

Running head: WIL CURRICULUM INQUIRY

Developing the Field of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in Higher Education:
A Scoping Study and Curriculum Inquiry

Abstract

The goal of the research is to develop a unified description of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Curriculum and a cross-disciplinary curricular framework that identifies the elements and the relationships between them. This research combined scoping study and curriculum inquiry methods and featured three cycles of data analysis and two types of curriculum theorization. Data sources included a literature review, a survey, expert interviews, and a focus group. In theorizing the WIL Curriculum in higher education, the authors develop a definition of the WIL curriculum and on the basis of this definition, put forward a unified curricular framework, as recommended by Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010). It begins with a WIL schema to provide an underlying organizational structure that outlines the relationships between fundamental actors and factors in the WIL Curriculum and describes twelve shared dimensions of WIL which are defined in relationship to their function in WIL curriculum development. We also propose a template for curriculum development in WIL and CSL. Finally, based on the data analysis and on patterns found to occur in cross-disciplinary data, we developed eight WIL curriculum models: Awareness, Application, Competency, Synthesis, Deconstruct-Reconstruct, Iterative Reflection, Research-Based, and Problem-Based Models. The WIL models that are advanced in this research provide a starting place for further inquiry, curriculum development and research.

Developing the Field of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in
Higher Education: A Scoping Study and Curriculum Inquiry

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is an academic discipline-in-formation. As a part of this process, WIL academics and practitioners are simultaneously debating the WIL field's scope and boundaries. With the increase in WIL programming and activities in higher education programs there is an increasing need for a more sophisticated description of what a WIL curriculum involves, which in turn poses several challenges including the development of a common cross-disciplinary curricular framework. Such a framework that is inclusive of curricular elements and patterns across programs could support dialogue and conversation about WIL as a shared discipline across jurisdictions and programs.

Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010) describe the WIL Curriculum as including “all aspects of the learning agenda,” such as “pedagogy, intended outcomes and unintended consequences, the environmental context, learner characteristics, and learners’ interaction with the learning agenda and environment, teachers and teaching, assessment and the distinctive role of supervision as they all relate to work integrated learning” (p. 57). This description of the WIL Curriculum was a starting place for us to build an expanded understanding of the WIL Curriculum in higher education, both structurally and theoretically.

The goal of this research was to develop a unified description of the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Curriculum and a cross-disciplinary curricular framework that identifies the elements and the relationships between them. This curricular framework identifies key factors and describes recurring curricular patterns, relationships, and dynamics in WIL across disciplines and jurisdictions. We address the WIL Curriculum, in its broadest sense, to include two prominent educational strategies: Work Integrated Learning (WIL), which involves learning in a workplace or work setting, and curricular Community Service Learning (CSL), which involves

service and learning in community settings. Based on our review of definitions present in the literature and our own experience and practice we developed the following two definitions.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a structured educational strategy that is an integral part of a larger educational program, integrating classroom/online studies and engagement in a workplace environment in a field related to a student's academic goals. Integrative learning occurs through dialectical processes including reflective practice and reflective discussions.

Curricular Community Service Learning (CSL) is a structured educational strategy that is an integral part of an educational program. CSL is founded on the reciprocal relationship between the community partners, the program and the students. Community needs are at the core of the CSL experience and enable students to achieve curricular goals while being actively engaged in a community. Integrative learning occurs through dialectical processes including reflective practice and reflective discussions.

Methods

This research combined scoping study and curriculum inquiry methods and featured three cycles of data analysis and two types of curriculum theorization. Data sources included a literature review, a survey (n =40), individual interviews with 15 experts, and a focus group. Survey responses were analyzed, grouped, and categorized to detect the patterns of practices and models. These were analyzed using frequency counts, categorization by type, and content analysis (for write-in items). Notes from expert interviews were analyzed using content analysis employing emergent methods to develop categories and sub-categories, which were then coded. In the three cycles of data analysis the researchers have engaged in two types of curriculum theorizing: substantive theorization, through which we constructed a unified description of the WIL Curriculum, and structural theorization (Huenecke, 1982), through which we identified the

actors, factors, and dimensions of the WIL Curriculum that span disciplines and jurisdictions. This included describing the interrelationships between the dimensions as they pertain to curriculum development and design. In theorizing the WIL Curriculum in higher education, the authors developed a definition of the WIL curriculum and on the basis of this definition and put forward a unified curricular framework.

Findings

Defining the WIL Curriculum

The curriculum inquiry allowed us to expand our understanding of curriculum in higher education and further develop a definition for the WIL curriculum. Grundy sees curriculum as closely tied to human interactions and as a social construction that depends very much on people, their collective experiences and views of the world. Grundy (1987) proposes that curriculum is not a concept, but rather is a social and cultural construction (p. 5). In the tradition of Grundy, we suggest then, that the WIL Curriculum is not a concept in the usual sense, but a collaborative social and cultural construction that is shaped by complex interactions (people, ideas, environments, requirements). It is a unique construction that depends very much on the actors and requirements of higher education, the disciplines that offer WIL, and the multiplicity of learning experiences that transpire from the many students', teachers', and co-workers' interactions. As such, it is not a static construction, but is a fundamentally dynamic totality that expands and renews itself through evolving experiences. As experiences and ideas are brought into the Curriculum, they re-form and redefine the whole (Marsh and Willis, 2007); in this way, the Curriculum is socially and culturally constructed by those involved.

