(Re)designing for equity, access and inclusion in work-integrated learning

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Equity-seeking groups of students participating in work-integrated learning (WIL) face disparities in access, retention, and future employment, reflecting challenges and barriers associated with their intersectional identities and dimensions of diversity. These disparities include international students facing cultural discrimination, students with disabilities facing bullying, and 2SLGBTQIA+ and female students facing discriminatory attitudes and underrepresentation within WIL placement. Through the lens of the social model of disability, where limitations are viewed as barriers in the environment rather than personal deficits, designing for equity is essential. This paper offers guidance to WIL employers and educators wrestling with expanding diversity and improving equity. Practical strategies for enhancing WIL access, inclusion, and equity are described for five identified design factors: context, timing, level of independence, degree of scaffolding (support), and connection with theory.

Keywords: Work experience programs, equity, student success, inclusion, diversity, students with disabilities

Learners who disproportionately face barriers in work-integrated learning (WIL) include international students (language and cultural challenges and discrimination), students with disabilities (harassment and bullying, in addition to lack of assistive technologies, health, and pain issues, and sensory and communication barriers), 2SLGBTQ+, and female students (discriminatory attitudes and underrepresentation, in addition to overrepresentation in gender stereotypical roles) (see, e.g., Cocks et al., 2015; Moylan & Wood, 2016; A. Taylor et al., 2015). Such equity-seeking groups of students participating in WIL face disparities in access, retention, experiences, and impacts on future employment outcomes (Cukier et al., 2018). Hiring preferences and criteria derived from social capital, educational attainment, and citizenship status may also reinforce discrimination (Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2018). Nielsen et al. (2022) summarized compounding barriers for Indigenous learners, including exclusion and tokenization (Pidgeon, 2016), misinterpretations and appropriations of Indigenous knowledge (Kovach, 2009), and privileging written traditions and positivist assumptions (Atleo, 2004), as well as intersectional impacts of finances and family structures/dependent care (Nielsen et al., 2022).

EQUITY (OR INEQUITY) IN WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING DESIGN

The barriers students face to success in WIL can be framed as individual challenges to overcome with support, or they can be considered as arising from the design. In design framing, access, inclusion, and equity (or lack thereof) manifest from WIL design choices, including assessments, policies, processes, requirements etc., WIL as a co-lived design (curriculum as experienced by each participant) is:

> an educational approach involving three parties – the student, educational institution, and an external stakeholder – consisting of authentic work-focused experiences as an intentional component of the curriculum. Students learn through active engagement in purposeful work

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> tasks, which enable the integration of theory with meaningful practice that is relevant to the students' discipline of study and/or professional development. (Zegwaard et al., 2023, p. 38)

When employers introduce a learner into WIL placement, the learner is welcomed into a new setting that has a range of factors that can enhance or hinder the student experience. These factors can be (re)designed to create a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive WIL. This article's redesign framework draws on the social model of disability, where limitations are viewed as barriers in the environment – systemic, physical or social – rather than learner deficits (Oliver & Sapey, 2006), and consider the impact of systemic social attitudes and norms that perpetuate colonial-rooted barriers for Indigenous people and people whose roots are from the global south (Kovach, 2009).

To be successful, learners need equity (systemic thriving) which necessitates access (viable opportunity) and inclusion (valued and belonging), while also requiring systemic changes to the policies, structures, and power dynamics of voice that are rooted in stereotypes and devaluing of specific groups (Henry et al., 2017). Equity involves revising systemic language, policies, and structures that demean, limit, or exclude, for example, letters with accents not available in required company font. Gaudry and Lorenz's (2018) work distinguishes between Indigenous inclusion and decolonial Indigenization that "fundamentally reorient[s] knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians" (p. 219). Access is removing barriers and creating viable opportunities to apply, be selected, be guided, and engage meaningfully and successfully, including where positions are advertised and how the criteria are written (Accessible Canada Act, 2019). Inclusion is the sense of belonging where people are valued for their perspectives and presence. To belong is more than being tolerated with minor deviations and expected to fit in, for example, asking about and meeting dietary needs at required events (Allen, 2020; Hagerty et al., 1992).

