

Exploring the Synergies of Work-Integrated Learning and Undergraduate Research in Educating Future Professionals

Franziska Trede, UTS

ACUR Colloquium

February 1, 2023

A photograph of a sunset over the ocean. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a long, shimmering reflection across the water. The sky is a mix of soft orange, yellow, and pale blue. In the foreground, a dark, silhouetted pier or breakwater extends into the water, with several vertical posts visible. The waves are gentle, with white foam visible as they break near the shore. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

Acknowledgment of Country

Outline

1. Critique of reductionist approaches to teaching, research and WIL (5 minutes)
2. What is WIL? (10 minutes)
3. What is RIL? (5 minutes)
4. Broader framing for an integrative approach (3 minutes)
5. A case study (in pairs 5 minutes, plenary discussion 10 minutes)
6. What are the possible synergies? (5 minutes)

1. Widening gulf of academic practice

- RESEARCH only professors
- TEACHING only academics
- WIL professionals



Reductionist, competitive perspectives of research, teaching and WIL

Funding: You can buy out teaching, but you cannot buy out research

Nature of recognition of teaching and research excellence: high publication rates do not necessarily equate with high SFS results

Knowledge-practice divide: “working in WIL is academic career suicide”

Antagonists: “Teaching interferes with research”, “WIL interferes with teaching”

Discrepancy between a training in research (PhD) and then a career in teaching

Instrumental view



TEACHING AS THE DOING: COUNTING HOURS,
SUBJECTS; STUDENT SATISFACTION AND
SUBJECTIVE MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS



RESEARCH AS THE OUTPUT : PUBLICATIONS
AND GRANTS, WITH LITTLE ATTENTION TO
IMPACT AND SIGNIFICANCE;



SABBATICAL IS FOR ACADEMICS ONLY

A limited perspective on the nature of knowledge

- Teaching as knowledge transfer, knowledge expertise
- Research as quantitative evidence through controlling variables
- Practice as instrumental, technical skills and disciplinary knowledge

These are confusing messages about the purpose of university education



2. What is WIL

- Umbrella term
- There are many different purposes of WIL
- **Work:** learning work routines, learning to fit in and get encultured, focus on pragmatics of work realities
- **Integration:** theory and practice; head, hands, heart and feet; culture and technology, ethics and pragmatics
- **Learning:** for change; to develop professional values and identity; engaging self and practice

The three integral concepts of WIL

(Trede & Wehr, 2022)

Educational partnership with industry, community – transition spaces from student to professional

Curriculum concept – scaffolded and aligned with career goals

Professional Practice Pedagogy – participatory, embodied, collaborative, relational, creative and critical learning

WIL is more than internships / placements, and if you can learn it from a textbook then it is not WIL



Educational Partnership

- Mature and trusting partnerships
- Reciprocal benefits, shared interests
- Inclusive approaches (access) to WIL for all
- Budget constraints
- Timetabling challenges
- Mismatched expectations
- Are external partners fit for purpose?
- What are industry/community's preferred WIL models?



Curriculum concept

- Professional identity development from day 1
- Connecting WIL across subjects
- Exposing students to real-world challenges throughout the curriculum
- Assessing WIL for learning
- Cultivating more co-design, lack of sharing of curriculum/course narrative

Privileging professional practice education

- We live in company of uncertainty and disruption
- From a focus on employment to deepening a sense of responsibility, professionalism and making a difference for self and community, in chosen profession and in society
- Educating future professionals *in* the world
- Preparing for multiple career changes

Professional Practice Pedagogy

- Reflexivity – self, others, context, environment
- Dialogue – collaboration, networking
- Action – professional judgment and act
- Impact - consequential learning, professional responsibility

*Learning, peer support,
mentoring is everybody's
business*



What is the role of WIL into the future?

- Rethinking what information sources are needed to make future decisions
- Rethinking what matters in society, for the environment, and how to contribute as professionals
- Inviting diversity and practising inclusion
- Focus on fairness, equity and social justice in learning, teaching, assessing and practising – that is the future