Marsh and Willis' (2007) description of the curriculum as a composite of interrelated experiences of the planned, enacted, and lived curriculum helps us to understand curriculum as a

multi-faceted constructed endeavour. This composite can be seen in the WIL Curriculum, which is comprised of facets of planned, enacted, and lived experiences. Goodson's (1994) description of curriculum "as a multifaceted concept, constructed, negotiated and renegotiated at a variety of levels and in a variety of arenas" (p. 111) offers an analogous way of understanding the WIL Curriculum. With the inclusion of lived experiences, the WIL Curriculum becomes a more personal and social creation process through which goals become adjustable to the learner and his/her personal experience through negotiation. The WIL Curriculum is characterized by negotiation by the people involved, including by students who can negotiate expectations and activities with people across learning environments. The Social Negotiation of Knowledge (attributed to Vygotsky and other constructivists) is a key concept in WIL that refers to the process whereby individuals compare and test their concepts and understandings with those of their peers (or more advanced learners or the teacher) to gain new understandings from one another. This occurs as they think about the variance among their individual conceptions. Peach, Cates, Jones, Lechleiter and Ilg (2011) describe WIL students as boundary spanners through which they re-situate knowledge and skills back and forth between workplace and university contexts (p. 96). From this view of the WIL Curriculum, the learner's experience of the curriculum is individual, ongoing, and unpredictable (based on Marsh and Willis, 2007).

The WIL Curriculum is a constructed- rather than a content-type of entity, although content provides the direction that represents intentionality (designing, planning, delivery, assessing in the broadest sense). The WIL Curriculum involves a fair degree of unpredictability related to the "lived experience" aspect of the Curriculum, and to circumstances, context/people in the higher education institution, and in organizations and community settings. Within these boundaries, we theorize the WIL Curriculum as follows:

The Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Curriculum is defined as a large abstract representation of the totality of WIL and Community Service Learning (CSL) programs and experiences (disparate curricular forms); it is a unique, dynamic, social and cultural construction, characterized by complex interactions of the actors within their environments; and it is a multi-faceted, negotiated and dialectical composite that bears both intentional and unpredictable qualities.

Within the larger abstract of the WIL Curriculum, we understand WIL program curricula as unique multi-faceted composites defined by the unique experiences of the students, teachers, and host organizations in particular contexts and disciplines. Program curricula also bear both intentional and unpredictable qualities, allowing students to negotiate and control aspects of their learning, and empowering them to engage in dialectical processes at different levels and in different learning contexts.

The WIL Curriculum Framework

The WIL Curriculum framework can be thought of as a unified curriculum structure for understanding the WIL Curriculum. In this case, the structure is understood to be complex, interrelated and dynamic. The WIL Curriculum framework identifies the following:

- A WIL schema with four main actors
- A contextual analysis of factors and their relationships
- Twelve common dimensions
- A curriculum development and design process
- Eight curriculum models

A. The Work Integrated Learning Schema

The WIL schema illustrates interrelationships between the fundamental constituents of the WIL Curriculum. Figure 1 below identifies the four constituents: Students, Program, Organization, and Discipline/Profession and represents their relationships (see outer-circle) that co-generate the qualities of the WIL Curriculum (as represented in the central circle). This builds on the work of Cooper et al. (2010) who identify three actors in WIL (student, program, and organization/community) with our addition of a fourth actor, the industry/profession because of its involvement and sometimes defining role in the WIL Curriculum.

The WIL schema allows and acknowledges a high degree of variability in the roles and the scope of involvement of the four main actors and recognizes that these vary according to interrelationships and interconnections within the WIL Schema. For example, conventional thinking might assume that the university/program would have a defining role in designing and planning a program curriculum, but that may not always be the case when other actors, including students, host organizations, and communities are able to take a more formative role with increased involvement in the experience.

Figure 1: The Work Integrated Learning Schema



B. Factors that Influence the WIL Curriculum

There are many factors (often contextual) that influence the Curriculum by modulating requirements, boundaries, structures, and/or responses of actors. Figure 2 below, identifies relevant factors and provides a template for WIL curriculum developers. The template can serve several functions including scanning the environment during course and program changes, and for new course and program development.