To offer strategies for (re)designing WIL's assessments, processes, policies, structures, and learning environments, this paper applies the five design factors from the Outcome-Based Experiential Learning (OBEL) framework (Hoessler & Godden, 2021) and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a conscious process of planning decisions to help all students learn and achieve expected outcomes from WIL (Novak, 2016).

Five Design Factors of Work-Integrated Learning

Five design factors for WIL were identified as part of a multi-year research project into the intended outcomes of WIL and experiential learning, and how those outcomes could be achieved (Hoessler & Godden, 2021). Publicly available descriptions, strategic documents, and promotional materials of 123 Canadian colleges and universities were coded and analyzed to derive the direct and external stakeholders influencing experiential learning and WIL design; and found 55 intended outcomes across 16 categories, including career readiness, learning theory and skills, adaptability through conceptual expertise and values, and interpersonal qualities (Hoessler & Godden, 2021).

Hoessler and Godden's (2021) five design factors for leaders, employers, coordinators and other stakeholders to consider when enhancing WIL design are:

1. Social and physical context (e.g., layouts, desks, lunch culture),
2. Frequency and length of the experience (e.g., 5 days a week for a month or 1 day a week for a term),
3. Level of independence and responsibility reflecting the leap from current to expected practice,
4. Degree of scaffolding specifying the level of guidance and feedback provided, and

5. Sequencing of theory and application (e.g., theory then work experience or work experience than theory).

Diverse Learners

Drawing on Gardenswartz and Rowe's (2003) internal (e.g., 2, 3, 4, 5) and external (e.g., 1, 6, 7, 8) diversity dimensions, this article examines the implications for WIL design on access, inclusion, and equity for eight dimensions of diversity:

1. Financial,
2. Neurodiversity,
3. Physical ability/disabilities,
4. Subjected to decolonized/colonized perceptions & practices (including people who experience racism),
5. Gender (including relative risk of harassment),
6. Family structure/dependents,
7. Religion and culture (including the identifiers, social norms and embodied mores by which human sub-groups defined themselves and are defined), and
8. Rural/urban.

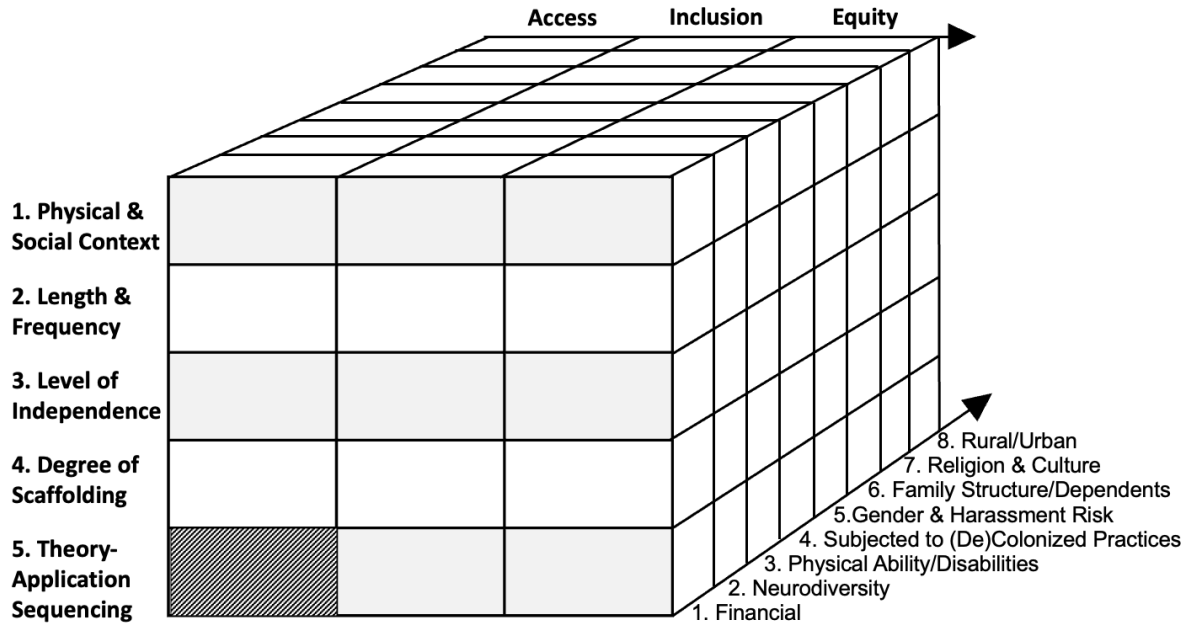
Additional dimensions, not included due to space, can also be considered using the techniques in this paper.

