

Facilitating transformative learning through critical reflection in work integrated learning

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In an increasingly diverse higher education environment, the challenge is to support a greater number of students to achieve academically at the level that more academically inclined students achieve more readily. Reflective practice as part of transformative learning is an important graduate attribute and work integrated learning is an opportunity for students to develop these skills. Academics need to ensure that such programs are integrated with classroom learning and that workplace learning is embedded within the curriculum rather than being seen in isolation. Reflective practice is one way of bridging this gap. The Fieldwork Learning Framework (Larkin & Hamilton, 2010) was developed to support the reflective practice skills of students while undertaking fieldwork practicums and aims to support students to optimise their work integrated learning opportunities. This paper describes an evaluation of the Framework and its use in embedding reflective practice in a third year, occupational therapy program. A mixed methodology study explored the experiences of third year occupational therapy students and their fieldwork educators regarding their use of the Framework, and the level of critical reflection evident in student journals. Students and fieldwork educators reported that the Framework helped students to reflect more easily on their preparation for, and during fieldwork. Student journals were also analysed for the level of critical reflection. The Framework described in this paper and the evaluation presented, aims to enhance students' experience of work integrated learning and provide a pathway promoting work integrated learning pedagogy that facilitates transformative learning and assists students in establishing a pattern of lifelong learning.