Redefining the 'work' in work-based learning

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Abstract
In this paper we argue for a widening of the normally accepted definition of 'work' as commonly used in the work- based learning concept. Work-based learning involving the paid job role is compared and contrasted with unpaid work-based and work-related learning achieved through a range of life place environments where there is no payment or no formal work environment involved, such as the home, the locale or the community. It is shown that currently work-based learning based on the former model, is normally much more valued and developed than other work related learning, completed in the alternative life place environments. We provide comment on the essential factors which would need to be considered if equity of status is to be achieved across the spectrum of learning environments and of the value given to all types of 'work' and the learning from them. While a model for valuing all work related learning is proposed, consideration is also given to ethical, moral and legal issues, which may need to be considered in the implementation of such a model. Recent evidence is reported which shows that effective learning can be achieved and formally assessed from unpaid work-based learning done in many differing life place environments and that ethical, moral and legal limitations can be overcome.

Introduction
The main focus of our research, was to extend the barriers to what is considered valuable learning, to progress the concept of informal learning accreditation within academia, and to promote the increase of personal autonomy of the learner in his/her own learning. Our focus draws on the fact that as every individual lives their life through a range of life place environments, such as the home, the community and more recently the virtual environment, and as 'work' is done in all of these environments, learners should be able to get credit for their learning if they so wish. Our research has lead us to propose that the current focus on work-based learning is too narrow to encapsulate this wider learning and that the locus for off-campus learning should change from the 'work and workplaces' to the life and the lifeplaces, e.g. to Lifeplace Learning. We realise and anticipate though, that to achieve our goal of Lifeplace Learning, which will require acceptance by academia, a number of steps must first be taken. We suggest that an initial step towards our wider goal would be to extend the definition of what is normally considered as 'work-based learning' to include a wider range of 'work' than is currently normally accepted.

In the discussion that follows we examine the use of the term 'work-based learning' and the normal definition and understanding of it, as we believe it to be interpreted too narrowly and to be open to too much iteration, thus ultimately, leading to confusion and a distinct lack of equity across the spectrum of available learning environments. We do not accept the well established and dominant (but not exclusive) view that the paid work-based learning model is the pivot around which off-campus learning should be developed.

We suggest that the term life-place learning, which would incorporate work-based learning, could be a more appropriate term to use for off - campus learning and that this fits usefully with the proliferation of the Lifelong Learning agenda proposed

globally. Blair (2005: p257) defines Lifeplace Learning as, "Learning that encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitude acquired, being acquired or to be acquired throughout life, irrespective of when, where, why and how it was, is or will be learned" and we base our work around this very wide but quite encompassing definition.

Lifeplace and Work place Learning
Lifeplace Learning was first discussed as a new learning paradigm by Chisholm and Burns (2003) and we have previously published our approach to the Lifeplace Learning model and its implementation, where the learner is recognised as having personal autonomy to define their desired learning outcomes across whatever life place environments underpin their learning (Davis and Chisholm, 2003). It is well acknowledged that learning environments are wide and varied, ranging from the recognised traditional learning environments (nurseries, schools, colleges and universities) to the recognised paid work place environment (office, factory, laboratory, hospital, countryside) (Rogers, 2004). If we consider though, that we also 'work' in many other lifeplace situations such as at home, then the home, the youth club, the gym, the library and all other everyday environments could become places which could be considered under the mantle of 'work-based learning' and would certainly begin to extend the Lifeplace Learning concept that we are proposing. Whether the work is paid or unpaid is irrelevant in this model and, as it is the learning that we are accrediting, it does not matter how or where it is learned as long as it can be made visible. The current situation, however, is that normally only some of this 'work-based learning' is deemed valuable and able to be accredited for qualifications.

Whilst we contest the value of continuing to use the word 'work' as that best suited to describe life learning, we recognise that it will continue to be used as it is now a well developed concept. We believe that its definition must be extended though, as in the majority of cases that we have examined, the definition is linked to the paid workplace. There is little doubt though that the term can be interpreted in relation to a much greater range of social and personal 'work' activities and thinking, than simply the paid organisational workplace.

