SEVERE RICH VOCATIONAL LEARNING

Experiences in workplaces and educational institutions can both potentially be generative of rich vocational learning. That is, learning that has the capacity to be effective in the circumstances of its acquisition and be utilised in settings beyond those in which it was secured. It is worth noting, that this goal of extending the utility of what is learnt is both a key claim of and rationale for the existence of educational systems and institutions. Similarly, understanding how best to utilise workplace learning experiences and augmenting them with intentional experiences in workplaces and vocational educational institutions stand as important bases for improving vocational learning. Whether considering the initial skill formation through apprenticeship-type arrangements or vocational education provisions based in schools, vocational colleges or universities, the consistent and abiding goal is to generate rich vocational knowledge for learners. The educational purposes to be realised through such rich learning include: (a) assisting understand the requirements of working life generally (Ghozzi, 2002), (b) developing occupational-specific knowledge (Australian National Training Authority, 1993), (c) understanding the particular requirements for a selected occupation; (d) variations in the requirements for that occupational practice (Billett, 2001a), (e) providing experiences to critically appraise the world of work (Billett, 2006), and (f) the capacity for developing general workplace competences, as in core competencies (Mayer, 1992; The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1992). However, to secure these distinct kinds of educational goals, through integrating experiences in workplace and educational institutional setting requires particular kinds of curriculum and pedagogic practices to be enacted. Offered in this chapter are instances of and suggestions for helping workers as learners and vocational students understand the world of work and the development of specific vocational competence.
Depending upon their educational purposes, distinct kinds of rich learning outcomes are intended to be realised through participation in vocational education programs. As just noted, these include purposes associated with: (a) understanding the requirements of working life generally in order to assist the selection of occupations or transition from school to work, (b) developing occupational-specific knowledge in order to engage in and practice a preferred occupation, (c) understanding the occupational requirements of a particular workplace in order to develop expertise, (d) understand variations in the requirements of occupational practice in order to be able to address novel and emerging work tasks, (e) critically appraising the world of work in order to make informed decisions about school to work transitions and career trajectories, and (f) developing more general workplace competences, which are claimed by some to be common across any forms of work. In different ways, all of these can be described as rich learning outcomes in so far as the knowledge learnt will be applicable in particular circumstances associated with learners’ immediate needs and also have the potential for that learning to extend beyond those circumstances in which it is acquired and initially practiced (Ericsson & Lehmann, 1996).

Of these goals, perhaps the most commonly sought is developing occupational knowledge that is directly applicable to those workplaces in which individuals are employed. This is the key stated purpose of national vocational education systems, such as those in Australia, the United Kingdom and other countries. This goal and that of students’ critical appraisal of work-related learning are the focus of this chapter, yet in different ways it also addresses the other kinds of goals stated above.

With the development of statements of occupational competence, the concepts, procedures and dispositions required to practice an occupation, such as carpentry, plumbing, hairdressing, cooking are usually identified through national consultations with industry representatives and sometimes practitioners who offer particular perspectives of the requirements that are common to the occupation (Australian National Training Authority, 1993). These consultations lead to the development of national curriculum documents and standards, aimed to guide the teaching and assessment of occupational knowledge within a national vocational education system. These processes and goals identify and articulate statements of outcomes for practising a particular occupation. Sometimes these outcomes are linked to occupational licensing arrangements.

However, on their own, these national statements of occupational competence are insufficient to elaborate how these requirements for occupational practice are manifested in particular workplace settings where learners are employed. For instance, the requirements for competent hairdressing practice are constructed quite differently across hairdressing workplaces (Billett, 2001a). Similarly, nurses’ work requirements differ across and within metropolitan hospitals’ wards, country towns, or in remote communities, as do the motor vehicle mechanics’ work across different kinds of garages (Billett, 1999). This indicates that, alone, statements of
competence at the occupational level will be insufficient to account for the situational variations of occupational practice. It follows that a more situated view of workplace competence that addresses both the specific requirements of workplace and emphasises the diversity of those requirements across an occupation stands as a salient educational concept. Rather than having transferable occupational knowledge per se, it is likely that being able to adapt to new or different work requirements arise from being aware of other ways of practising and instances of occupational performance (Lave, 1988). From this perspective, relying on securing skills and understanding at the occupational level alone is insufficient. Rather than being able to adapt or transfer occupational knowledge per se, the capacity for adaptability or transfer is premised on understanding variations of practice (Billett, 2001a). These outcomes cannot be learnt without engaging in workplace settings, and having the opportunity to learn about and reflect on other approaches for work practice. This takes the learning from knowing one-best-way, to knowing a number of ways of responding to a workplace task, depending upon the particular work requirements (i.e., goals for performance). Such a capacity requires being able to critique the particular work activity and know which of the available responses to the best option to achieve a particular goal (Greeno, 1989).