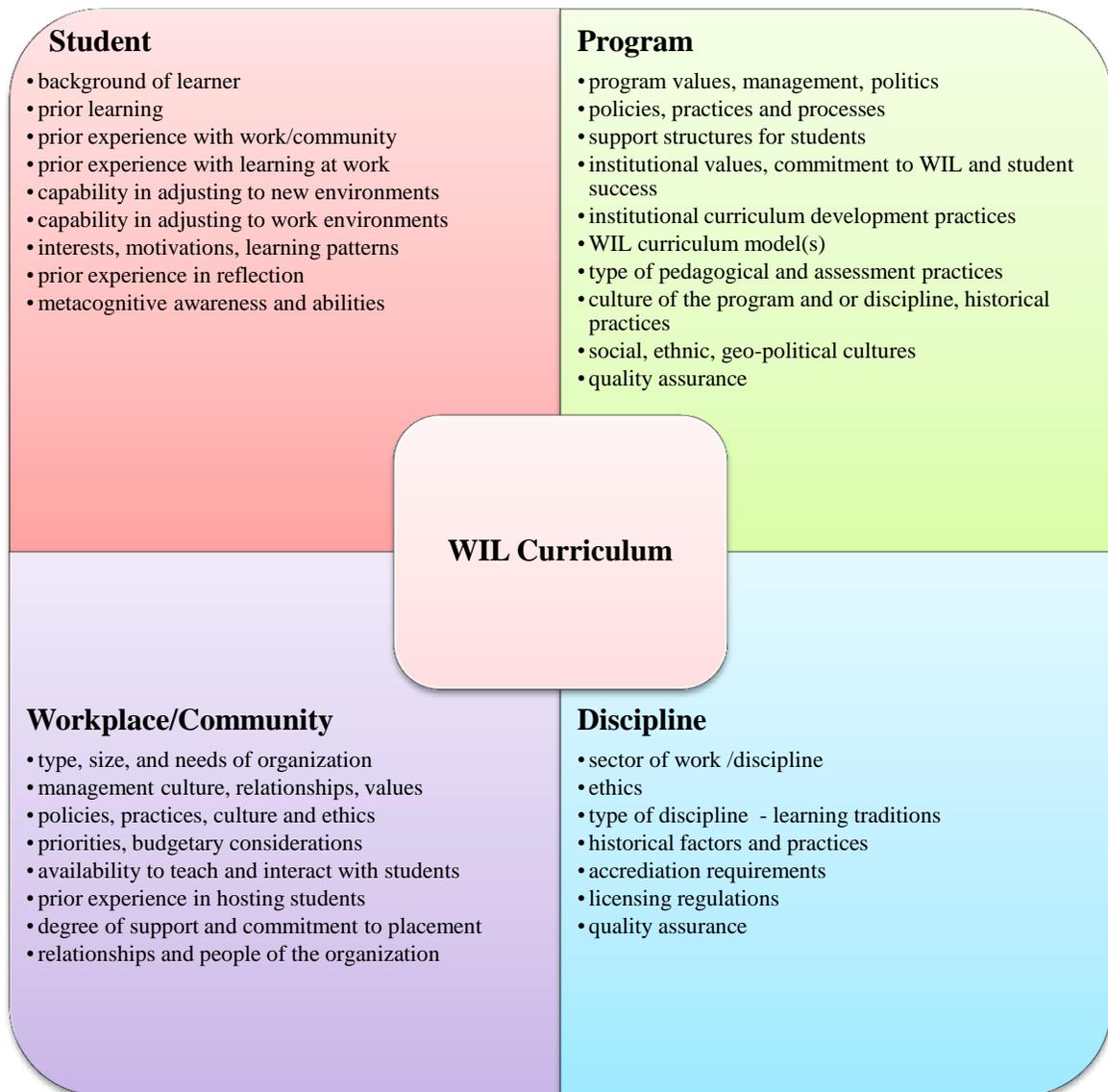


Figure 2: Template of Contextual Factors

C. Common Dimensions of the WIL Curriculum

In analyzing the WIL Curriculum both theoretically and structurally (and in juxtaposing data from our survey), we identified the following twelve common dimensions in the WIL Curriculum¹ across disciplines. These dimensions can be thought of as defining characteristics of the WIL Curriculum. Some of the dimensions serve larger functions in the WIL Curriculum as course and program components although their form and format may be quite variable when looking at and comparing individual courses. For example, orientation serves a large function that relates to the whole WIL schema (the four main actors), which includes faculty, program administrators, host organizations, communities, and sometimes discipline experts who are concerned with orientation matters; however, orientation often occurs as a sessions or series of sessions inside a WIL/CSL program or course.

1. Partnership of the actors: The partnership among student, university/program, organizations/communities, and discipline/profession/industry (as described in the schema) is a fundamental characteristic of the WIL Curriculum.
2. Learning across contexts (university and *in situ*), people, and communities: WIL involves learning across contexts (workplace, community, university) and among people (social negotiation of knowledge).
3. System of contextual factors: Refer to Figure 2 Template of Contextual Factors, above.
4. Purpose: The purpose is an overarching statement that describes the foundational intent and goals of the WIL program curriculum. In the design process, the purpose

¹ Cooper et al. (2010) describe seven key dimensions for WIL (purpose, context, nature of integration, curriculum issues, learning, partnerships, support, p. 39) and we have considered this work in developing the WIL dimensions in a curricular context. We have also considered the work of Smith (2012).

can be expressed in broad learning goals or directions that may be revised during the curriculum development process to realign with relevant factors

5. **Negotiation of learning within the partnership:** Negotiation is a key aspect in the partnership among the four actors. A distribution of control supports the negotiation process among the actors and makes space for collaboration and shared decision-making. It can involve negotiating the purpose and goals of the WIL experience and how the learning is to be structured.
6. **WIL Pedagogy (classroom, online, and workplace/community):** In current literature WIL pedagogy tends to be indirectly discussed without explicit definition and description. We suggest that the WIL pedagogy can be defined as integrative pedagogy that supports the development of integrative knowledge and that ensures that students are really learning, not just working or having an off-campus work experience. Reflection is the most frequently discussed integration pedagogy.