We suggest that work-based learning based on paid work may also reach a point of nil growth as organisations are mainly based on the neo-classical capitalist model of business, where in reacting to market forces, the essential focus is to make decisions based on their own perceived interests centred on maximising profits and establishing financial sustainability. This is currently evidenced by the cost cutting measures being adopted by organisations during the ongoing global economic situation. This model is essentially in conflict with a work related learning model based on personal autonomy of the individual and the general personalisation of learning. In addition, organisations often emphasise groups rather than the individual and put emphasis on the education and training of individuals to fit in with organisational philosophy appropriate to the delivery of the required organisational outcomes. This philosophy of work- based learning, which is aimed at having individuals identify with the organisation, does little to support any form of autonomous learning or personalisation of learning. This approach can become the philosophical focus for an organisation where there is essentially no regard for individual autonomy and learning. In the Japanese workplace model for example, many employees complete their career working in group harmony which is regarded as the guiding virtue in Japanese organisations (Luegenbiehl, 2004). It can be observed that the learning model in this instance would essentially be about the needs of the organisation, with the individual operating in a closely controlled environment where autonomous learning and personalisation o learning would not be encouraged.

This is an extreme example of a work-based learning model, which is generally considered unacceptable from a western point of view. The driving force for such

learning is not concern for the learning and career development of the individual but much more about using and supporting learning which is highly relevant to the survival of the organisation. The individual in the organisation is paid to deliver to a job specification and agreed outcomes. If learning is included and approved it is almost certainly likely to be linked to the organisational learning objectives put in place to sustain its competitiveness and financial stability. It is not about personal autonomy of the individual in negotiating learning outcomes that they might desire, deriving from the experiential learning from their job role.

We consider that fundamental to effective learning is the recognition of the personal and professional autonomy of the individual. The concept of individual autonomy appears to be deeply embedded in western philosophical and political tradition, yet when we consider the traditional on-campus learning model, there is little evidence of this apparent. The case for personal autonomy in learning is strongly supported by the notion that "individuals are by their very nature as rational beings deserving of autonomy" (Luegenbiehl,2004p7). Luegenbiehl provides further evidence of this by suggesting that, "…individual autonomy is necessary for the proper functioning of society based on an ideal of liberal democracy".(p7) Our Lifeplace Learning concept of learning would support this notion of personal and individual autonomy for the functioning of society but we question whether this is evident in many of the current profit making organisations where the majority of accredited work-based learning takes place but where the paid job role has the prime position rather that the focus being on the individual and autonomous learning. We feel that this reflects the undesirable face of the paid and rigidly controlled work-based learning model where learning for the individual can only take place if it contributes directly to the organisational outcomes. We accept though that where outcomes desired by the individual coincide with that desired by the organisation the paid work based model probably does provide for effective learning.

During the development of work-based learning one of the main arguments for using the workplace environment as a learning environment was the Mode 2 learning approach proposed by Gibbons et al (1994) and Gibbons (1998;) which allowed the learner to negotiate his/her own learning content and learning outcomes. Over the past ten years we have found little evidence of this individual autonomy in learning in the paid work environment where learning is primarily driven by organisational needs for financial sustainability and profits. We suggest therefore that it is highly doubtful if the work-based learning model, based on paid work, has much to offer in preference to the traditional on-campus classroom model as far as allowing the learner to achieve personal autonomy for their learning.

In both the on-campus and off-campus paid work-based models of learning the learner is in a highly controlled learning environment where it appears that he/she is deprived of personal opportunity due to enforced coercion of thought and action. These models do not provide adequate opportunity for the learner to arrive at his/her own decisions, and do little to underpin the individual taking responsibility for the decisions he or she has made. This results in the learner failing to develop competence in independent judgement – a value considered by many as essential for valid and effective learning. We suggest that a future model of work-based needs to intrinsically reflect the value of personal autonomy for the individual, otherwise there is little value in moving away from the on-campus model that still forms the essential basis of learning in western society.

Despite the issues identified, we have observed significant growth of work-based learning in the UK over the last fifteen year period as it has evolved as an alternative to on-campus traditional classroom learning. This has to be welcomed as an ever increasing recognition that learning occurs in environments other than the traditional on-campus environment. We feel though, that this has mainly, but not exclusively, been

due to organisations realising that by becoming learning organisations they will be able to underpin and sustain the survival of the organisation within the competitive global economy, not for the benefit of the individual.