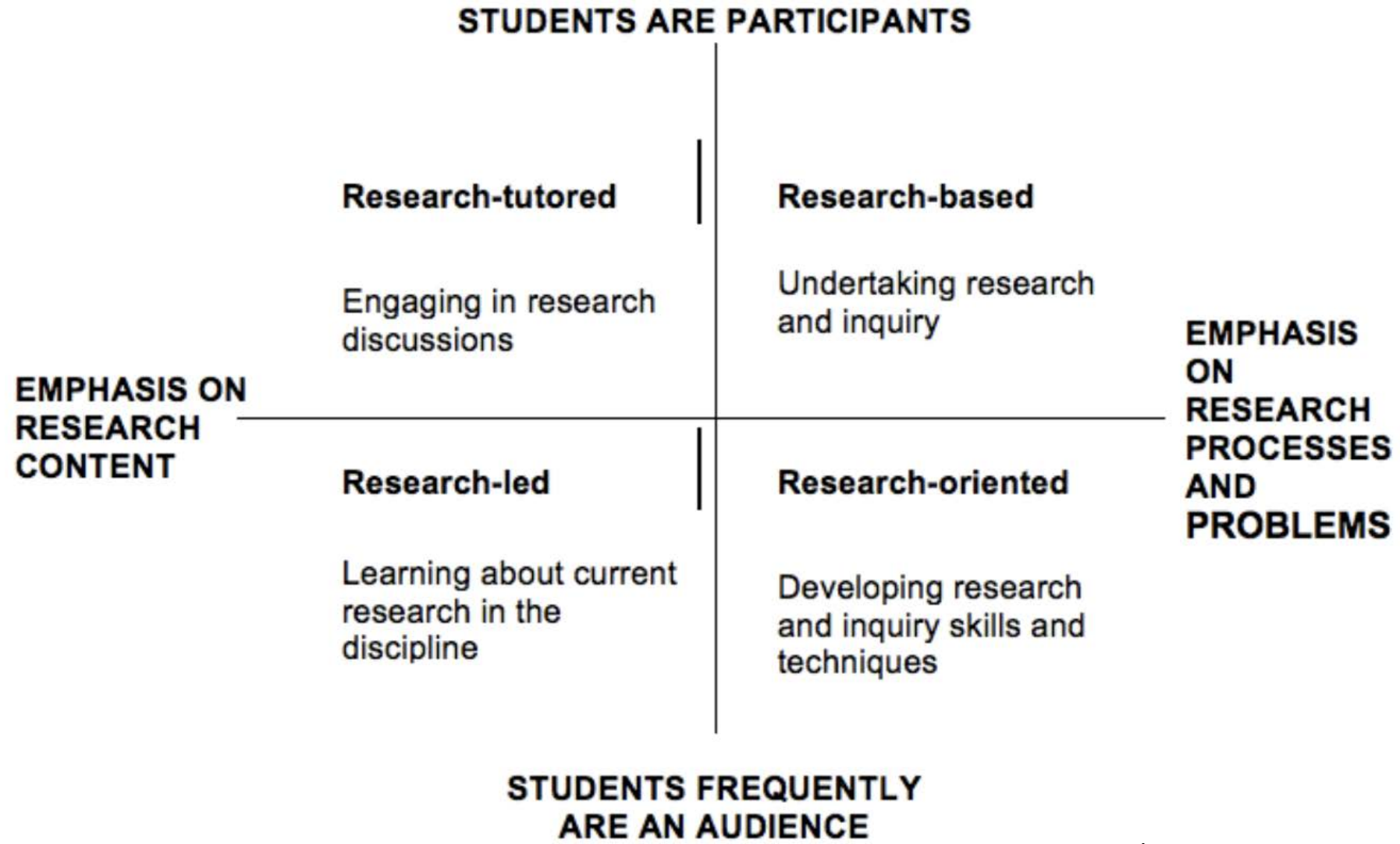
3. UG Research – what is it

Research or investigation conducted by tertiary level undergraduate students attending universities and colleges.