Moreover, beyond the educational purpose of developing robust (i.e., adaptable) vocational learning, that this integration of experiences can assist realising other goals, including engaging how students understand the world of work, engaging in a critical appraisal of work and working life, inform their choice of occupations and identifying what constitutes general workplace competence (e.g., problem-solving, working with others, timeliness). The opportunity to experience in some way, consider, reflect upon and share experiences from workplace setting in educational institutions is likely to be helpful in securing these kinds of educational purposes. Hence, it is necessary to have some engagement with authentic workplace activities in order to generate these kinds of educational outcomes. Certainly, the evidence suggests that it will be difficult, perhaps impossible, to achieve these learning outcomes without engaging in authentic instances of work activities, as these kinds of experiences are necessary for moving individual knowledge from the declarative (i.e., knowing about) to the procedural level (i.e., knowing how to) (Anderson, 1982). Also, extending understanding about practice likely requires augmenting the contributions of what experiences can be provided in both educational and workplace settings. In particular, experiences provided by the other setting does much to promote the adaptation and extension of learning arising from just one of these settings. For instance, the opportunity to reflect upon workplace experiences in educational institution and through guided processes by teachers will be important in extending the learning from those experiences. So in these ways, authentic workplaces experiences and practice in work activities provide a link and important reinforcement and honing of both procedural and conceptual knowledge accessed through experiences in educational institutions. Consequently, both the development of specific and more general forms of vocational learning arises from taking what has been learnt in one setting and assisting its applicability in another.
Therefore, the development of canonical occupational knowledge, some of its situational manifestations and likely variations across instances of practice are important goals for vocational education. These will likely best arise through utilizing and integrating experiences in both workplace and educational processes and settings. Each of these settings potentially provides particular contributions for securing that learning. However, when taken together and effectively integrated the prospect for rich vocational learning is enhanced.

In the sections that follow, two case studies are presented and discussed to illustrate how rich vocational learning might be best developed drawing on the integration of experiences work-based and intentional educational experiences. The first describes some of the strengths and limitations of learning through work, and how experiences that are deliberately organised to maximise the contributions of workplaces and address some of its limitations. Here, the use of intentional learning experiences (i.e., learning curriculum and guided learning) augment the learning experiences arising through work. The second case study refers to integrating school students’ paid part-time work with individual and group reflective processes to assist these students make informed decisions about post-school pathways. In both case studies, the concern is for the learning arising from these experiences to be extended to be applicable in circumstances other than those of its acquisition.

Case Study One – Workplace learning

From studies of workers’ learning through and for work across a range of industry sectors, a set of factors contributing to how individuals learn richly through everyday work activities has been identified (Billett 2001b). This learning allows them to perform effectively in their daily work activities and respond to many of the challenges (i.e., novel tasks and requirements) that arise through work life. Key contributions to this learning include: (a) individuals’ engagement in goal-directed activities within the workplace, (b) direct guidance they receive from other workers, and (c) indirect guidance (e.g., observing and listening) they secure from participating in work and interacting with others and the workplace. The potency of each of these contributions is premised on a duality comprising how they are afforded by the workplace and how individuals engage with these activities and interactions. Table 1 depicts the relational bases of these contributions through a consideration of how these contributions are afforded by workplace settings and subsequently engaged with by worker-learners. So, rich learning through everyday work activities can be understood in terms of how individuals are invited to engage in particular kinds of activities and interactions and how these are either supported or inhibited by workplace factors. Yet, importantly, how individuals elect to engage in workplace activities, the focus of their intentional engagement and the degree of effort they deploy in undertaking these tasks will also have particular legacies in terms of what they learn through their participation in work activities (Billett, Smith, & Barker, 2005). In short rich learning is unlikely to arise without
effortful engagement of learners. So, the particular interests and imperatives of both the workplace and individual workers will, in different ways and by different degrees, shape the kinds of learning that arises through participation in everyday activities at work.