Higher Education and Terminology
Whilst this work-based development is a welcomed progression, we are concerned about the lack of clarity and lack of vision in the development of off-campus learning in the Higher Education (HE) sector. We note for example, that Gibbs and Costley (2006), referring to courses at one university in England, suggest that the focus of work-based learning is in transdiciplinary awards in work-based learning studies that are not subject based. They further comment that transdiciplinary awards are quite distinct from modes of work-based study that deliver single subject-based awards. Gibbs and Costley (2006) make the point that the trans-disciplinary awards are distinctive in that they relate to work-based learning as a field of study. This is quite different to what we are suggesting, which involves accrediting non-subject based work-based awards but not in the context or regarding work-based learning as a field of study. Although both models described above deliver within interdisciplinary environments and encourage professional development of graduates, based on government priorities, they do not generally extend the wider 'work' related approach to Lifeplace environments.

In another work-based learning centre, this time based in Scotland, the focus is on work-based learning based on traditional 'work' roles and all participants need to be in a cohort of learners from within an employed role, i.e. they need to be in employment (but not necessarily paid employment). If one also examines the evolving "branded "qualifications in the UK, it can be seen that a growing number of organisations are working with educational institutions to put in place work related accredited qualifications up to degree level. Whilst many of these awards are described as subject-specific, the work- related learning is about becoming a learned worker with a range of knowledge bases and competencies that are not subject specific and have transferability across a wide sector of industry and commerce. We believe that the current evolution of work-based models leads to confusion as to what "work-based learning" means and what it delivers. It supports the evolution of distinct and competing models rather than supporting the evolution of a common framework that is totally inclusive of all the distinct approaches.

This confusion can also be seen in the debates which have arisen around terminology and the meaning of 'work based learning'. Cairns, Malloch and Burns (2006) discuss whether we learn *at* work, *about* work, *through* work or *in* work and all raise issues of understanding. The terms work-based learning and work related learning, workplace learning, structured industrial studies, experiential learning, experience-related learning and work-placement learning are all terms which we have noted as related to learning which is claimed to take place in organisations rather than via the traditional on-campus classroom models. More recently, in researching alternative learning environments, which we have reported as Lifeplace Learning, (Davis and Chisholm, 2003; Chisholm and Burns, 2003), we have shown that using the proliferation of work related descriptions related to learning in organisations is not the best way forward for the development of autonomous learning for learners in off-campus environments nor for the delivery of a common framework which describes learning in all off-campus environments.

The definition of work according to the English Dictionary (Geddes and Grosset, 1996) is as follows:

> **Work** *n* employment, occupation; a task; the product of work; manner of working; place of work; a literary composition; *(pl)* a factory, plant. **vi* to be employed, to have a job; to operate (a machine, etc); to produce effects; (*with* **on**) to (attempt to)

persuade by persistent effort; (*with* **out**) to undertake a regular, planned series of exercises, **vt* to effect, to achieve; (*with* **off**) to eliminate though (sic) effort; (*with* **over**) to examine closely; (*inf*) to assault violently. –**workable** *adj.*-**worker** *n.*

There is nothing explicit within the definition above that relates to any form of payment or to any organisational setting. Rather, the focus appears to relate to some form of activity. An activity that has some relevance to our concept of Lifeplace learning environments is play, which one might agree is not normally considered as 'work'. The similarities of play and "work" ,however, are that both can be fun and good for the development of the individual, whilst differences relate to the voluntary nature of play and the fact that play is normally unpaid with no form of duty involved (Geddes and Grosset, 1996). It could be argued though, that these latter attributes of play, also apply to some work activities, e.g. ad hoc voluntary work, and so we would argue that play involves considerable 'work' in the general sense of the word. We advocate that play environments are both effective learning environments and work-based environments.