Each learner has more than one dimension of diversity, and that intersectionality is reflected in their lived realities (Crenshaw, 1989). The importance of considering intersectionality is highlighted by recommendations for Indigenous learners by Nielsen and colleagues (2022), who note the impact on access based on financial and family intersecting with colonial barriers. Women with physical disabilities face heightened disadvantages including "more psychologically affected by inequitable workplace conditions, partly because they earn less, are exposed to more workplace stress, and are less likely to experience autonomous working conditions" (Brown & Moloney, 2019, p. 94), with Lee (2015) recommending strategic considerations to "reduce structural, environmental and attitudinal barriers to employment equity" (Lee, 2015, p. 89) for women with disabilities.

Visualizing the Complexity of Accessible, Inclusive, and Equitable WIL for Diverse Learners

To untangle the complex puzzle of improving equity, access and inclusion for WIL students, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the puzzle. In this dimensional cube are 'blocks' that leaders, educators, coordinators and employers can focus on when (re)designing programs for inclusive WIL. Each block considers how one design factor impacts access, inclusion, or equity for one dimension of diversity. This three-dimensional cube representation approach was based upon Bray and Thomas (1995) and Godden's (2016) work that use a cube's visual form to prompt nuanced consideration of policy implementation.

FIGURE 1: Designing for equity with the OBEL-equity cube.



Note. The cube is five rows, three columns and eight spaces deep. The five design factors are rows along the vertical y-axis. Access, inclusion and equity are the three columns along the horizontal x-axis, and the 8+ dimensions of diversity are blocks along the z-axis.

Applying an OBEL Equity Cube approach, an educator, employer, or program coordinator would: (a) select a block by choosing a goal of enhancing access, inclusion or equity; (b) select a design factor; and (c) identify implications of a proposed or existing design for one or more dimensions of diversity. For example, the shaded bottom left block (Access, Sequencing, Financial) examines how access is impacted by sequencing for people of varied or lower financial circumstances, including how unpaid final year placements may impede participation after years of tuition payments even though learners benefit from having the theory.

IDENTIFYING EQUITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS FOR EACH WIL DESIGN FACTOR

Slicing through the complexity of EDI implications of WIL (re)design, each design factor can be examined to identify practical considerations for WIL coordinators and employers.

Physical and Social Context: Potential Barriers and Practical Options

Each WIL experience is situated within a specific social and physical context that, can present or mitigate barriers to diverse learners' access, inclusion, and equity.

The dimensions of diversity highlight specific equity considerations for the social and physical context. As an example, consider the design of washroom access, belonging, and equity.

In many places, inequitable access to washrooms is still a lived reality, including physical:

- Too few stalls leading to longer lines for women washrooms.

- Single-stall washrooms further away, affecting those with mobility, fatigue, and unexpected or frequent need.
- Portables on job sites using sanitizer, lacking clean water for menstrual sanitation.

And social:

- Post-meeting walking debriefs could lead to withholding or repeatedly missing the leader's allocations of tasks or insight.
- The 5-minute bio-break between online meetings.

The physical and social context slice of the cube can be considered for access (door sufficiently open), inclusion (valued and belonging), and equity (systemic thriving).

