills to actively participate and make contributions to the global community. It seeks to promote a sense of responsibility, cultural sensitivity and the capacity to tackle difficult issues. But how do students become active citizens able to grapple with the complexity of the current times? It is for institutions of higher education to take up the challenge of educating students in ways that help them to do so. The following emerge as particularly important for virtual collaboration: adequate infrastructure, user friendly virtual platforms, training in digital literacy, a framework for collaboration, efficient communication channels, sufficient planning opportunities and building a strong sense of community.

## **Learning for change? The short-term impact of the Global Classroom in producing change-agents for sustainability**

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**Keywords:** *Global classroom, work-integrated learning, knowers and knowledge, epistemological versus ontological learning, change-agency*

### **Abstract**

A key promise of work-integrated learning (WIL) is to produce what Barnett (2012) terms 'ontological' learnings. These are dispositional changes important for knowers to become better able to cope with a changing and complex world. In this paper, we explore one attempt to produce dispositional changes through the case of the Global Classroom for Democratic Innovation (GCDI). Using a combination of quantitative survey and (mostly) qualitative interviews methods, the paper reflects on the degree and nature of the attitudinal change among student participants in the GCDI. Overall, this iteration of the GCDI produced small but consistent and positive evidence that it enhanced change agency. Particularly empowering for participants was the framing of change agency as taking action to bring local change for sustainability - in contrast with assumptions that wicked problems required political solutions at national or international level. Further, taking such action was not seen as 'political' or 'activism' by many, but was unpacked more in other language such building agency, doing good deeds, building communities. Students' facilitators expressed much more empowerment than student participants, redeeming WIL as a learning approach. Notably, it was only in the research moment that the practices of empowerment experienced by students could be reflected on and integrated with ideas of change agency.

## **Universities and the ‘Protection’ of Civil Society: A Critical Reflection of Work-Integrated Learning in Shrinking Civic Spaces**

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**Keywords:** *Work-Integrated Learning; universities; democratic space; civil society; human rights; protection*

### **Abstract**

Findings from a recently published CIVICUS Monitor report (2023) notes that “28% of the world’s population, approximately two billion people, are subject to extreme levels of repression”. Post-pandemic, the rate at which civic space continues to shrink has increased under repressive state legislation and the active criminalisation and harassment of civic groups/individuals. In the context of shrinking civic space, universities have been positioned as key sites of ‘protection’ for individuals/communities working to advance human rights locally and on a global level. However, the ways in which universities begin to do so have been poorly defined particularly in the global South.

Universities can become incubators of particular socio-democratic ideals and values; collaborators working with civic groups (amongst other actors); and instigators of protest and scholarly activism (Gready and Jackson, 2023). This paper focuses on the university’s collaboration with civic groups defending human rights and the use of what is argued to be a ‘pedagogy of protection’. Drawing from a longitudinal experience of Work-Integrated Learning including but not limited to a Work-Integrated Political Studies (WIPS) Master’s program offered by the University West (Sweden), the paper critically positions experiential learning with civic organizations as a protective mechanism for human rights defender.

# Track 3



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Skills Transfer and Emerging  
Technologies in a Globalized Working  
Life

## **Influence of WIL Initiative on Digital Skills Sustainability for Youth Employability: A Case of South African Underserved Community**

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**Keywords:** *ICTs, Digital Skills, Job Market, Sustainable Development; WIL Initiative, Youth Unemployment*

### **Abstract**

Global unemployment promotes a pervasive challenge, especially for youths which hinders individual well-being and human development. This issue is particularly pronounced in South Africa, where heightened youth unemployment impedes economic progress due to a lack of technological expertise. This study focuses on investigating how digital skills courses can enhance youth employability and entrepreneurship in the Thohoyandou community of Limpopo Province. The proposed solution involves applying government collaboration and WIL initiative to promote digital skills training in underserved communities. Digital skills courses for the future work should be incorporated in HEIs curriculums to prepare graduates for the future of work. Employing a quantitative approach, the study analyses 76 participants through structured close-ended questions distributed online. Guided by the Sustainable Livelihood Theory, the results emphasize the importance of digital skills in facilitating youth development. Consequently, the research recommends policymakers implement government collaborations with WIL initiative to provide digital skills training to prepare young people for the dynamic labor market, foster entrepreneurship, and mitigate youth unemployment at the grassroots level.