Based on this example and all the other evidence we have gathered we propose that work-based learning should relate to all types of work, whether the learning is gained *in* work, *during* work, *from* work or *for* work. Additionally, it should relate to learning gained from 'work' in a variety of contexts, i.e. from work in a recognised organisational capacity, from work involved in home activities (either related to our paid work or as part of normal household/family duties), from work involved in leisure activities and work from volunteer activities. For the future effective development of work-based learning we contend that the aspect of its definition needs to be widened such that work-based learning can be based on work that people do that is not necessarily in a formal place of employment or indeed paid, provided valuable learning can be achieved by the individual in the given environment. This will benefit a wider number of people and will make society more inclusive by including those learners who cannot or do not wish to involve themselves in traditional on-campus learning and who are not in a position, or do not wish to gain paid work place employment. A widening of the definition will also provide much more significance and value to the valid everyday learning that individuals do in their Lifeplace environments to further their life skills, knowledge bases and competences.

The lack of differentiation and confusion in the current approach to work-based learning also suggests to us that equity is not being achieved even in the workplace environment. An effective future model needs to facilitate an understanding of how the workplace environment is being used for learning by the learner and a key aspect to be considered is the personal autonomy of the learner in relation to the learning outcomes being achieved. The paid employee achieving outcomes set by the organisation to further the development and sustainability of the organisation, as we have already alluded to, in many cases, seriously compromises the values of the work related learning model. Where the learner, though, is able to access a workplace in an unpaid situation outside the formal job role, the learning model fundamentally changes, as the learner is then able to exercise full personal autonomy in relation to the study and learning outcomes. In this latter situation the organisation has a relatively passive role in making the workplace environment available to the learner and defining the conditions under which it is available to him/her. The following example illustrates this point.

A learner who is also a paid employee in an organisation could be undertaking work-based learning as part of the job requirement where learning is achieved through a project with distinct outcomes for the company. This learning would be achieved through integration with the paid job role. The same learner, however, could have negotiated to access the organisational environment to support specific learning outcomes not related or part of the job role. In this case, the organisation in approving

the use of and access to the environment, might expect the learner to complete the study in his/her own time. In the former situation the personal autonomy of the learner is compromised as the learning outcomes require to integrate with the job role and the delivery of desired organisational objectives. In the latter case the personal autonomy is not compromised as the learner is completely in charge of the desired learning outcomes to be achieved through using the workplace environment in an unpaid role.

The same learner may also be involved in achieving learning outcomes via prior completed work in the paid job role. Once again, while it may involve permission to use, and or, refer to earlier work of the organisation, the reflection and thinking involved in this prior experiential learning would be driven by the intrinsic motivation of the learner acting in a completely autonomous manner. This latter learning would almost certainly be achieved by the learner in their own time with no correlation to the paid job role.

We understand that these learning situations cannot simply be described by the same term but they can be described as work-based learning, as work related learning, as workplace learning and as experiential learning and all could be included inside a common framework giving equity to each. While it is clear that it is a workplace environment which is involved in all three cases, the environment is being used quite differently to facilitate learning. This also illustrates the points made by Malloch et al (2006) as in the situations illustrated it is not clear whether the learner is learning *at*, *about*, *through*, or *in* the workplace environment.

Considering all of this we suggest that some form of useful rationalisation in terminology is attempted for clarification purposes of work-based learning, whilst growing and developing off-campus learning. This would mean examination of the multiple meanings of the terms associated with off-campus learning and evolving definitions which adequately underpin every form of off-campus learning environment.

Accreditation
In conducting our research survey on Lifeplace Learning (our wider goal) reported by Blair (2005) we were surprised to find out how little consideration is given to learning in the range of life place environments which we have described earlier and even more surprised to learn that where such environments had been considered, the learning was treated as informal with little attempt to recognise, assess or credit it. We have shown that much of what has developed as theory and practice in relation to the paid work place as a learning environment has transferability to other life place environments such as the home, the community and leisure (Chisholm and Blair, 2006; Blair and Chisholm, 2006). It is important to note that in suggesting that learning from life places (informal learning) should be accredited through assessment and credit, we are not suggesting that informal learning is somehow more important than formal learning. What we are suggesting, and we agree with Billet (2001, 2004) in this respect is that we need to recognise both. Billet has critically discussed the artificial dichotomy in this area and expresses particular concern that informal or non-formal learning as it is described in the literature is considered less important than formal learning. There appears to be a problem in understanding and recognition of informal learning and in particular it is this aspect which needs to be rectified Historically schools, colleges, and universities have been regarded as formal learning environments and workplaces and other life place environments as 'informal' learning environments with the former being acceptable and approved and the latter simply suitable for informal non assessed learning. This dichotomy is often more associated with the fact that an on-campus formal environment is involved with accreditation of educational programmes, the assessment of such programmes, and on the basis of assessment, the award of credits. On the other hand, informal learning is often more associated with learning that

is not part of an accredited programme and where often no formal credit system is involved.