TABLE 1: Access, inclusion, and equity sample considerations for physical and social context.

Diversity Dimension	Access	Inclusion	Equity
1. Financial	Access to menstrual products?	How are washroom break delays treated?	(across dimensions) Who decides on washroom amenities in new and current spaces? If a person declines a work trip or site visits, is there any impact on their evaluation? What washroom designs and amenities are recommended by people who live each dimension?
2. Neurodiversity	How much privacy is available?	What sanitation options are provided?	
3. Physical ability	Stall sizes?	Desks closer to the washrooms listed as an option?	
4. Subjected to colonized beliefs	Are there assumptions that some groups of peoples need fewer breaks?	Are requests for washroom breaks welcomed?	
5. Gender	What is the location of and ratio of staff per gender-specified stall?	Are there relevant washrooms on each floor and workplace?	
6. Family structure / dependents	What is the ratio of person to washroom for home offices?	Are washroom break delays expected?	
7. Religion and Culture	Places to wash feet?	Who arranges if there are specific requests?	
8. Rural/Urban	Is there access during travel between sites?	Options during commutes between sites?	

Organizations can pre-plan for all employees/learners working at home, on online platforms, and on-site to consider their physical contexts, and experience of the social context, including access to supervisor/mentors and organizational culture. Review the considerations for all relevant locations when a work placement requires travel or site visits. Sample checklists for washroom designs checklists include the Ontario Human Rights Code (n.d.) audit for dining experiences, University of British Columbia's 2022 washroom audit, the City of Edmonton Accessibility Advisory Committee's *Checklist*

for Accessibility and Universal Design resource indicating what is code-required and where are best practices and a review of gender (in)equity in ice arenas completed by Campbell (2009). Organizations can revisit their checklists and design periodically.

To improve inclusion, indicate all options for washrooms, even if someone does not look like they need a particular washroom. Allow people to self-pace and self-select the timing of washroom breaks, or if staff coverage is needed, invite a conversation. Enhance equity within organizational policies and decision-making by encouraging feedback on plans and remove policies and assessment criteria that penalize washroom breaks. Ask "what do you need to thrive here?"

In addition to washrooms, consider the implications of social and physical context on:

- Access to websites, including the application portal meeting, based on Web Content Accessibility guidelines (physical, neurodiversity, financial).
- Access to appropriate food and kitchen (financial, physical, culture, religion).
- Control over distractions such as noise (financial, neurodiversity, physical).
- Inclusive representation in images and iconography along the hallway walls and in promotional and company material that impacts belonging and perceived access (gender, decolonized/colonized, religion and culture).
- Equitable policies for requests and training for people receiving those requests for creating social and physical spaces to meet needs and create thriving (all dimensions).

When considering a WIL placement location, employers and coordinators can reflect on:

- What audits/reviews of accessibility have been done for the location the learner will be attending, including entrances, fire codes, access to food/kitchen, ergonomic setups, safe walks, and communities;
- What flexibility could be offered for the role (e.g., timing of commutes, hybrid within the week, hybrid over the quarter such as hosting one site for one week and otherwise working from home);
- What existing supports are there for accommodating employees, and will these apply to the WIL learner;
- How will common barriers (e.g., accessible washrooms, vague productivity definitions, work-alone policies, funding for ergonomics, safe walk to vehicles) be mitigated; and
- How can power differences between the learner and employer be addressed and any concern by the learner about possibly being seen as an 'additional hassle to manage' be mitigated.

Length of Time and Frequency

WIL designs, specifically the duration and frequency, can account for the inherent variability and differing time requirements due to program length, logistics, and the complexity of the learning. Shifting learners' perspectives (e.g., recognizing how food insecurity shapes decisions), assumptions (e.g., pets are optional in patient lives), attitudes (e.g., valuing client-centered care), ways of knowing (e.g., how to interpret a situation) and ways of being (e.g., how to be calm with a client) needed for complex application, called transformational learning (Kegan, 2000), requires more time due to greater variation across learners and the level of disruption of existing beliefs required to succeed. In contrast, informational learning of steps, terminology or routine applications of existing conceptual models are more linear and predictable and typically shorter in length of time (Kegan, 2000).

