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**Work-Integrated Learning: Trends
And Issues In A Borderless World**

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WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) IN A BORDERLESS WORLD

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The Minister of Education, Vice-Chancellor, honoured guests. It is my real privilege to join with you in this conference on Cooperative Education in Malaysia. I bring greetings from the World Association for Cooperative Education and wish you every success in the development of work integrated learning in Malaysia.. It is certainly the hope of the Council of WACE that this initiative will also contribute to the creation of many cooperative education programs throughout the ASEAN region. I can assure you that the World Council will support these initiatives in every way it can.

Introduction

Education methodology is only one aspect of the World Association. It is important that we keep before us strategic issues that national governments may utilise to facilitate the development of human endeavour wherever it occurs. It is appropriate to ask the question what policies should be formulated to achieve a highly educated people who can and will contribute to the development of national wealth through business creation and added-value as effective employers or employees? This question effects all countries large or small, and developed or developing. To put it simply, what I am arguing is that education must be linked to the work place. There is an interesting saying by Confucius that what I hear - I forget; what I see - I remember; what I do - I understand.

It is the last couplet which is at the very base of work-integrated-learning "what I do - I understand". The founder of Babson College in Boston USA, an engineer by background, a successful financier by performance and an historian of the great mathematician - Newton has stated, "success comes not by knowing but by doing". It is of necessity therefore that we find a balance between the emphasis on academic learning in schools, colleges and universities and that of experiential learning in the home and work place. It is quite wasteful of resources to believe that all development should occur in a linear fashion, that is we first teach knowledge and then we teach experience. Such a theory does not conform with the development of a human being or business. It is the development of human and technical resources that policy makers, governments, educators and employers are concerned to achieve through world best practice. Today I wish to address the importance of WIL in achieving these practices on a world basis.

I believe passionately in the mission of this organisation, the World Association for Cooperative Education to advance cooperative education as a means to achieve enhanced education and improve the relationship between education and work. In general WACE will promote awareness of work integrated learning in business, government and employing organisations as a strategy for human resource development to improve productivity and increase competitiveness.

Cooperative education, or work integrated learning which I consider the more appropriate expression, "is thus a strategy of applied learning. It is a structured program developed and

supervised by an academic institution in cooperation with one or more employing organisations and in which relevant productive work is an integral part of a student's academic program and is an essential component of final assessment."

Cooperative Education Review

A review of previous world conference proceedings reveals strong support for integrating the two fundamental planks of cooperative education, namely: knowledge and experience. At the 5th World Conference, Keton stated that astute practitioners know how to do a good thing before they know why it works so well. Whereas Dewey at the 6th World Conference concluded that most significant learning occurs in: "a reconstruction of experience"; "a recodifying of habit" and "a perceptive examination of one's experience of unfamiliar ground". The development of such theoretical underpinnings of cooperative education have been shown by a number of authorities such as Checkering 1969, Brogden 1989 and Wilson 1974 to enhance the effectiveness and development of student autonomy and independence.

Indeed the development of student autonomy and independence provides a basis for successful government policies and initiatives which contribute to effective national growth. It is essential citizens take responsibility for their own future and contribute to national growth. It is thus appropriate that this international conference should consider the role of education on national strategies and in particular the integration of work experience in the formal university learning environment.

Some argue that work experience simply prepares students to be effective in a work setting or facilitates the likelihood of employment but Wagner, in the *Journal of Cooperative Education* (1993) argues that the important components of WIL in the overall education process is that; the student learns to take responsibility or be self directed; develops emotional self reliance and intellectual flexibility in order to adapt to situations; chooses alternative courses of action using information based on feelings and attitudes to solve problems; and gains improved grades in chosen study courses. In terms of strategic outcomes, work integrated learning not only produces well rounded and better prepared citizens but it also adds value to students by enhancing their academic performance.