Early 21st Century society is increasingly concerned with the delivery of learning which can be measured and awarded credit, so it is valid and necessary to develop an off-campus learning model which facilitates quality assurance, valid assessment, and the award of credit where this is desired by the individual or organisation involved. Whilst Billet (1998, 2004) and others have been at the forefront of the development of the work-based model, and in giving support to the value of informal learning as equally valid as formal learning, it is surprising that this support has not led to a broader model in which all life place environments are equally valid for effective learning. The narrow focus of learning in the workplace is reinforced by respected work such as that by Boud (1998) and Boud and Garrick (1999) where they report considerable amounts of study devoted to learning at work and ways to theorise on work and learning. Whilst that work and similar anecdotal evidence was vital and necessary in order to promote and establish the work-based learning concept in its developmental stages, we now need to move forward towards a much more inclusive common framework for work based learning.

Work-based learning is recognised because it normally relates to business processes and related activities being conducted in a controlled environment and is thus more easily correlated to the traditional on-campus learning environment. Additionally, if it is a paid role related to the business then the evidence of the learning is likely to be more easily verified as work or personnel records and/or testimony from workplace mentors can all be used as evidence. Lifeplace Learning, which we have set out as our wider goal can also be evidenced appropriately in any given Lifeplace environment as we illustrate later in the paper. We reiterate that by widening the definition of work-based learning and creating a common framework which gives equity to all Lifeplace environments, this wider goal can be realised to the advantage of the development of future off-campus learning.

An accredited example of Lifeplace Learning
An excellent illustration of the validity of learning from non paid work in the Lifeplace, and how such learning can be accredited is shown by the following example this clearly shows why the paid workplace model is not the optimum model for the development of a common model of off-campus learning. This postgraduate project involved a detailed study of schooling in the home environment in a relatively isolated rural community in Australia. The individual, a mother, exercised total personal autonomy in educating her daughters in the home environment. She researched all of the recorded literature and documented the programmes that she had developed while educating her children, who all had some degree of learning difficulties. This involved in-depth reflection and analysis of the experience which she had gone through which was then followed by testing her overall experiential learning against theory, and further development through reflection and debate towards her conclusions. The overall curriculum in this case was life and work associated with the farm 'home learning 'environment.

In completing the successful thesis this mother used all of the work-based learning concepts and theories developed around the paid workplace environment including retrospective in-depth reflection on the education journey involved. On the basis of the experiential learning derived from the home schooling, she reviewed results through a critical literature study of relevant theory. This lifeplace learning, in a purely home environment, provides strong evidence for the introduction of a more broad-based off campus learning model which does not emphasise paid workplaces but also emphasises the 'work' involved in such a study.

This example also relates, in an interesting way, to the informal/formal learning equilibrium. The home schooling and all the original work done were taken forward through informal learning and it was a decade later when, through registration with a University, the project became formal learning involving quality assurance and assessment of the delivered thesis. This example underpins the need to give equal recognition to informal learning in addition to formal learning and illustrates the key point that off-campus learning environments require to be integrated with on-campus learning environments if the learning, done by the student, is to be formalised through assessment and award.

Ethical, moral or prejudicial limitations
We argue in our wider goal of Lifeplace Learning that all learning should be valued, inclusive of unintentional learning deriving from experiential development in any type of lifeplace environment and that autonomous learning is paramount in this. We also argue here that the first step to this should be the widening of the work-based learning definition. With the argument for individual autonomy and negotiation of learning by the individual in multi- lifeplace environments, however, comes the question of what is ethically and morally acceptable as study content. Within the teacher/lecturer controlled traditional on-campus classroom environment and the traditional work-based environment this is much less of an issue but for a broader, off-campus model to function, as we are suggesting, educators may have to exercise some form of ethical control over what is acceptable as topics for study.