As an example, consider religious and cultural observances. Each region and country can have a set of culturally significant dates that have adjusted work hours or are treated as statutory holidays, for example, in Canada most (non-Orthodox) Christian holidays are statutory holidays that do not require use of vacation time to observe. In addition, some funeral or cultural traditions require travel, multiple days, or attendance on the anniversary of the passing.

TABLE 2: Access inclusion and equity sample considerations for religious and cultural observances.

Diversity Dimension	Access	Inclusion	Equity
7. Religion and Culture	Can WIL placement students take time off for religious and cultural observances? How will hours be accounted for?	Are policies naming only one religious and cultural group's observances? Are multi-day funerals or weddings requests anticipated in guidelines?	When an organization sets holidays, are non-normed observers offered days off for their observances without using vacation time? If a person takes a day for religious or cultural observance is there any impact on their promotion or retention?

To improve equity (and remove disproportionate restrictions), employers and WIL coordinators can engage in distinguishing, discussing with partners, reviewing policies, and communicating, by for example:

- Distinguish essential requirements from typical expectations. Some requirements for workhours, site access limitations, or date-specific activities are rooted in essential requirements (e.g., migratory bird counts during migration, walking clients from the front desk to the meeting room for security reasons), whereas some norms are historic common practices (e.g., lunch at noon).
- Discuss with partners plans for embedding flexibility. Checking with partnering organizations and educational institutions on the degree of flexibility of the placement type, role, and location context. What is not possible (due to essential requirements). How will variations be approached, managed, and supported? Consider, discuss, and plan options for religious or culturally significant days during placement hours. Consider working hours during fasting observances.
- Review forms and policies. Review policies on how to handle requests for religious or cultural observances.
- Communicate essential (limiting) requirements and flexibility. Being transparent early in the recruitment process helps. For example, note in the job description if a role requires coverage on specific weekends by listing the dates. Convey clearly and as early as possible if there are any opportunities for flexibility (e.g., the required 400 hours typically occur over 13 weeks with up to five personal days and six observances/wellness days).

In addition to religious and cultural observances, length of time and frequency can impact people's access, sense of belonging (inclusion), equitable treatment, and chance to thrive in WIL, for example:

- Access to paid time off from work (financial, family structure);
- Ability to flex dates, shift pacing, or adapt length of time (physical disability, neurodiversity for acute, dynamic, and chronic conditions); and
- Differences to the extend learners are primed for norms and skills compared to other students (e.g., tying a necktie or discussing travel destinations when networking with clients) (financial, religion/cultural, family structure, subjection to colonizing policies)

When considering a WIL placement for a particular length and frequency as a coordinator or WIL placement employer, consider reflecting on and asking:

- What transformational learning (perspectives, assumptions) and informational learning (steps, routine applications) are expected for and during this WIL opportunity?
- What time considerations are essential for the roles? What time considerations are typical but not essential?
- How can flexibility (embedded options) or accommodation (individual response) be embedded into the overall length and spacing between days, as well as having specific days flexible in length, remote or as an earned day off?

Level of Independence and Responsibility

WIL opportunities typically begin with the learner being dependent on the knowledgeable members of the work setting. As the learner further develops their knowledge, experience, and skills related to the work setting, they can increase their independence and responsibility with less supervision and direction. Based on situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), workplace routines (Munby et al., 2003), expert-novice theory (Ambrose et al., 2010), and Adaptive Mentorship (Ralph & Walker, 2011,2013), WIL can start and progress along six responsibility levels (Hoessler & Godden, 2021):

1. Observation from the periphery of the action, learners seek to identify the patterns of norms, processes, dynamics, terminology and skills of an organization or site;
2. Replicating processes modeled by an experienced person;
3. Guided, specific instructions for unpacking the tasks of a bigger ask or routine (e.g., stock the shelves) and then implementing the steps (e.g., check what is low, locate stock in backroom, use safety equipment);
4. Apply with constructive feedback where the learner engages in a task, receives specific feedback, and integrates it into the next implementation of the same or similar task;
5. Capable, but nervous learners seek feedback with mentors inviting reflection and considerations for future instances; and
6. Independent where the mentor becomes delegator, occasional observer, and sounding board for ambiguous situations or options for novel situations.