Table 1. Affordances and engagement in work-related learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Affordances</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyday activities</td>
<td>The degree by which the workplace affords opportunities to:</td>
<td>How individuals exercise their intentions, agency and construals when engaging:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participate in activities from which knowledge required for work performance can be learnt;</td>
<td>in activities they can access in the workplace;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and with the social and physical environment of the workplace;</td>
<td>with the social and physical environment of the workplace; and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect guidance</td>
<td>access the social and physical contributions from which the performance for work requirements are accessible; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct guidance</td>
<td>direct guidance that can provide access to knowledge that would not be learnt by discovery alone.</td>
<td>with more experienced counterparts</td>
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The second of these contributions – direct guidance - is very much premised on the willingness and competence of more expert or experienced workers to provide guidance to less experienced workers. This permits the learner to acquire knowledge that they would not realise through experience alone (Brown & Palinscar, 1989; Rogoff, 1995; Rogoff & Gardner, 1984). However, here again, how individuals elect to engage with the guidance being afforded them is salient. This includes the kind and quality of interactions with more expert or experienced co-workers. Among others, a factor here is the learners’ perceptions of the more experienced partner’s competence (i.e., the worth of engaging with them). In one study (Billett, 2000), a worker refused to engage with his workplace-appointed mentor, claiming that he knew more about his work practices than his mentor. Consistently, this worker then reported through a series of interviews and responses to critical work incidents, that his learning at work was largely a product of his own agency, not of his mentor’s or others’ support. Regardless of the validity of this worker’s claims, the point is that even when direct work guidance is afforded, individuals will make judgements about the pertinence, credibility and utility of that guidance and also about the consequences for their sense of self in such engagements. Rightly or wrongly, they may either accept or reject that guidance on the basis of their appraisal of its worth. So, just as with teaching, individuals play a significant role in engaging with and mediating direct guidance. It reflects the duality of learning more generally: the contributions of the social world and those of the individual learner.

The same set of studies identified potentially important limitations of workplace learning. These included the paucity of understanding knowledge that cannot be
accessed through experience alone, the reluctance of experts to assist the learning of less experienced co-workers and the unevenness or restrictions on opportunities to engage in activities that are central to there learning about and honing important workplace knowledge. In order to overcome these limitations and assist develop rich learning, workplace curriculum and pedagogic practices can be enacted (Billett, 2006). The workplace curriculum is premised on a pathway of activities that progressively engages the worker-learners in increasingly more complex tasks through which their rich learning is secured incrementally. Pedagogic strategies comprising guided learning and the use of modelling, coaching, explanations have also been shown to be effective in extending the potential of everyday work experiences (Billett, 2000). So, through these kinds of intentional educational interventions, richer learning can be secured through work activities.

The third of these key contributions – indirect guidance – is premised on the individuals’ engagement with the physical and social contributions of the workplace. This includes observing and listening (Pelissier, 1991; Scribner, 1985), utilising models, clues and cues about work (Beach, 1993), performances that are accessible in the workplace and in different ways for particular workers (Gott, 1989). These contributions are not always objective or equally accessible. Individuals may or may not be able to engage in the workplace discourse, and will utilise in different ways what is observable within the workplace, given differences in their understandings of what they are observing. Many anthropological accounts of learning emphasise learning cultural practices, such as work, arising through individuals’ active mediation and learning of what they encounter and experience, rather than how these practices are being taught (Lave, 1993; Pelissier, 1991; Rogoff & Lave, 1984). So, much of what shapes the efficacy of workplace learning experiences is a product of individuals’ engagement, negotiation with and construction of what they experience in workplaces. That is, each of the above are premised on the learners’ active and agentic engagement with what is afforded in the workplace.

It follows that, in different ways, individuals will elect to exercise their agency in securing this knowledge. Certainly, some individuals’ engagement in work-related learning will be inhibited because of their standing and status. For example, volunteer fire fighters were given no access to some of the expertise and practices employed by professional fire fighters in learning how to fight fires in remote and rural communities (Lloyd, 2004). However, on becoming employed as paid fire fighters, they were invited to learn these practices (Lloyd, 2004). Similarly, the agency of workplace participants can drive interest in securing knowledge which is beyond their current employment status (Billett, 2001b). For instance, understanding workplace goals often requires securing access to the knowledge and the assistance of more experienced workers to access that knowledge. Yet, it is also the agency of individuals in thinking about, seeking out and formulating understanding of the goals that is central to their need to understand to what purposes their labour is directed. Consequently, individuals’ attempts to overcome the limitations of demarcated work practices, contested workplaces and understand knowledge which is not accessible, requires them to be agentic (Billett, Barker, &
Hernon-Tinning, 2004). This suggests the importance of personal epistemologies – how individuals go about learning agentically: actively and pro-actively (Smith, 2005).