Buckeridge and Grunwald (2003) raise issues as regards secularisation in the western world where moral and ethical issues are no longer taught or debated. We deduce from this, rightly or wrongly, that the current generation of educators, while being much aware of their rights, may show less understanding of their social obligations and responsibilities set within the context of ethical and moral frameworks. Against such a background it would be difficult for educators to reach any consensus as regards acceptable subject matter for experiential study. Cairns, Malloch and Burns (2006) make some interesting points as regards what is ethically and morally acceptable in experiential learning. They note that in most writings about learning, it is put forward that learning is associated with developing positively where it can be assumed that all learning experiences are either fortuitous or at least benign. They comment as follows (p.92),

> This is a naïve and at times shockingly false assumption. Attitudes, values and much of the manifold evils of humankind could be described as learned. All the "isms" such as racism, ageism, sexism as well as the social "evils" of violence, war-making, hate, jealousy, greed and avarice could be said to be learning that is not positive and is certainly not benign in its effects and impact.

This quote raises many issues as regards limitations on acceptability for accredited experiential learning, which, either contributes to or constitutes an award. It illustrates the complexity of making judgements in relation to acceptable learning.

Society has increasingly grown to expect and demand the highest ethical and moral standards from their educators and this would be no different within the Lifeplace Learning or extended work-based learning contexts. The challenge for educators would be to provide an ethical and moral framework in relation to negotiated learning, while ensuring such a framework does not become over intrusive and compromise the very basis of the learning and the personal autonomy. This may be a difficult equilibrium to establish and maintain but we suggest not impossible. Ultimately any experience in life can lead to experiential learning, whether intentional or unintentional, and it could be argued that any form of derived experiential learning should be acceptable to the educator if it is what the individual desires. In this respect, we recognise that such considerations may well present difficulties, and be an initial inhibition to developing our

widest Lifeplace Learning model but this is not necessarily the case for the extended work-based model we are proposing here.

To charge individual educators with this responsibility could lead to significant confusion, perhaps even dangerous situations, as it could be anticipated that the educators and students involved may well vary significantly in their interpretation of what is ethically and morally acceptable AS learning in a life place environment. Most undergraduate and postgraduate study, whether on or off-campus within currently benefit from a framework where ethical/moral issues are carefully examined in relation to proposed studies. This normally consists of study projects being submitted to an ethics committee/group for examination and the group approving, or rejecting, the studies on behalf of the educational establishment. We suggest that an ethics group could take responsibility on behalf of the educational establishment for the approval of Lifeplace Learning studies in any given environment in the same manner. Ethical, moral, or legal issues are no different for Lifeplace Learning, as they are for traditional learning. The key exception is that the learner and facilitator/mentor can agree on the subject area rather than having the subject matter dictated to them by set curricula. Whatever is illegal, immoral or unethical in traditional learning styles remains illegal, immoral or unethical within Lifeplace Learning.

What is perhaps the most significant feature in Lifeplace learning is that there is opportunity for both the facilitators/mentors and the learners to make decisions on the extent that they wish to adhere to moral or ethical issues. This is significantly different from what happens in traditional on-campus learning where the areas of study and curriculum content have been through a formal process of accreditation. There should be no difference regards legal issues as the law dictates what is acceptable, and if a student wanted credit for learning that was illegal there would be a duty on the facilitators/mentors to reject this. The moral or ethical areas are not as clear because individual beliefs differ and these may cause disagreement in what is acceptable between tutors and learners in the absence of an overriding body of decision makers. A point worthy of note though is that if credit was requested for learning from a past illegal event, we suggest that this would be acceptable and fall under the moral or ethical area. To clarify this we provide the example of someone who had served a term of imprisonment for a crime and who wished to reflect on the learning that he/she had from this event and the prison experience, and use this learning towards credit. It is unlikely that innovative educators would refuse someone the opportunity to undertake this type of learning recognition.