Format, scheduling, and duration: The format, scheduling and duration support and provide time and space for the activity, and the learning experience. They are closely connected to the curriculum model(s) (discussed below) and to the type and nature of the learning goals.
7. **Orientation:** Orientation covers a range of activities and purposes, including supporting student adjustment to the workplace or community and understanding the learning goals and requirements as well as issues, policies, and theories that might be encountered. The following is a list of typical considerations: workplace culture, safety, specific ethical issues, the work requirements, and/or the roles and responsibilities of the student, the supervisor, and the workplace. If a job search is

- involved, orientation might involve resumé preparation, interview practice, contract acceptance, and other related tasks. Orientation may also be provided for the workplace in preparation for receiving a WIL student, addressing what to expect from students, course goals, expectations, assessment, and problem-solving.
- 8. Supervision:** The goal of Supervision is to facilitate the connection between the requirements of the program and the student experience, and to support the student (and the workplace/community) in the experience. Supervision can take many forms (face-to-face, blog, phone, seminar discussion, preceptorship supervision) and can be provided by the workplace/community, the university, or both. The form and format of supervision are shaped by the purpose and functions of the supervision within the experience, the nature/complexity of the activity, and the specific requirements of the professional context and industry. The level of risk to self and others while students are in the WIL experience is also a determining factor in supervision (frequency, type of supervision, and function). The functions of supervision include monitoring functions, clarification of roles and responsibilities, administrative functions, educational functions, and personal support (stress, emotional) to those involved. In some cases supervisors may only provide one or two functions, but in other cases they may provide all of the functions listed. Educational function might include a teaching and/or modeling role, as well as facilitator's role for self-assessment and reflective practice.
 - 9. Assessment and evaluation:** Assessment and evaluation of student learning in WIL/CSL depend upon the purpose of the experience, the curriculum model(s) of the experience (see models that follow on page 33, and the learning theories that underpin

them). In WIL/CSL there is a strong emphasis on formative assessment, which refers to the ongoing monitoring and feedback performed by both the student and the assessor/observer. In formative assessment activities students discuss their learning and are provided with pathways to select from and renegotiate their approaches to learning. Assessment strategies seek to assess integrative knowledge and point to different ways of approaching the experience and making connections. In addition, summative assessment (evaluation) of student learning can be found at the end of a WIL/CSL course or programs when students' learning is assessed against a set standard or level of performance.

- 10. Support mechanisms for the student, for the community/organization, and for the university:** Support mechanisms ensure the effectiveness of the partnership in delivering the course and ensure that roles and responsibilities are understood and negotiated from an informed position. Support can take many forms, including explanatory documents, field manuals, field visits provided to students and/or workplace/community, third-party visits to workplace/community/students, conflict resolution meetings, and counseling to support students in stressful situations. Although these have similarities (on the surface) with orientation strategies, they differ in that they are provided on a need basis, and sometimes just-in-time. With the just-in-time approach, it is important that the process be explicit (understood in advance by the partnership) for handling and delivering strategic support.
- 11. Alignment:** Curricular alignment refers to the alignment of all of the dimensions to the purpose/learning goals and to each other². In addition, a constant realignment process takes place in the enacted and lived WIL curricula, whereby the actors revisit

² See Biggs (1999) for a discussion of constructive alignment.

the learning experience to adjust and realign (the activity, the pedagogy, the work assignment, reflection, etc.) in light of the purpose in support of making connections and constructing knowledge.

D. WIL Curriculum Development and Design Process

The development of a WIL or CSL program or course involves the above dimensions as important constructs that are interconnected and interdependent in the design process.

Curriculum design, in this case, is a high-level intentional process defining the learning to take place within a specific program of study. It can be thought of as a structured way of thinking that gives WIL curriculum developers ways to consider the interconnected dimensions that in turn will impact and shape student learning.

Both Keating (2006) and Smith (2012) note that curriculum development in WIL differs from conventional curriculum development. We observe additional complexities emerging from the interactions in the WIL schema, the dimensions, and contextual factors. WIL experts in the *Work-Integrated Learning in Ontario's Post-secondary Sector Report* confirm that there are challenges around the development of a WIL curriculum and add that it needs to be well thought out in terms of curriculum and sequencing (Sattler, 2011, p.82).

Another challenge that WIL curriculum developers face is designing a WIL curriculum that is flexible enough to be implemented in a multiplicity of situations within organizations, communities, regions, and countries involved in WIL or CSL placement activities and for a diversity of students living the learning experiences in their own unique ways. Garrick (1999) adds that one key notion about learning at work is that it is closely related to “individuals (subjects) apprehending experience, reasoning, or logically thinking through their work experience and giving that experience ‘meaning’(p. 226). This is often more pronounced in CSL,

as curricular CSL is designed for specific community needs and individual student interests. This further implies that the WIL design process needs to be able to build in diverse learning paths (Atchison, Pollack, Reeder and Rizzetti, 2002) and different routes for students to achieve learning goals. These traits of a WIL curriculum call for a sophisticated, structured design process to develop a responsive curriculum that supports diverse learning experiences in diverse workplace and community contexts.

Design Process for a WIL Curriculum

We propose a curriculum design process that applies the principles of constructive alignment in the context of the WIL Curriculum framework. According to Biggs (2006), constructive alignment is an approach that perceives students as constructing meaning through relevant learning activities (meaning is not something imparted or transmitted from teacher to learner) and within which “teaching is simply a catalyst for learning” (p. 2). The alignment aspect refers to what the teacher and curriculum developer do, which is to set up a learning environment that supports the learning activities appropriate to achieving the desired learning outcomes. From this perspective, the focus of curriculum development is on setting up an aligned system, within which goals are formulated and expressed and a learning environment is designed to support students to achieve the learning goals. A constructively-aligned curriculum facilitates student learning and supports social negotiation of knowledge.