If the requirements for being more agentic in learning through work seem unrealistic and unreasonable, it is worthwhile considering experiences of how relatively socially-isolated workers learn. A study of how small business operators learnt to implement the goods and services tax in Australia (Billett, Ehrich, & Hernon-Tinning, 2003), found that agency and intentionality of these operators was important not only in how they decided to engage in the task of learning (e.g., with whom they would collaborate, often very selectively), but also in making decisions about what they believed was important for them to learn. So both the goals for learning how to implement this new practice and the processes of doing so were largely shaped by the small-business operators’ interests and intentionality. For instance, those in professional practice (e.g., optometrists, veterinarians) elected to engage in learning only about the scope and extent of their compliance requirements. They were more interested in their professional practice and were able to delegate this task to somebody else. However, other kinds of small business operators had specific goals and needs for understanding this taxation regime. These included avoiding dependence upon accountants and financial advisers or careful planning of entrepreneurial activities. All this rehearses the importance of how individuals elect to engage in work-related learning experiences.

Yet, there are concerns that all of the above will be limited if it does not develop the capacity to deal with new tasks or occupational tasks that conducted in other workplaces, but in different ways and for different purposes. For instance, and as noted, studies that report how learning through everyday work activities progresses also identified limitations to that learning. A key one of these is extending this learning to be applicable to other circumstances (i.e., new activities and activities). Here, it found necessary to adopt guided learning strategies such as questioning dialogues and the use of problem scenarios (e.g., accidents, production problems) as bases for extending the knowledge associated with work. Yet, such strategies are not always easily enacted as part of everyday activities and, along with the need to develop understandings that are hidden, indicate the potential for experiences in educational institutions to augment and enhance the learning arising through participation in everyday activities.

INTEGRATION OF WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES THROUGH EXPERIENCES INTENTIONAL EDUCATIONAL

Building upon the premises outlined in the previous section about the limitations of everyday experiences in workplaces to provide rich learning, it is worthwhile considering how an integration of those experiences with those from educational settings might best occur. This section discusses how curriculum and pedagogic practices might be organised to focus on guiding and enriching learners’ experiences across these settings.
As a starting point, it seems likely that it will be those within educational institutions and systems (e.g., teachers) who will lead and guide this process of integrating the contributions of the experiences within workplace and educational institutions. This is because much of the expertise, interest and imperative for effective integration of these experiences reside within educational institutions. Also, given the key role for supporting learning, and concerns about the applicability of what is learnt in educational institutions to workplace settings, it is perhaps in the educational institutions’ interest to lead the integration of the two sets of experiences (Ricks, 1996). This includes identifying particular goals for this integration and offering curriculum arrangement and pedagogic practices to realise the kinds of integrations most likely to render rich learning. For instance, as discussed above, the educational goal might be to understand the broad applicability of a particular set of occupational knowledge and practices (e.g., in nursing, hairdressing, automotive work) to a range of possible workplace practices (i.e., different wards, salons, garages) or to respond to different kinds of work activities. If these were the case, it would be necessary to understand something of the diversity of occupational requirements across a range of such workplace practices. This may assist the development and application of the kinds of occupational knowledge across distinct instances of work practice. It follows then that developing these understandings could be undertaken by sharing among students their experiences of the requirements of the different kinds of workplaces in which they have worked or have been seconded. In Australia, for instance, apprentices spend approximately 85% of their indenture in the workplace and 15% of their time in vocational colleges. Hence, a potentially useful pedagogy practice would be to organise experiences in their college time to engage apprentices in discussing with others the work performance requirements in their particular workplaces and use this as a basis for sharing and critiquing these experiences.