As an example, consider the implications of level of independence and responsibility for regulated practicums. Even with policies often determining rights, shortcomings continue in how learners with disabilities are supported (Boye, 2022), with limited solutions in numerous WIL situations (Jackson et al., 2023). Designing for access, inclusion (belonging), and an equitable chance at success requires careful consideration of expected levels of independence at the start and which levels are expected to be reached throughout the opportunity.

Table 3. Access inclusion and equity sample considerations for level of independence for two dimensions of diversity.

Diversity Dimension	Access	Inclusion	Equity
3. Physical Ability & 2. Neurodiversity	Are independence expectations at the start too high/low for a learner adapting to unstructured workplaces?	Are persons with visible and non-visible disabilities anticipated and valued within the design with task-by-task consideration of their level of independence?	Do processes allow for variation in the level of independence by skill, as one task might be a barrier while the other ten are fine?

To improve equity (and remove disproportionate restrictions), employers and WIL coordinators can engage in the three steps of distinguishing, establishing, and communicating.

1. Distinguish what independence level is essential: Ensure educators, coordinators and workplace supervisors have a shared vision of the minimum and ideal levels of independence and responsibility that all learners will have throughout their WIL opportunities.
2. Establish and agree on flexibility within program requirements*:* For normed expectations that go beyond fixed requirements, check with industry insiders, educators, accessibility consultants, and WIL partners to identify what variation is possible and feasible.
3. Communicate and check in on the learner*:* Ensure the learner is encouraged to work towards expected, while clearly communicating the range that is considered a successful pass for any for-credit WIL. Communicate with current as well as potential learners the expected levels of independence and responsibility for successful completion of the WIL opportunity. Convey encouragement and what it would take to complete the WIL placement as well as supports (next section on scaffolding).

For professional programs with a series of WIL placements, program coordinators are wise to seek flexibility in the expected/required levels of independence and responsibility to be reached by the end of each placement and by the end of the series, and then to convey those expectations clearly as early as possible in the program admission process and employer recruitment.

When considering or onboarding a WIL placement that must meet required program standards, incorporate planning, and discussions for learners to be able to work towards independence and responsibility. Subsequently, as a coordinator or WIL placement supervisor or employer, consider:

- What are any assumptions about the incoming skillset? Is there any under- or overestimating of the learner skills set and readiness for higher levels of independence? For example, an incorrect assumption that female placement student were more compassionate with kindergarten children?
- Have clear definitions of success at each level of expected independence and responsibility. Avoid vague criteria like taking initiative without examining assumptions of what behavior qualifies and how that expectation is conveyed (e.g., how long to persist before seeking help?) (religion and culture, gender, neurodiversity, decolonized/colonized, and physical disability?
- What safety net is built into assessments to ensure that a single mistake is evenly addressed as attributed to the situation (e.g., late posting of the scheduled) and as an opportunity to improve.

Some groups face being labelled with specific inherent stereotyped qualities for a single mistake (e.g., being lazy).
- Are the criteria for progressing specified? Are there clearly stated milestones, timelines and needed level of positive feedback to reach the next level of responsibility?

Scaffolding of Learning

Scaffolding is the degree of support provided by a mentor/supervisor, experienced peers, or through structured modules that progressively removes the supplementary support, guidance and feedback as the learner increases their confidence and task capacity. Effective scaffolding allows learners to thrive in WIL, grow their careers, and improve wellbeing (Munby et al., 2003). The larger the stretch from current capacity to expected capacity, the greater the need for scaffolding (mentorship, instruction, practice). Consider if a task is within a learner's current skill set, withing their likely range of feasible learning (called zone of proximal development in Vygotsky's (1978) classic framework, or beyond what is feasible to learn right now and needs to be built towards. For larger cohorts, consider the likely ranges for learners in that program.