The curriculum development process that follows is collaborative and iterative in the sense that it involves the actors/factors and suggests a series of cycles that allow effective alignment between the dimensions and the learning goals. Curriculum redesign follows a similar process (and includes a program assessment process), which we do not address in this paper.

Curriculum development involves three phases: pre-planning, establishing actors' needs and the purpose of the course, and aligning the model(s) and dimensions. These phases provide guidelines to navigate the complexities inherent in the discipline of WIL.

Phase One: Pre-planning

The pre-planning phase is concerned with understanding the context for the course and program and understanding the main variables and motives that underpin the intent of the course development process. This includes basic planning inputs, such as field of knowledge and professional requirements; student interest; prior educational experience, knowledge, attitudes, needs, and priorities; program priorities; accreditation requirements; and community needs. Through this pre-planning, the actors determine who should be involved in what parts of the curriculum development process as well as identify possible additional actors. In this phase of program development, committees and terms of reference may be formulated.

Phase Two: Establishing the actors and the needs

Phase two focuses on establishing the actors' needs and intentions and identifying the purpose of the course (generally agreed upon by the actors). This involves considering several aspects and educational concerns, including the course relationship to the overall program and program goals; the core course concepts, the relationship between course concepts, the relationship between theory, practice, and experience; the professional and community context, needs, and culture; the program and faculty context; the context of the educational institution; and student interest and motivations.

The purpose determines the rationale or *raison d'être* for the WIL/CSL experience. What will this experience achieve? What will students ideally learn in the experience? This dimension (purpose) is characterized by core course concepts which can be developed into learning goals