A model for valuing all work related learning
We report now on a study of negotiable Lifeplace Learning modules which were developed as part of an undergraduate general degree programme in the UK and allow students to gain 20 credits at levels 1, 2, 3 and/or 4 within the Scottish accreditation system. This means a maximum of 80 credits on a degree of 480 credits. The modules offer students the opportunity to negotiate their own topic, syllabus, learning outcomes, study mode, and assessment methods and criteria. The only limitations are that the study has to be at the correct depth for the level chosen, the assessment needs to be appropriate to be able to demonstrate the learning outcomes, and there is a compulsory reflective element included. The subject areas can be a past or current event or indeed some future study. All decisions are made during the initial negotiation stages and the students are guided by the academic facilitators/mentors. In the study below, ethical, moral or legal issues for the supervisory staff in agreeing to the content and topic area of the studies, did not create problems as far as the work-based projects were concerned. From a more general perspective, however, there were one or two very sensitive areas discussed during the personal reflections and in relation to topic choice. One example was personal child abuse, which was agreed upon as an area for

study after discussion, but which, nevertheless, raised concerns for the supervisory staff involved.

During 2006-2008, the model formed the basis for a European project where the concept was tested in three other European countries; Finland, Germany and Estonia. Each partner country tested an element of the concept within his/her university. Within this study the terms work-based, work place, work related and Lifeplace Learning were defined as follows:

Work- based Learning: Learning arising from undertaking study directly connected to an individual's own work duties or directly related to their organisation or industry for the benefit of their work related career or for the organisation within which they work.

Work place learning: Learning which is indirectly related to a persons work duties or which takes place using the workplace as the learning environment.

Work- related learning: Learning that is associated directly or indirectly with work of whatever nature but not necessarily done in the workplace.

Lifeplace Learning: Learning that encompasses knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitude acquired, being acquired or to be acquired throughout life, irrespective of when, where, why and how it was, is or will be learned.

To date around seventy-seven (77) students have undertaken Lifeplace Learning in its widest sense and Table 1 shows the wide range of topic areas chosen by the students which relate to the work-based argument. Those marked by * in the Table are traditional work-based studies, those with ** are traditional workplace studies, and those marked with *** are traditional work related studies. As can be seen twenty (20) students in total chose topics related to paid work (as traditionally defined), ten (10) students chose topics related to work-based study, six (6) students chose topics based on workplace study and four (4) students chose subject matter related to work-related study.

If we extend the definition of 'work' as argued by the authors in this paper to include activity involving 'work' but not necessarily paid work, the situation alters as follows. Work-based remains the same with ten (10) students; work-place doubles to twelve (12) students, as indicated by those marked with ##; and work-related almost trebles to eleven (11) students, as indicated by ###. Overall, it raises the total of learners able to get credit for work-based learning (based on our research to date) by approximately 60%, to a total of thirty-three (33) students.

We believe this to be a significant result and thus believe that by widening the definition of work-based learning, more individual learners would be able to gain academic credit associated with 'work' under work-based learning and this would consequently have an impact on the number of people able to access work-based learning qualifications. This would also have a positive impact on universities offering such courses (potentially more students), on the global widening access agenda (more people able to access formal learning), on Lifelong Learning (visible credit for learning through life) and on Inclusion (very little learning is not acceptable and there is flexibility to enable).

Conclusions

Paid work-based learning is much more valued and developed than other work-based and work - related learning completed in alternative life place environments. This is not only because of the focus on its development over the last 20 years but also because it has increasingly become a key objective of central and regional government policy. Work-based learning is seen as enhancing the employability of graduates while at the same time strengthening educational establishments' working relationships with organisations through the integration of the on-campus and workplace environments.

Table 1

No.	Level	Topic
No of students = 77		
3	2	Goals for business and individual success ***
8	2	Health and Safety *
10	2	Benchmarking *
15	2	Quality assurance in Engineering ***
17	4	Skills for primary teaching ###
18	4	Lean Manufacturing *
23	2	Skills required for joining the police ###
26	2	Employment difficulties of offenders and /or ex offenders *
27	2	Discipline in Schools ###
30	2	Error Management in the workplace *
34	3	Interview skills ###
40	2	Learning to play the piano with my daughter ###
41	1	Marketing opportunities via the internet ##
42	2	Internet – Asset or liability? ##
45	2	Production of Wedding Stationery *
46	2	Meaning of work/life balance **
51	3	Utilising underused materials to design a range of gift cards. *
54	3	Reflexology ###
56	3	Practical issues of web design **
46	3	A voluntary student mentoring system for skills development **
48	3	Drama techniques analysis & methods for self development ##
49	4	Community Education ##
55	1	Website Accessibility and problems ###
56	2	Critical factors and external risk when going international. ***
59	3	Learning at work and its relevance to personal development **
60	3	The effect of Reiki treatments ##
66	3	Managing a team and recruitment strategy *
67	3	Improving Outpatients Endoscopy Services *
68	3	Healthy eating and size zero
69	3	An investigation of Asthma and linked allergies
70	3	Improving confidence and communication to be able to teach ##
71	3	Understanding skills for the hospitality industry **
72	4	Developing & producing a website to promote a small business *
74	1	Learning from work duties **
76	3	Skills necessary to be a paramedic ***