## **Bachelor thesis writing as a bridge to work life**

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**Keywords:** *Work-integrated learning; Practice-based education; employability; work-readiness; professionalism; knowledge transferability*

### **Abstract**

This paper conceives thesis writing and supervision in an undergraduate program at University West as an example of Practice-based education. Exploring the educational practice of thesis writing from the viewpoint of Work-integrated learning (WIL), in this paper, we investigate the outcomes of the entire thesis writing process in terms of key learning and professional outcome indicators in the WIL field such as employability, work-readiness, professionalism, learning-for-life, and knowledge transferability between the university and 'work-life' (Eraut, 2010, pp. 48-52). Specifically, we are asking what skills acquired through the thesis writing process are transferable to a professional career, and in what ways. We find that in regard to the ontological dimension, as indicated by categories such as professionalism and work-readiness, the alumni identified that through the thesis writing process, they had attained skills such as resilience, time management, carrying out a larger task, performing under pressure, and teamwork. In regard to the epistemological dimension, as indicated by categories such as learning-for-life, research skills, and reflection or critical thinking, the alumni identified that through the thesis writing process, they had attained the skills to find a solution to complex problems – such as solving supply or production chain changes, author a report, a memo or collect data to inform financial decisions – at work.

## **Connecting the Dots: A Tripartite and Synergistic Approach to Embedding WIL in the South African Education and Training System**

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**Keywords:** *WILSA, AWIL, Policy, Research, South Africa*

### **Abstract**

Embedding Work-integrated Learning (WIL) into national Higher Education (HE) qualifications is a key priority of the reconstructed education and training system of South Africa. Research has shown that despite achieving notable progress in including WIL in the reconstruction of education and training, it is not fully entrenched. Key constraints include the lack of resources, human capacity and other enabling mechanisms to establish the necessary coordination and regulatory instruments required to successfully implement WIL and to ensure that its implementation structures maintain quality standards and coherence.

To address these multi-pronged challenges the Technological Higher Education Network of South Africa (THENSA) crafted a tripartite and synergistic response by establishing WILSA (2022) to be a national steering and oversight mechanism. THENSA also developed a WIL Policy Guide for HE (2023) and established AWIL (2023), a professional body for WIL practitioners.

This article describes the tripartite and synergistic solution that was designed and implemented by THENSA to embed WIL as a central consideration within HE in SA. It also presents the findings of an exploratory survey conducted in 2023 to elicit the views of WIL practitioners from public HEIs on the perceived value-add of these three enabling mechanisms.

## **Trials and tribulations: The journey of implementing PebblePad into undergraduate programmes of initial teacher education**

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**Keywords:** *Initial teacher education, School Placement, ePortfolio, digital transformation, technology*

### **Abstract**

Situated within initial teacher education provision, this case study outlines the process of implementing PebblePad as a learning journey platform within the Department of Creative Education, in the Atlantic Technological University in Ireland. PebblePad was selected as a software as a service technology to support ePortfolio and School Placement.

Student teachers are required to develop an ePortfolio which allows them to evidence their learning by means of purposeful and curated collections of work, artefacts, and reflections. An ePortfolio is also used to showcase a student's achievement, professionalism, and self-development over the course of their degree. School Placement is a rich, varied, and complex site of work integrated learning, set within classrooms in the secondary school system, where student teachers link theory to practice. During teaching practice, students develop significant documentation to evidence their learning, pedagogical development, and critical reflections.

The paper reviews the literature on ePortfolio and its application as a teaching, learning and assessment tool. The paper also presents a critical reflection on the journey of the incremental implementation of PebblePad within the Department. The research tracks the progress of a cohort of students through the first two years of the implementation cycle through questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used to develop emerging themes and patterns from within this data set. Perspectives and reflections of the of the author, as Head of Department, are also included.

The initial findings suggest a relatively seamless engagement with the PebblePad platform by students, which may be applicable and relevant to other providers of initial teacher education programmes. The importance of prescribed supports in managing the implementation process, the emergence of PebblePad champions, and the optimum timing in change management also emerge as important considerations. Finally, ensuring that the student voice is heard during the implementation process helps to ensure a student-centred approach.



## **Towards a Quality Framework for Work-Integrated Learning in Higher Education and Working Life**

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**Keywords:** *Work-integrated learning (WIL), strategic partnerships,  
pedagogical design, competence development, lifelong learning*

### **Abstract**

Today's working life faces a major ongoing transformation characterised by increased complexity and specialisation of work and conditions for lifelong learning. This requires competencies beyond traditional theoretical knowledge, including the ability to prepare for uncertainty and unknown outcomes. Therefore, involving students in work-integrated learning (WIL) and learning how to learn for lifelong learning is essential. At University West in Sweden, educational programs are WIL-based and developed in collaboration with strategic partners to provide a relevant and attractive range of programs and courses. In this study, we argue that it is a shared responsibility for academia and business organisations to collaboratively develop innovative approaches to working and learning to secure a future workforce ready for a complex working life and continuous competence development. The purpose of the study is to identify and provide knowledge underpinning the understanding and application of WIL in higher education and working life. The goal is to develop a framework that supports key stakeholders in understanding, designing and applying WIL. Findings from this study suggest that the collaboration between teachers, partners, and students can be strengthened by a quality framework supporting the planning, implementation, reflection and improvement of WIL-based education and competence initiatives. The main contribution of the paper is a nuanced description of WIL conceptualizations along with a multi-perspective approach, bringing multiple perspectives into the development and application of WIL. It also highlights how a framework based on these foundations can support quality development and enhance the application of WIL in higher education and working life.