As an example, consider how access, inclusion and equity can be impacted by the degree of scaffolding provided by mentorship. Healthy mentorships provide appropriate and fair guidance that contributes to access to information, feeling valued and having a chance to thrive. However, unhealthy mentoring may compound challenges when scaffolding is withdrawn or unevenly applied due to racism, gender bias, social class, and other discriminatory factors (Osman & Gottlieb, 2018). To avoid disproportionate impacts, employers and WIL coordinators should consider:

- Access. Provide scaffolded opportunities for low-stakes feedback and practice opportunities early in the process or prior to starting about expected social norms. Online modules without a further cost to learners and with responsive branching can allow individuals sufficient practice. Ensure mentorship: when there are limited mentors, embrace different types of mentoring relationships, including pairs, triads, and group mentorship opportunities supplemented with some one-on-one follow up.
- Belonging. Create spaces where learners feel they belong and can ask questions. Review instructions, feedback, and practice opportunities to ensure they convey to the learner that they are valued, and it is about adding organizational norms to their repertoire, not disparaging their existing norms.
- Equity. Improve mentor training and monitor evaluation reports for potential conscious and unconscious biases–beliefs about a group that are applied to an individual (e.g., the belief that all some groups are lazy, or all young people have endless energy) – that may impact learner success and retention.

When considering how scaffolding will be structured for learners and who might take the roles of providing the scaffolding, the WIL coordinator or placement organizer or employer might consider reflecting on:

- What level of scaffolding is the learner provided with at the start? Is this level clearly articulated and understood by the learner? Are any assumptions about the level being made?
- Is the mentoring clearly described in the placement posting? Is intensive support like daily mentoring available early on or throughout?
- Who is mentoring? Would diverse learners see themselves represented in the organization? (cultures, religions, gender, neurodiversity, decolonized/colonized).

- Is the mentoring scaffolded (structured) to reduce support as the learner becomes increasingly independent? Are individual needs and circumstances around support factored into the design, and is there flexibility for life events?
- How are the scaffolded experiences monitored and assessed for opportunities (access), conveying belonging (inclusion), and chance to thrive (equity)?
- How well-equipped are mentors to provide quality and robustness to the feedback they provide learners? Are mentors trained to address stereotypes and approach from a mindset of valuing (they bring a lot and add to that) rather than deficit (focusing on what they don't know)?
- In particular, when WIL placements are remote and rely on large group meetings, it may be easier for a learner to go unnoticed, for miscommunication to occur, or their ability to be under- or over-rated. To mitigate, what additional platforms can connect mentors and learners for quick questions, formal meetings, and check-ins?
- Are there existing training modules to help learners effectively develop skills, recognize norms like taking initiative, acquire terminology, or review policies?

Theory-Application Sequence

WIL integrates academic learning (theory-focused) and workplace (application-focused) settings (Billett, 2009) with variation in the sequence of theory and application. In western Eurocentric pedagogies, theory provides the concepts, language, standard processes, techniques, risk criteria, ethical considerations, and evidence-based insights. Application connects ideas to practice, concepts to context, calculated risks to lived circumstances.

In contrast, Indigenous pedagogies, as synthesized by Antoine et al. (2023), emphasize learning by doing and in place, as well as interweaving of emotional (heart), spiritual (spirit), cognitive (mind), and physical (body) (e.g., Blackstock, 2007). Theory (ways of knowing) and doing are not separated, and the learner is not separated from their culture or identity. The Tunison (2007) report describes how connection to Indigenous ways of knowing and culture supports the success of a learning spirit as "emerg[ing] from the exploration of the complex interrelationships that exist between the learner and his or her learning journey" (p. 10). The Comprehending and Nourishing the Learning Spirit group (Battiste, 2010), noted how the learning spirit is harmed when Indigenous learners experience lack of identity, lack of voice, and low self-esteem. Thus, are invited to seek a shared understanding among employers, coordinators, educators, learners, and advisors of WIL learners' expected journey, reflecting on and integrating ways of knowing, experience, and identity, to strengthen their understanding of themself and the world.

