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Work Based Learning
at Middlesex University

Work Based Learning: Learning for the Student, the Organisation and the HEI

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Institute for Work Based Learning

QAA

Definition of Work Based Learning



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‘...learning which is **integral to an HE programme** and which normally derives, in part from experiences in the workplace

It is learning which is usually achieved and often demonstrated through work and is intended to meet both work and personal development objectives.

It can range from a student taking one module within a programme to an entire programme **that has, at it's core, activities designed around the individual's occupation.**

It can also range from being a **mode of study** where the named award is gained by work-based learning, to a **field of study** where the qualification is in work-based learning’.

QAA draft Code of Practice, Section 9: WBL and placements learning (2007)



WBL Definitions

Work Based Learning is 'Learning for, in and through paid and unpaid work'

Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (2006)

IWBL:

WBL is a learning process which focuses University level critical thinking upon work (*paid or unpaid*) in order to facilitate the recognition, acquisition and application of individual and collective knowledge, skills and abilities, to achieve specific outcomes of significance to the learner, their work and the University.

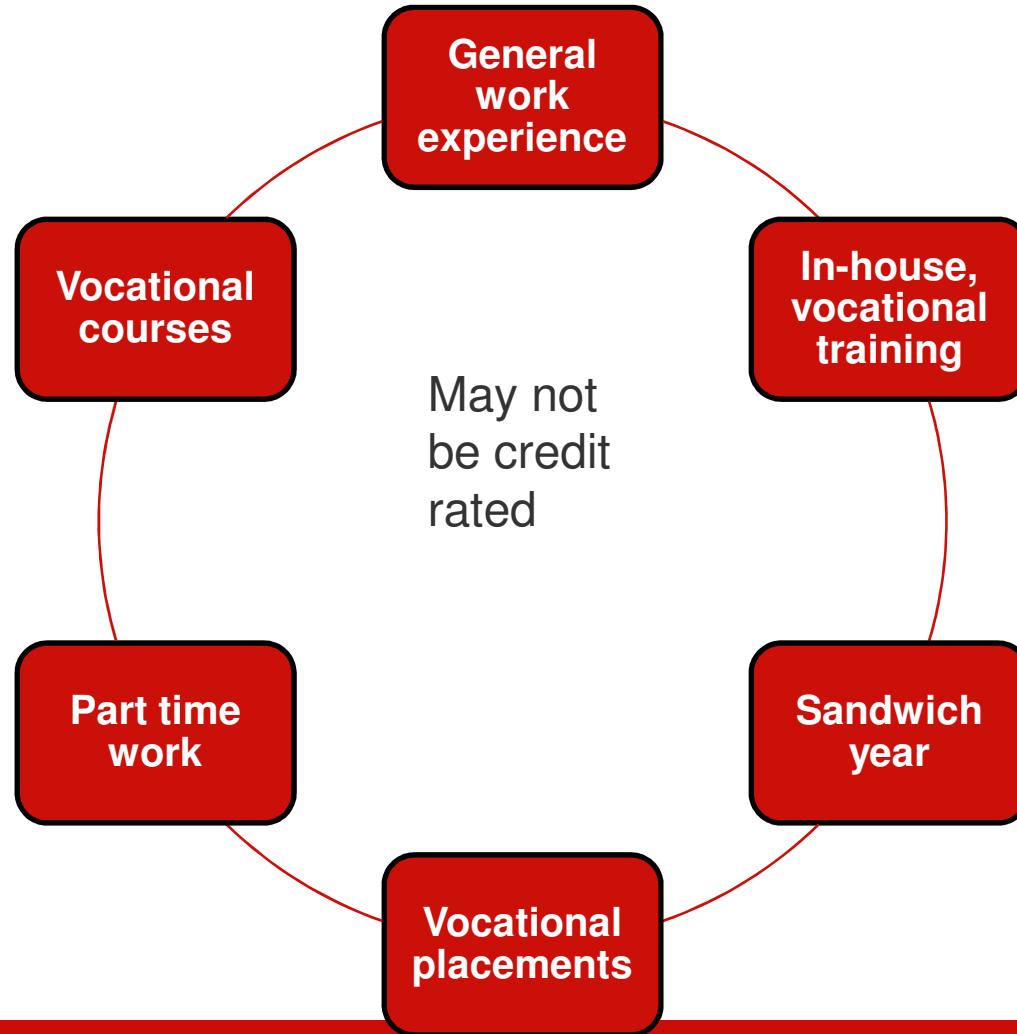
Garnett (2004)



Types of WBL in HE/FE programmes



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Part time WBL programmes;

HE/FE Provider specifies content

- Work related, possible choice of topics, credit rated

Employer contributes to study

- May provide specialist input, assessment, often credit rated

Content negotiated by learner

- Built around learner's preferences/ needs, HE credit framework

Characteristics of WBL programmes (Boud & Solomon 2001)