Work-based learning is also seen as supporting the political agenda where educational institutions are encouraged to support people in seeking personal and professional development throughout their careers. Increasingly, the demand for competencies and knowledge generation, alongside professional mobility, has put a key focus on the need for work-based learning to be integral to undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

As government driven "branded" awards evolve we must avoid placing learners in constrained learning situations designed to suit employers only. If this happens we will simply be replacing the traditional on-campus model with a work-based model exhibiting similar constraints. Learning opportunity should be based on personal needs of the learners or indeed a combination of needs of both the learner and the organisation. Recognition of learning achieved in the wider life place environments that could be used to provide added value to the learning completed in the workplace or the traditional on-campus learning environment, needs to occur.

We propose that the future vision of off-campus learning should involve defining a model of learning, where learning achieved in interdisciplinary life place environments, including the work place, has value, due to the experiential nature of all learning and the added value that this can add to the learner. What is key is the experiential interdisciplinary everyday environments. If we are to achieve a more effective model of learning, then the learning cannot simply be seen as that attached to the paid job role. Environments such as the home, the community, the locale in which a person lives must be recognised as valid and equal.

Moral and ethical dilemmas of learning are far from clear, and by widening the scope of learning environments and learning choices, further problems are raised in deciding what is acceptable as topics for learning, and of who should make decisions on this. It seems reasonable though, that ethical and moral issues should be addressed by the educational institutions involved in the studies, in terms of putting in place facilitating mechanisms. We question whether educators and those in organisations involved currently have sufficient understanding of how their own personal ethical construct should function in the professional context of deciding where to draw the line with regard to what is acceptable as experiential learning in life place environments.

It is interesting to note the difference in the work-based awards currently offered by higher education institutions. While some work-based awards appear subject specific, others are about the personal and professional development of the learner and about generic experiential understanding of the work based learning environment. This supports our view that the terminology and ideology of work-based learning is in need of rationalisation. Our goal to have the Lifeplace Learning concept as the overall concept of learning, with work-based learning becoming a sub set therein, would better address this problem, including defining the work related, work-based and work place learning more precisely.

We propose that all learning should be acceptable for accreditation, as learning is basic to human kind and pervades all we do throughout our lives. This is certainly supported by Vaill (1996) in his examination of the centrality of learning in life. If we are to gain equity across the spectrum of learning within 21s century society, we must reconsider the value of individual autonomous learning for both the individual and society as a whole. The essential factors to be considered for equity across the spectrum of learning environments must be value of knowledge, consequences of missed opportunity and attitude change. There is a need to recognise, on an equitable basis, learning across all life environments where experiential knowledge production and experiential based personal and professional development of the learner is gained. This meets the challenges posed by a rapidly changing global society where increasingly knowledge capital is in high demand.

In taking forward the Lifeplace Learning concept we firstly need to rationalise all "work" terms used to describe experiential learning such that society can appreciate the meaning and value of this approach to learning as a valid alternative to the traditional on-campus subject discipline model. A model for learning accreditation which includes work-based learning can, and should be, put in place where work in a range of life place environments can be valued equally alongside the paid work place environments. Effective learning can be achieved and formally assessed from unpaid work-based learning done in many differing life place environments and there is value in the learning both for the employer and the employee.

The development of learning in paid workplaces must continue, as there is already recognition of this as valuable and useful learning, but as academics at the forefront of practice and knowledge, we must continue to develop the other interdisciplinary life

place environments and the learning derived from our participation in them. We can start by recognising the wider connotation of the word 'work' and extend the barriers to work-based learning.

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