Consider how theory of ways of knowing prior to, during, and after a learner's WIL experience fits within their overall program. WIL can be designed as a(n):

- Theory-initiated sequence with learners engaging in theory or ways of knowing followed by application of their new knowledge/skills (e.g., McCarthy's, 2002);
- Application-initiated sequence where learners engage in an application in situ then connect with theoretical elements and self to interpret and plan; and
- Iterative sequence that alternates theory and application to frame experience through theory and situated learning within context linked through reflection and integration of new learning into self (Kolb, 1984; C. Taylor, 2010).

As an example, consider the impact of sequencing on the access, inclusion and equity experienced by

part-timer learners. Ensure a shared understanding among employers, educators, and program coordinators about how the WIL experience fits into the learner's program prior to setting the role and posting, particularly for part-time learners, and identify options for learners with caregiving responsibilities (family structure), specialist appointments (physical, neurodiversity), or commutes (rural, family structure limiting access to housing) such as deferred placement or concurrent placement online, near or on campus.

For equity, consider and mitigate any short- and long-term dis(advantage) across dimensions of diversity for sequencing including:

- disproportionate lack of resources for two rents if placements require moving or paying for additional accommodation (financial, family structure);
- heightened harassment risk when integrating into new groups or sharing experiences (neurodiversity, physical ability, gender, religion, culture); and
- advantages based on familiarity with the field through their family career paths (family structure, financial).

In addition to part-time studies, theory-application sequencing can impact students' access to WIL. Consider:

- cost of repeat applications including certificates or documentation (financial);
- access to guaranteed funded education or scholarships; and
- predictability and disruption as the new normal when scheduling in a program, and avoid a single narrow window for completion (financial, physical disability including acute and dynamic/chronic, family structure/dependents).

When considering the sequencing of a WIL placement, employers and coordinators can reflect on:

- What theory is essential (required) prior to the WIL experience? What can be assessed and provided as needed on arrival or during the experience? Programs with part-time or transferred learners could specify pre-requisite courses rather than number of credits to qualify since two students with the same number of credits may have completed different courses prior to the placement due to schedules.
- How will the experience integrate with prior and subsequent learning including theory and other WIL experiences? How can flexibility be embedded? For example, online modules offered by institutions e.g., Carleton University's FUSION Skill Development Program (n.d.).

Overall, each of the five design factors allow for a focused consideration of how the current or proposed plan for a WIL experience could impact learners' access, inclusion and equity based on dimensions of diversity. Each coordinator and employer can select the design factor(s) and dimension(s) of diversity that matter in their context to identify potential challenges and practical next steps.

CONCLUSION

This paper invites leaders, employers, educators, coordinators, and programs to engage in a tangible process for (re)designing WIL for improved access, inclusion, and equity. Embedding equity into WIL design draws on Universal Design for learning (CAST, 2018) options for engagement, materials, and demonstrating competence with considerations of power and privilege (Fritzgerald, 2020). Research specifically into intersectional lived realities and needs in WIL experiences and programs, and specific

settings (e.g., Campbell, 2009 on equity in ice arenas), particularly for partnerships with Indigenous communities (e.g., Nielsen et al., 2022) are key directions going forward.

The OBEL Equity Cube allows employers, educators, and program coordinators to focus on specific WIL design factors to identify and integrate impact on access, inclusion, and equity in WIL for multiple dimensions of diversity. The OBEL Equity Cube facilitates worthwhile practices including mentorship for the process and building skills in partners and educators in addressing discriminatory norms (e.g., Nielsen et al., 2022). WIL advocates, policymakers, educators, employers, mentors, supervisors, and learners now have a structured tangible process for addressing the needs of learners and transforming WIL design for learner and organizational thriving.

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