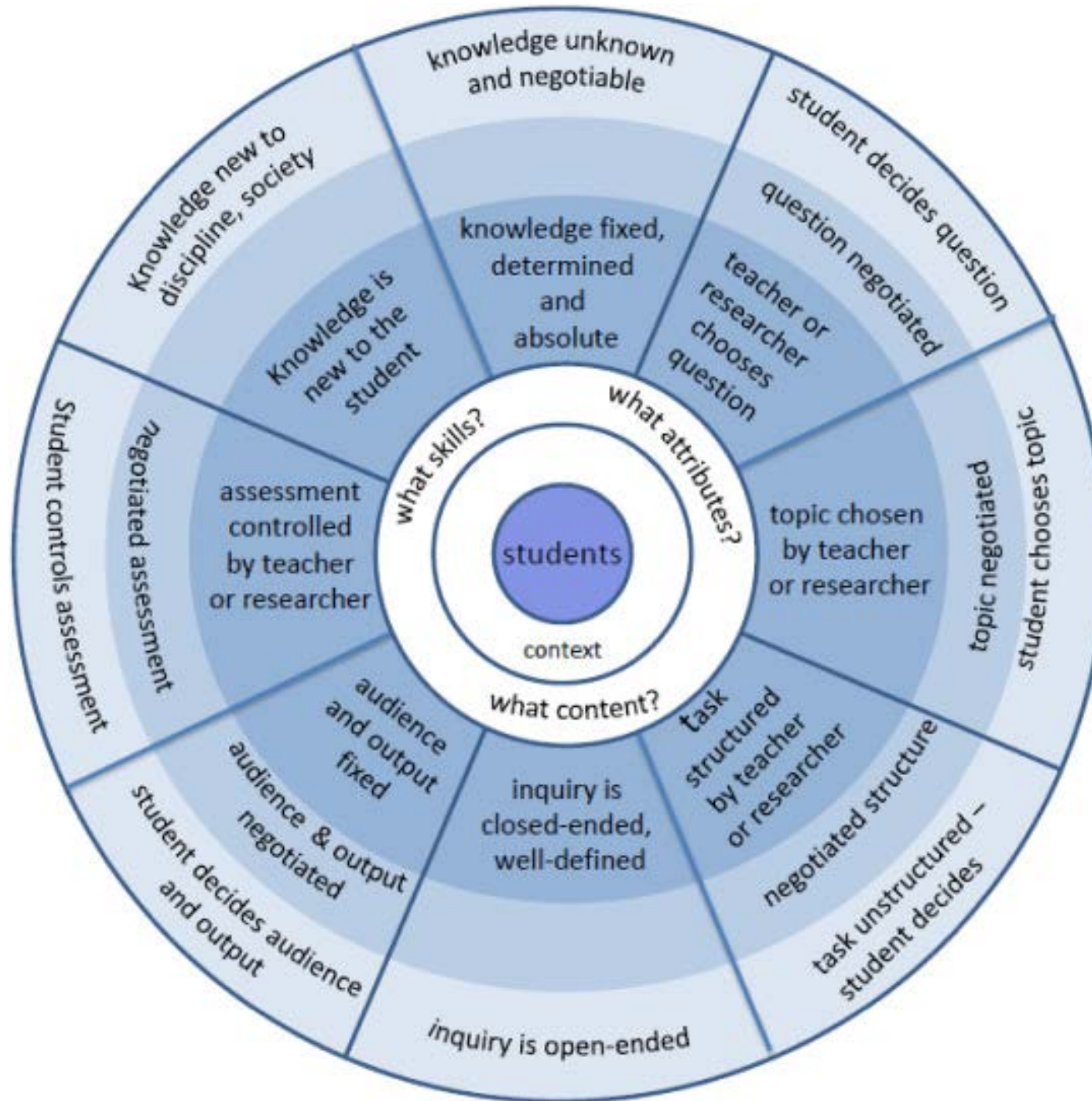
Skills development

Networking

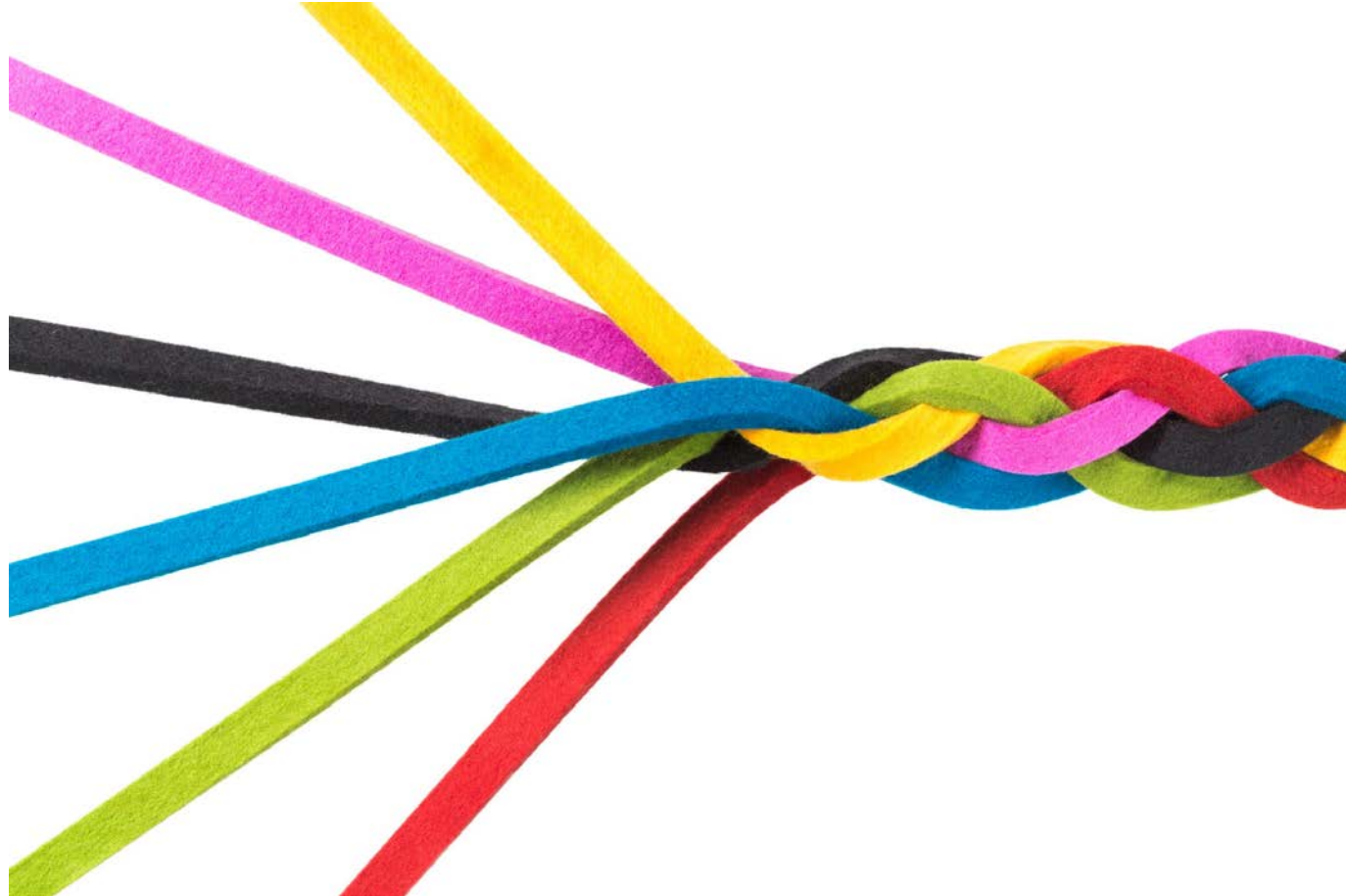
Use research for change



Healey, M.
and Jenkins, A. (2009). [Developing undergraduate research and inquiry](#), Higher Education Academy



4. In search of shared concepts – purpose, context, process of learning practice capabilities



Purposes of UG University Education

- knowledge
- ideas
- structures
- practices
- Employability



Professional Practice Context

- As the integrative foundation
- Doing, sayings, knowing, relatings, being and becoming
- Interdependency and co-existence of knowledge, values and agency in WRIL



4. Process of learning practice capabilities

- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Professional judgment
- Meaning making, synthesizing experiences, asking questions
- Communicating across disciplines
- Teamwork



Shifting roles and identities of students, academics, practitioners

- Who is active
- Who leads
- Who assesses
- Who makes decisions
- Who benefits



What is needed tomorrow?

Sustainability

Complexity

Courage to act

- Eyes wide open in a complex world
- Considering other possibilities
- Social justice lens
- A capacity act



Future Professionals

“agents not only for whom “things matter” but also who themselves matter in history, culture, and society and,

*moreover, who come into being as **unique individuals** through their activist deeds, that is, through and to the extent that they*

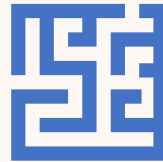
*take a stand on matters of **social significance** and*

*commit to **making a difference** by contributing to changes in the ongoing social practices” (Stetsenko, 2019, p.7)*

5. Case Study



Learn theory accompanied by assignment (50%) to test understanding of the theory



Apply theory by choosing a research problem (20%)

Build teams to work on a complex research problem that can have various approaches
Collectively formulate a research question, propose a research approach, conduct the experiment, and present results in class



Make meaning of research results (30%)

Work individually
Critique the research process
Recommend future research questions and next project

A large orange circle occupies the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge.

Case Study Activity

- What do you like about this approach of work-integrated, research-inspired learning?
- What can you learn from this approach for your teaching?
- What would you do differently?



6. Possibilities for Synergies

- Shared purpose
- Explicit goals
- Active participation
- Future-focused

