

Review of: "Dignifying Lifelong Learning: The Case of Internships"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a thought-provoking opinion piece that potentially prompts debate. The introduction touches on many longstanding challenges for higher education: equity, access, regulation, dignity, relationships, lifelong learning, etc. The article is well-written and uses words that accentuate the insult of disempowerment and inequity. These are issues that need to be out in the public domain, so I commend you for articulating the challenge so eloquently. As work-integrated learning (WIL) as a pedagogy has increased in prominence across university courses, the debate around paid versus unpaid WIL placements (internships) has become more pressing. Termed 'placement poverty' in Australia, it is a topic that has attracted research interest and disdain. The government recently announced (yesterday) payment for some professional university programs that have mandatory WIL placements in response to a recent high-level review of the higher education sector.

This makes for a globally relevant topic of interest, and I highly recommend that you undertake some empirical research and write a more fulsome article grounded in evidence. There are a couple of aspects that I think need to be factored into evidence-based discourse. Firstly, a student on an internship is not an employee; they are a learner. This is core to the notion of WIL embedded in a program. Hence, this shifts the dynamic of the employer-intern relationship to one of support, feedback, and guidance. This in no way compromises what you have said - your words are still relevant and resonate across the employer-intern paradigm. The other factor that cannot be overlooked, as it diminishes the rigor of the university, is that of the role of the educational institution. The educational institution is ultimately responsible for the quality of the student experience and graduate outcomes. If an internship does not meet the needs of the program outcomes, students are treated unfairly, and/or their dignity is threatened, the institution has a role to play. They need to strengthen partnerships, scrutinize WIL opportunities, and establish solid communication channels. Best of luck with your future research in this area.