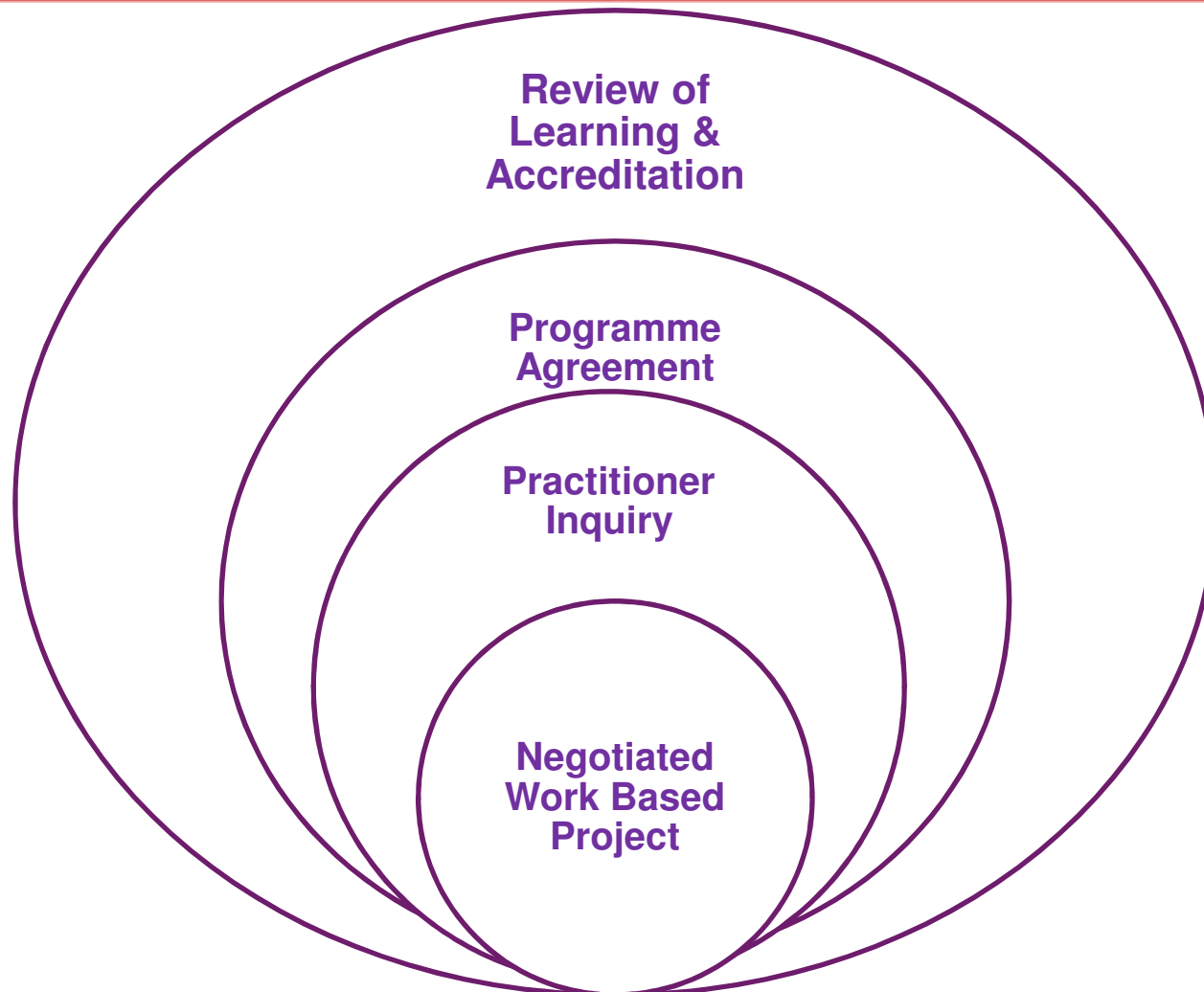
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- **Partnerships** – organisational learning & HEI, formal/ informal, benefits for both organisations
- **Negotiated learning plans/ learning agreements;** workplace & individual learning agreed with all parties
- **Programme derives from workplace needs;** trans-disciplinary, complex problem solving, work is the curriculum generates knowledge
- **The learner is the starting point** – what learning do they have? Can it be accredited? Not necessarily educational qualifications but current competence
- **Workplace projects** – real time for real work needs, collaborative, linked to organisation and individual capabilities
- **HEI assessments** - HE standards and levels, qualifications,