In particular, drawing out the canonical occupational principles and practice which will be expected of all of those practising that occupation, regardless of setting might be helpful. Having identified the common requirements of the occupation, classroom activities within the educational institution or workplace training education could then be used to share apprentices’ experiences of how occupational tasks such as servicing of vehicles, procedures for hairdressing, approaches for preparing and serving food etc are enacted in particular workplaces and analyse why are these goals and particular approaches valued. These points then could be drawn out and reflected upon by learners to understand the particular circumstances and requirements for those kinds of work performance. This kind of learning can be used to assist apprentices understand the relationship between different kinds of performance conditions and performance requirements, and understand something of a variation of these for their selected occupation. Similarly, in university settings, trainee nurses’ experiences of different kinds of hospital wards could be drawn together to identify what constitutes the canonical principles and practices of nursing and they may be asked to reflect on how these might be applicable to different kinds of nursing work in which they might find themselves engaged. Similar processes might be used in courses undertaken by
those learning through workplace experiences. For instance, whether in advanced vocational education courses or in industry specific programs there can be ways in which such approaches can be used in educational programs to draw upon and extend the diverse workplace experiences of the participants.

The possibilities and problems with achieving these kinds of processes and educational outcomes are discussed in the case study below. This case study draws on a study of school students’ reflecting on their paid part-time employment as a means for critically appraising their work, working life and pathways beyond school.

Case Study Two – School students’ learning through reflecting on their paid work

This case reports the findings of a study that sought to use the paid part-time work experiences of school students in order to reflect on these experiences to reflect upon and critically appraise the world of work beyond schooling. This study was motivated by a concern about the educational worth of school-organised work placement programs, because of the lack of authenticity of the work experiences they provided, their short duration not being generative of useful outcomes, and their reported weak engagement by students and the schools’ curriculum (Billett & Ovens, 2007). Yet it was known that up to 70% of Australian senior year students engage in authentic work activities through their paid part-time work (Department of Education Training and Employment, 2000; Fullarton, 1999). In 2003, 79% of 15-19 year olds in Australia studying on a full-time basis were employed part-time (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2004). These experiences represent an educational resource to understand work, work life and post-school pathways that is readily available in every Australian high school, as this participation was reported across both genders and in settings in metropolitan and non-metropolitan settings.

The aim here was to co-opt and integrate the students’ paid work experiences using school-based pedagogic activities. The project involved working with groups of year 11 and 12 students (16 and 17 year olds) in five Australian schools to assist them understand the world of work and value its contributions to their education and to inform their post-school pathways and post-school transitions (Billett & Ovens, 2007). In short, the procedures adopted for this project drew on students’ experience of the paid part-time work to secure important educational goals about school-to-work transitions by reflecting critically and constructively on those experiences. This is another form of rich learning. The process of engaging the students to secure these goals comprised them reflecting and sharing their work life experiences through a series of four sessions. In these sessions, they considered the work activities using a set of descriptors about work and work practice; shared these with other students; considered the implications for post-school pathways and reflected further on the process. However, securing these goals was not straightforward in the school settings. Firstly, although it was anticipated that some school students might struggle to engage positively and constructively in reflecting
upon their paid part-time work experiences, this problem was exacerbated by some of the teachers’ value positions and pedagogy practices. Whereas some teachers were able to engage students in useful discussions, and intervene to draw out helpful insights (e.g., about working with others, learning through work), this was not always the case. Moreover, some teachers lacked sympathy for, and competence with, a process which legitimated learning experiences outside of school. Furthermore, some seemed uncomfortable with pedagogic processes in which students were the sources of knowledge to be shared and reflected upon. Of course, not all students were cooperative or benign. So, the sentiments of the teachers in accepting knowledge from elsewhere, and being able to effectively guide and integrate these experiences, were central to this project. Nevertheless, there were a number of helpful outcomes that are consistent with rich learning.

Pressing students to reflect upon that paid part-time work, overall, permitted them to identify crucial features of work and working life. This included them making distinctions between the conditions, status and roles of part-time and full-time workers, differences in the kinds of rewards for, and the kinds of, work that are undertaken by different categories of workers (e.g., those with higher or lower levels of qualifications and skills); differences in the kinds of discretion available to different categories of workers; distinctions in prospects for advancement and career progression across categories of workers; and differences in the kinds of requirements for workplace performance expected across workplaces (Billett & Ovens, 2007). It seemed that through describing their experiences of paid work, the students were able to identify, share and critically appraise many features of their paid work and working life. These insights were developed over time through periods of engagement in work that were significantly longer than those available through short work placements.