# Track 4



**WIL24**

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Work Integrated Learning as Field of  
Study

## **Clinical and work-integrated learning in times of crises: How the Covid-19 pandemic has affected registered nursing students' clinical learning**

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**Keywords:** *Adaptive and developmental clinical learning, Covid-19 pandemic, nursing students, interviews, thematic analysis*

### **Abstract**

Clinical placement during a pandemic can be considered a critical environment. This study aimed to describe how the Covid-19 pandemic affected nursing students' clinical work-integrated learning. The study had a qualitative, investigative approach. Data were generated using twelve semi-structured interviews with final-year students from October 2020 to January 2021 and were analysed by thematic analysis.

The Covid-19 pandemic can be seen as a critical environment that has unintended, undesirable consequences on learning. The analysis revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic affected nursing students in both their adaptive and developmental learning as they had to take personal responsibility for their work, reflection, and learning. In the chaotic situation, students and supervisors became like novices, struggling to go with the flow while shouldering responsibility for their own learning. The students' learning extended to tasks outside the course syllabus. They acquired extensive knowledge about working during a pandemic, including basic hygiene routines and working at a safe distance. The students developed new knowledge due to the increased demand for flexibility and creativity. They had more contact with patients as well as their relatives and developed an ethical approach related to the pandemic.

## **Mapping WIL-models in Norwegian Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review**

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**Keywords:** *Work-integrated learning, WIL-models, Global WIL model, Placements, Work Relevance, Experiential learning, Higher Education*

### **Abstract**

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is a relatively new and unknown term/concept in higher education in Norway. However, focus on work relevance, “arbeidslivsrelevans” (Norwegian term), aiming to prepare students for future work life is highlighted in national policy documents and reports on quality in higher education. Work relevance is on the education authority’s agenda, and educational institutions are developing new pedagogical models aligning with this ambition. Research in WIL calls for more knowledge about different WIL-models (Kay et.al., 2018) at a global level (McRae & Johnston, 2016). In this study, we conduct a systematic literature review to map models of WIL, that involves (1) students (2) Educator/institution (3) industry partners and aim to develop a better understanding of WIL in a Norwegian context. The results of the study show how placements in professional studies like nursing and teacher education is the most common WIL model in higher education in Norway. There is limited research on WIL-models in pure sciences education programs, like business studies, natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Further, most research on WIL in Norway focus on students’ perspectives and learning outcomes during their WIL experiences. Based on this, we call for more research on non-placement WIL models outside professional education. Further, we call for more Norwegian studies taking industry supervisors, and educators perspective aimed at ensuring students increased quality in their WIL experience within educational programs. This research represents a contribution to the global understanding of work-integrated learning and WIL models, and provides new insight to the development of WIL models in higher education in Norway.

## Work-integrated learning in PhD-education

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**Keywords:** *career development, career transition, employability, PhD education, work-integrated learning*

### Abstract

The issue we set out to explore is how work-integrated learning (WIL) can enhance PhD-education. We argue that the inclusion of WIL will enable a more enriched PhD education where better interaction between the competencies needed in the workforce and real-life working problems will emerge that will feed into creating sustainable solutions for both the educational environment and the practice field. The inclusion of WIL in PhD education can also enable a better transition for PhD students after completion of their PhD to their next step in life and a better impact of research from PhD projects on the practice context. The research consisted of a rapid review (Klerings et al., 2023), and the included articles were analysed. The rapid review findings were also reflected on PhD education at the University West in Sweden and the University of the Free State in South Africa. The two universities are interesting as cases, as University West has a prominent profile of work-integrated learning, and the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein does not. The two case universities represent cities with the same level of higher education in the population (25-27%). However, higher education is much more common in the general population in Sweden than in South Africa.

The results show a lack of research concerning WIL in PhD-education. Formal requirements and expectations for PhD education vary depending on context and scientific topic, which may affect how and to what level WIL is included in PhD education, as well as the options for the PhD student's career after completion. Frameworks developed for undergraduate education were used to explore WIL options in Ph.D. Opportunities of WIL and how WIL can be included in PhD education differ depending on context. In South Africa, PhD students often work fulltime while doing a PhD part-time, continually pursuing a PhD because of a personal dream rather than for career advancement. Helping these PhD students understand the value of a PhD for their careers and society can open them to different and novel career paths. In Sweden, PhD students often study full-time and must find new job positions after completing their PhD. To address these issues, exploring how WIL can be integrated into PhD education is essential. The findings are relevant for Theme 4: Work-integrated learning as a field of study, as it applies how work-integrated learning can be contextualised in PhD education and provide opportunities for pedagogical and curriculum innovation.



# Conference contributions

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Organizers of WIL Conference 2024 is humbly thanking all contributors and reviewers that engaged in this years' conference. Without you all – there would not have been a conference!

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# WIL24

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