WBL Curriculum



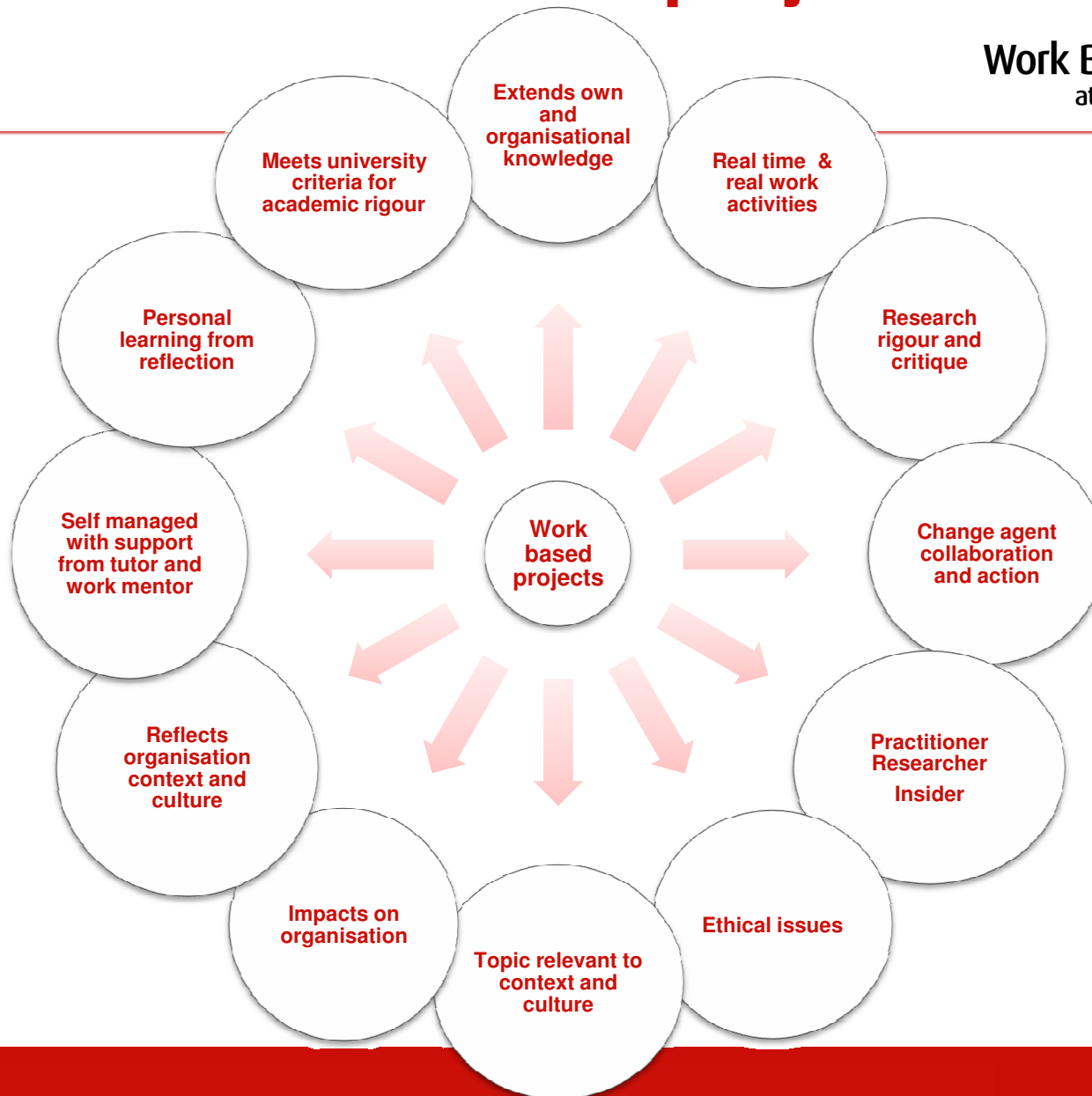
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Characteristics of WBL projects



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Learner's Positionality

Size, level &
Complexity of
project

Role
relationships

Sphere of
influence

Assumptions
about other's
contribution

Level of
expertise &
knowledge

Own gender
& role

Links with
other
professionals

Networks
with others in
organisation

Workplace
support



Learner perspectives

- Choosing own area of specific interest
- Focus on own learning rather than project output – important to get what they need professionally/ personally
- Work focused – develop local political astuteness, context specific
- Raises ethical awareness and dilemmas
- Academic skills: critical thinking, rigour, inquiry skills, project management, structure and process skills
- Knowledge production from practice: tacit and explicit
- Self directed and collegial learning
- Insider/ practitioner/ researcher learning



Organisational perspectives

- Intellectual and human capital and tacit knowledge captured as organisational knowledge
- Develops/ improves organisational processes which may be significant
- Contributes to organisational effectiveness
- Encourages critical reflection upon practice and questions custom and practice
- Tripartite learning agreement between learner, organisation and university: nominal or real?
- Employer role – hands on or off?
- Mentoring may be outside workplace



University perspectives

- Negotiated WBP for learner, organisation, & HE requirements
- Critical thinking on real work issues: purposeful knowledge creation
- Opportunity for knowledge production, codification and dissemination
- Products unconventional
- Facilitate autonomous learning, self & peer assessment



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