Indeed, the majority of students reported that their paid part-time work provided an effective experience to learn about the world of work and consider post-school options. The students’ responses to what they had learnt through reflecting on their paid work included: (a) learning about working life; (b) learning about different kinds of work and what was common and different among them; (c) learning about preferred kinds of work; and (d) a consideration of whether their preferred work options were actually what they wanted to do. For many of the students, it also assisted developing an awareness of the need to understand what actually constitutes the work that they were aiming to pursue careers in before they invested significant time and finance in tertiary and higher education courses. Often, but not always, the students’ responses demonstrated insights about approaches to work and post-school options. Overall, typically the students were able to identify the educational worth of reflecting upon their paid part-time work experiences, even if that appreciation was not always explicit.

In terms of pedagogic practices to support this learning, the students reported that this process was most helpful and appreciated when students were able to debate and discuss these matters in classroom and when effectively facilitated. Certainly, feedback from teachers suggested that discussions were often rich, informed and engaging, and the task of writing down their insights did not always
reflect this richness. So, this suggests that the method for engaging the students in reflecting upon their paid part-time work might need to be considered in terms of the kinds of outcomes that are desired by the teacher. Certainly, some students struggled to articulate their ideas positively when asked to write down responses. Yet, despite this, even those students, usually males, who resented writing about their paid part-time experiences did, nevertheless, seemed to gain from the opportunity to reflect upon their work.

Importantly, beyond the students’ readiness and characteristics, teachers’ interest in the workplace focus and their capacities to provide effective classroom-based experiences stood as important determinants in students’ reflections upon their paid part-time work experiences. Standing out among teachers’ qualities were those associated with: (a) their capacity to adapt and utilise effectively processes that met the readiness and characteristics of students; (b) their capacity to facilitate student learning by drawing upon their learning rather than teaching them; (c) managing students’ reflection of their paid work; and (d) appreciating the likely contribution of the workplace experiences for students.

In sum, it was found that through co-opting, identifying, sharing and reflecting on students’ paid work: (a) students’ understanding the world of work was elaborated; (b) that students learnt about work life beyond schooling and considerations for post-school pathways through reflecting upon paid part-time work in school settings; (c) the educational value of reflecting upon paid work was demonstrated; and (d) the role of institutional practices and teachers is essential in integrating these experiences. Overall, it seemed that the degree to which the experiences of paid work were able to be maximised and addressed constructively in the classroom, was identified as being, in part, a product of the understanding of working life by teachers and their capacity to facilitate this process in the classroom. In some ways, alarmingly, there was evidence of the closed culture of schooling which seem to de-value the contributions and sources outside of the school, which in turn inhibited the quality of school-based engagements. However, such practices are likely to exist in other educational settings, such as in vocational colleges and universities. Curiously, one of the best outcomes in this project was from a school that had a very limited tradition of vocational education. The quality of the outcomes of this school were realised through engaged and agentic students and the effective management of their learning experiences by their teacher.

LEARNING VOCATIONAL PRACTICE

It has been proposed here that experiences in both workplace and educational institutions when effectively integrated stand to develop generic, occupational and situational competence. Yet, even on their own the distinct contributions of both kinds of learning environment need to be understood and exercised effectively in assisting individuals learn vocational practice. It is through maximising the affordances of each environment and engaging learners richly with what each affords that offers the surest pathways to effective vocational learning.
Although the focus of the analysis above has been on workplace experiences, it is possible to develop a similar list for learners’ participating in educational institutions. For instance, much of the intentional goal-directed activities are directed towards the imperatives of schools as educational institutions, rather than students’ learning and how these are afforded and how students elect to engage with them. The proposition advanced here is the key role that individuals play in their learning and how the bases of their agency and intentionality will be exercised in that learning. The focus of this intentionality in terms of its engagement, direction and strength is central to the process and outcomes that comprises individuals’ learning experiences. This is not to deny the important contributions of others in the workplace or the educational institution, nor is it to encourage wholly individual over collective learning efforts. Instead, it suggests a greater consideration for rich learning and the effective integration of experiences in the workplace and educational settings of personal epistemologies, particularly those that are appropriately focussed and agentic. Educational provisions that explicitly acknowledge and accommodate the place of the individual within these arrangements and make the experienced curriculum a key consideration may provide helpful pathways to rich learning.

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