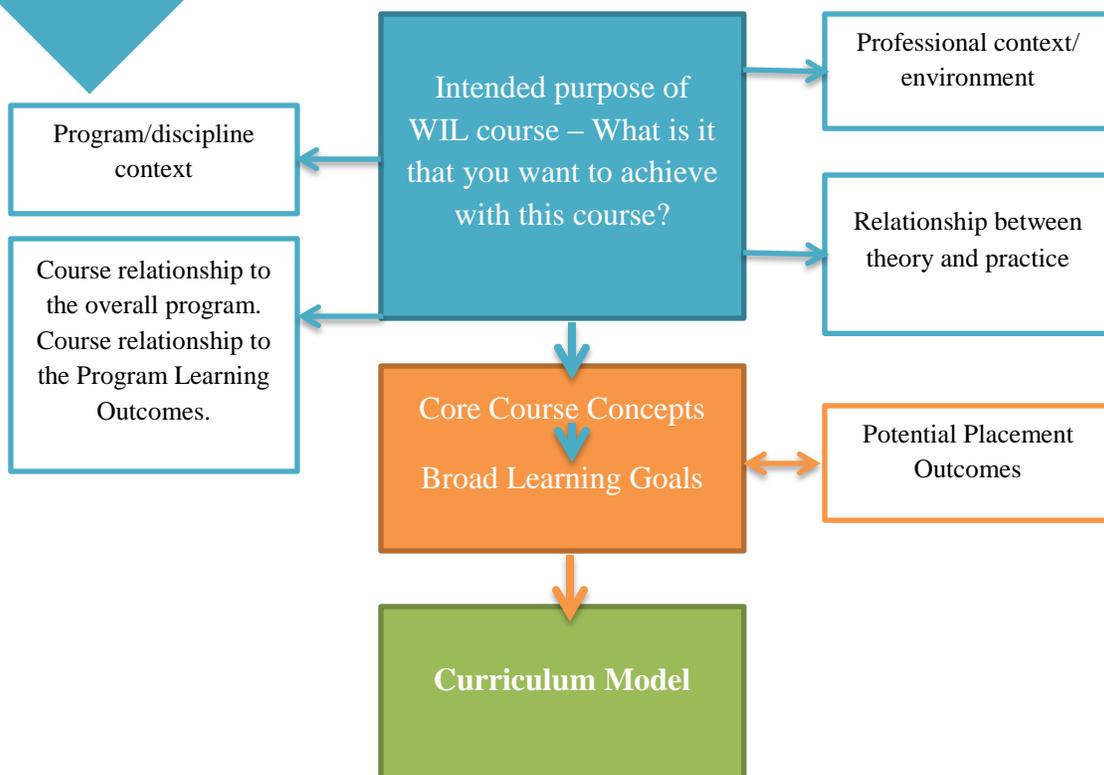
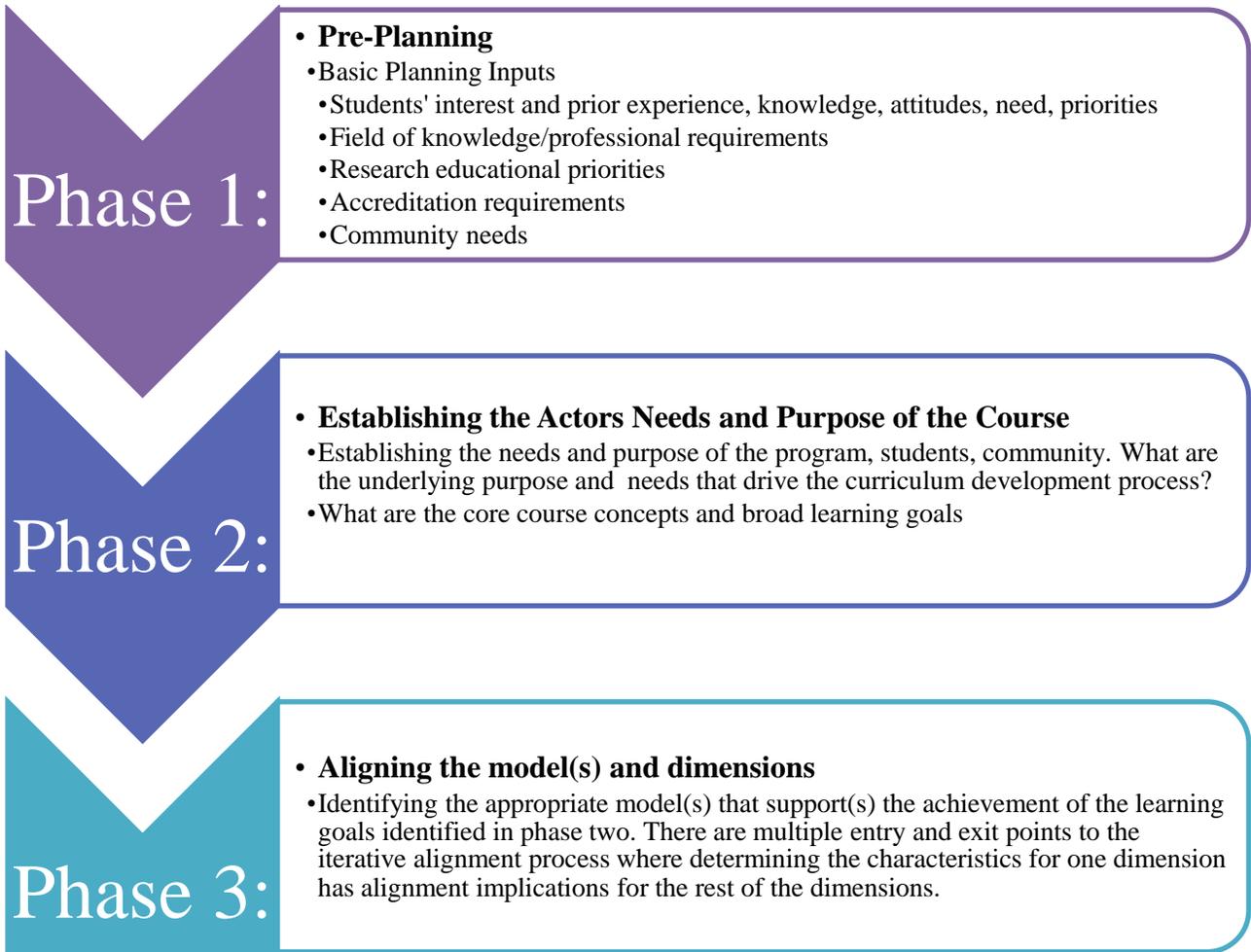
(broad, rather than narrow) that can drive the curriculum development process and will help shape the other dimensions. Learning goals in WIL/CSL are statements that outline and describe the knowledge, skills, competencies, attitudes, and integrative knowledge that students are expected to achieve during their WIL or CSL experiences.

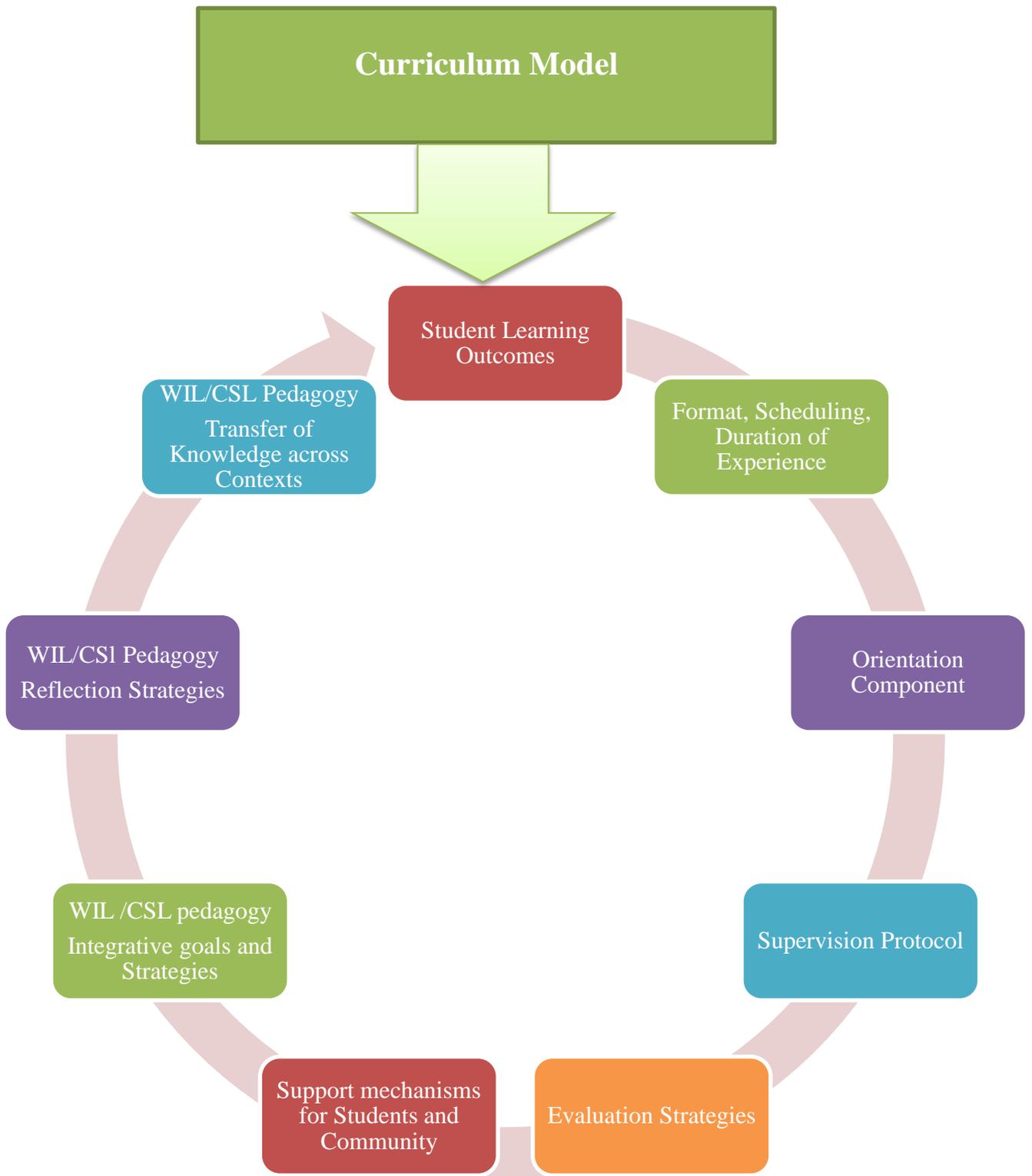
In CSL, learning goals and community needs have equal importance in curriculum development, and as a result, they interact so that community needs will sometimes inspire and/or redefine the learning goals. Community needs, then, play a major role in driving the CSL curriculum development process. The community partners are largely implicated in the whole development process, and because of this, they have a more determining role than typical host organizations (in WIL) in subsequent phases of the process.

Phase Three: Aligning the model(s) and dimensions.

Alignment involves a cyclical process that starts by identifying the appropriate model(s) that support(s) the achievement of the learning goals identified in phase two. There are multiple entry and exit points to the iterative alignment process where determining the characteristics for one dimension has alignment implications for the rest of the dimensions. Toward the end of the design process (and before implementation), plans for evaluation of WIL courses and programs will be drafted.

Figure 3 and 4 on the following pages illustrate the curriculum development process applicable to both WIL and CSL.





From Learning Goals to Curriculum Models

The survey, interview, and focus group data provided us with opportunities to look for and identify curricular patterns and commonalities in data from actual WIL and CSL courses and programs from several disciplines. In examining the cross-disciplinary data, we found that learning goals covered a range of types of learning including: broadening understanding by introducing aspects of profession/role, work, work contexts or work culture; responding to community needs and culture; developing specific skills within a real work or community setting; applying, developing, and enhancing knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom in a work/community setting; analyzing and researching specific aspects of the context; and, developing integrative knowledge. Learning goals also addressed a range of work- and community-related issues such as work-/community-related ethics, skills (e.g., communication skills, professional conduct, observation skills), and cultural and social aspects of the profession and work/community contexts. A number of other patterns emerged in the data: clusters (of types) of learning goals, curriculum components (types of orientation, supervision requirements, and assessment strategies) and parallels amongst pedagogical practices (capstone courses, for example). These provided the basis for the development of Curriculum models.

Eight Curriculum models were identified in the survey data: Awareness, Application, Competency, Synthesis, Deconstruct-Reconstruct (Suitcase), Iterative Reflection, Research-Based and Problem-Based Models. These models can be found in CSL (community) and WIL (workplace) courses and programs. In the data, two or more Curriculum models were often combined in one WIL or CSL course. We also observed programs where models are combined over the duration of the program.

Curriculum Models

1. Awareness Model

The Awareness Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to introduce the context (characteristics) and develop contextual knowledge in preparation for further program learning;
- to introduce the specificities and characteristics of the field through the context;
- to introduce students to new communities and to support the expansion of their understanding of the communities' structures, goals, culture, values, traditions and issues;
- to expand the frame of reference;
- to explore the associated career path to determine if there is a fit; and/or
- to engage in a discourse in support of identifying situations that relate to upcoming areas of study.

Description

Students go into workplaces or community settings to

- observe work and interactions;
- discern the nature of interactions, characteristics and culture; and
- formulate possible connections with professional roles (such as responsibilities, interactions, and professional identities) and themes linked to the discipline and profession.

Students may contribute to the context in substantive ways or they may participate in peripheral and short-duration activities in the workplace/community.

Program design more often places this type of course earlier in the program, although it also may appear near the end of a program.

2. Application Model

The Application Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to support the application of knowledge and new skills through service/work and the development of procedural knowledge in the workplace or community;
- to identify contextual elements and aspects that impact practice; and/or
- to explore real-life situations and assess them to identify courses of action (involving new skills).

Description/Features

Students go to the workplace/community:

- to apply knowledge, including information and principles they have learned in the program; and/or
- to analyze community or work situations in order to select relevant tools, knowledge and skills and employ them in assignments.

3. Competency Model

The Competency Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to support students in developing specific well-defined competencies and their associated protocols through practice; and
- to monitor and track mastery of specific sets of knowledge and competencies (at a particular level of required capability).

Description/Features

Students are placed in specific work/community settings that enable them to develop the set of competencies through practicing the specific competencies in context. This learning is often supported by coaching and close monitoring in the workplace/community, especially for complex competencies or if there are significant risk factors (to student or others).

4. Synthesis Model

The Synthesis Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to draw together several streams of knowledge (often across disciplines) and experience, including prior knowledge, to attain integrative learning *in context*;
- to monitor student self-awareness and assess work readiness;
- to demonstrate beginning-level of autonomy in planning a course of action and completing multi-faceted tasks over time; and
- to develop and engage in beginning professional/community practice.

Description/Features

Students complete assignments and engage in experiences that enable them to encounter and bring together multiple streams of knowledge that relate to their programs. This is usually coupled with in-depth reflective activity which is accomplished through completion of:

- an in-depth study or a substantial project or research project,
- a culminating report and presentation,
- a description of experiential learning related to a theme/topic,
- an exploration of early career issues and challenges, and/or
- a professional development plan for a future learning, work, and/or community engagement.

5. Deconstruct- Reconstruct (Suitcase) Model

The Deconstruct-Reconstruct Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to deconstruct experience to construct new knowledge based on experience;
- to make connections with prior experiences and knowledge to attain integrative learning of complex and sometimes incongruous knowledge and ideas.

Description/Features

Students go to the workplace or community to gain a variety of experiences and interactions in relation to their fields of study. This diversity of recollections and experiences can be thought of as a suitcase filled with diverse experiences and ideas that need unpacking, discussing, sorting, and deconstructing in order to reconstruct meaningful integrated learning.

6. Iterative Reflection Model

The Iterative Reflection Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to continuously challenge students to re-interpret previously acquired knowledge, to examine assumptions, experiment with and modify strategies, and fine-tune attitudes and behavior in the workplace/community.

Description/Features

Students alternate classes (seminars) and work/community experiences to integrate systematic understanding of how such experiences connect to previous knowledge and life experience. Progress is incremental both in unpacking and understanding experience and in making connections with theory.

Integrative learning is achieved by the iteration of facilitated discussion, interweaving the academic component with its contextual implications in such a way that theoretical learning and experiential learning mutually consolidate and reinforce each other.

7. Research-based Model (Research in Context)

The Research-based Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to link research activities to real workplaces and communities;
- to engage in research using current issues from the workplace or community; and/or
- to explore and discuss facets of context-based research topics.

Description/Features

Students gather information and interact in the workplace/community to develop a more complex and grounded understanding of the research topic and its facets. The findings of the research are discussed and sometimes implemented. Literature reviews or summaries and/or recommendations are common activities.

8. Problem-based Model

The Problem-based Model includes courses whose purpose and goals fall within the following:

- to engage students in addressing a problem-based assignment by proposing a sequence of actions and/or engaging in an activity to solve a problem or contribute to a resolution.

Description/Features

Students go into the workplace or community to develop their knowledge and to contribute to the resolution of a specific problem, concern, or need.

Conclusions

In theorizing the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Curriculum in higher education, the authors developed a definition of the WIL Curriculum and put forward a unified WIL curricular framework, as recommended by Cooper et al. (2010). The WIL framework provides an underlying organizational structure that outlines the relationships between fundamental actors and factors in the WIL Curriculum and describes shared dimensions of WIL. These provide cross-disciplinary language and a shared structure that can serve as catalysts for ongoing and sustained conversations among diverse WIL practitioners across disciplines and jurisdictions. A common language in the field of WIL is critical for the discipline in formation.

Within the framework twelve dimensions were defined in relationship to their function in WIL curriculum development and design. We also propose a template for curriculum development based on an outcomes approach which allows application across disciplines and regions. These provide beginning processes to guide program and course changes and new program and course development in WIL and CSL. The design process provides a skeletal form that can evolve and be elaborated upon through iterations of the process.

The researchers identified several curricular patterns that were developed into eight curriculum models: Awareness, Application, Competency, Synthesis, Deconstruct-Reconstruct, Iterative Reflection, Research-Based, and Problem-Based Models. The WIL models that are advanced in this research provide prototypes for identifying additional clusters of practice and models, and a starting place for further curriculum development.

This research sets the stage for further research that analyzes and describes integrative pedagogies in ways that can be shared across disciplines (as suggested by Sattler and Peters, 2013) and cross-disciplinary description of model-specific pedagogies. Now that we have a framework for cross-disciplinary description and thinking, we can begin to talk about practice and best practices in a curricular way, that is, where both are understood within a curriculum context. In this way, best practices have curricular parameters that set their methods, range of application, boundaries, and delimitations as they pertain to specific curriculum models.

This unified curricular approach to WIL provides a direction for further development of the WIL language and discourse to advance WIL as a discipline-in-formation in higher education.

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