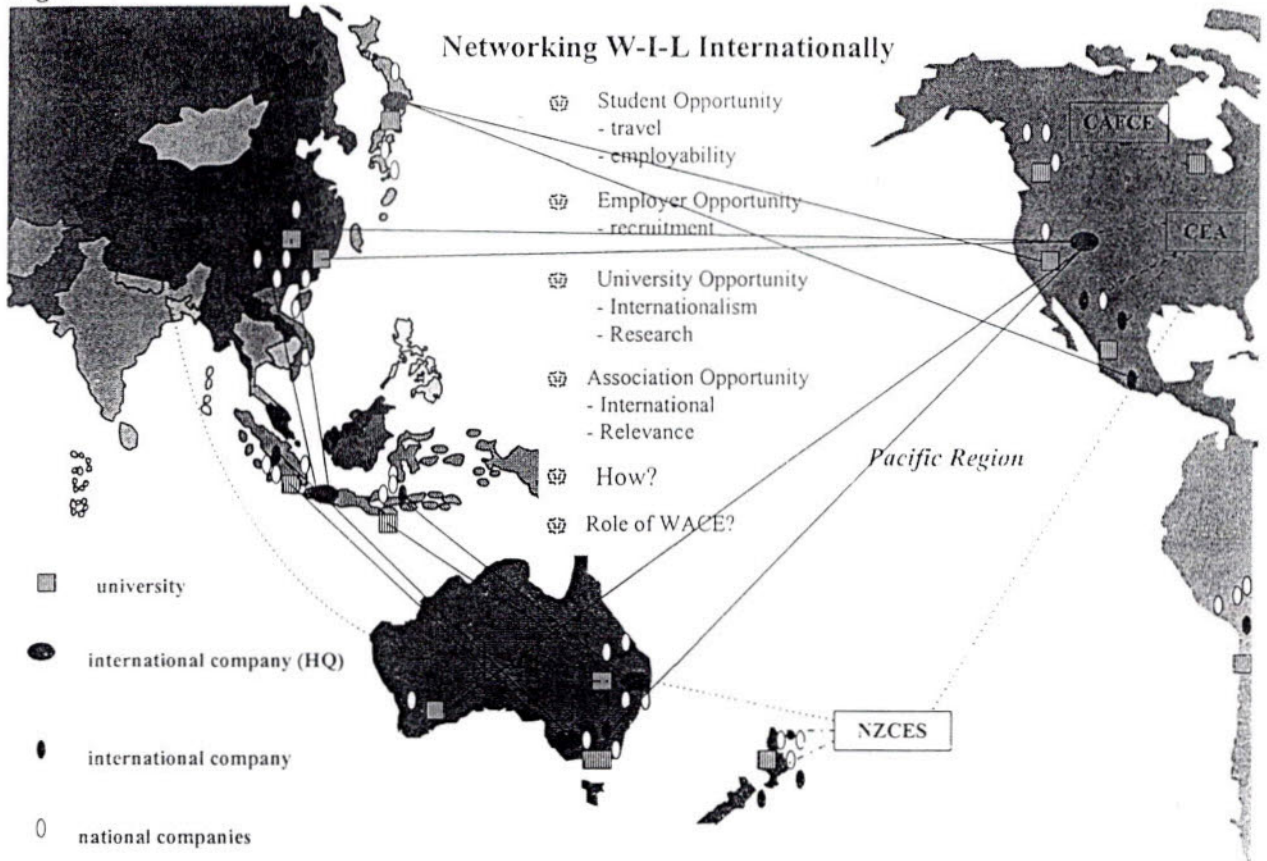
Based on the research presented at past world conferences of WACE it is possible to assess the economic benefits for work integrated learning. From the national perspective; companies recruit quality graduates at reduced cost; graduates have demonstrated positive improvement in responsibility levels over non-coop graduates; graduates experience enhanced job and career satisfaction; demonstrate improved communication skills; are committed to being a team player; and effective in supporting new venture creation.

International Cooperative Education

However today there is an increasing movement to participation in international WIL experiences for our students.

Fig 1 shows a schematic illustration of the opportunities and the processes for WIL across international boundaries.

Fig. 1



Besides the student there are four major organisational elements to be considered in assessing international cooperative education. These are the Universities either as the home university of the student or the cooperating university in the country of international placement which will facilitate the student placement.

The other important component of any international exchange is the receiving employer organisation. In some cases, and particularly with multi-national companies or companies with a global strategy, placements may be at the international headquarters or at subsidiary sites around the world. For example a decision may be taken by the head office in the USA to either bring a Malaysian student to the USA, or send the student to a subsidiary plant in Australia so that on return to Malaysia and completion of the student's study, the same student will be offered employment in the Malaysian or other SE Asian plant of the organisation.

This international networking across national boundaries will provide for

- student opportunity to travel;
- enhanced student employability, both nationally and internationally;
- an enhanced cultural understanding by both students and organisation;
- access to new and developing international technologies;
- awareness and practice in international business and best practice;
- enhanced recruitment success for companies with employees who understand the national and international activities;
- increased opportunity for the home university to expand its international links and cooperative learning arrangements;
- increased research activity in association with international universities and organisations;
- enhanced role for WACE.

The most economic benefit will be achieved by developing graduates who are committed to an export ethos and an understanding of the need for new venture creation geared or developed for export markets. It is this development of the human resource and participation in the world technological market place that makes WIL the critical learning process for the 21st century.

A central aspect of any decision to enter into international cooperative placements is to identify the overall strategic approach to such an endeavour. This implies a study to identify the reasons for collaboration and a broad analysis of how an international alliance can enable both the university and organisation to achieve its major goals.

Essentially there will be two primary motivations for choosing the international option. The first is a perspective that the organisations cannot achieve their objectives alone due to scarcity or lack of access to resources, particularly human and technological. The second is the perception or recognition that in order to achieve success in a "borderless" world the organisation must submit to the pressure of external forces. Primarily these include government regulations, cultural differences and barriers to trade. Why firms collaborate is illustrated in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 Primary reasons for collaboration between firms



It is thus apparent that many opportunities can result from an alliance relationship between a university and international or national organisation to facilitate both access to and development of human resources linked with improved research, technology transfer, manufacturing and consumer markets.

For many organisations to remain competitive in the current market place they must gain access to well trained and creative staff and a broad range of technological capabilities. The international alliance between a national university and international organisations may

provide some of these resources. The end objective of the formation of such an alliance may essentially be the attainment of goals that are impossible to achieve alone in a "borderless" world.

Choosing the right partner

Organisations that successfully develop exciting visions, prepare inspirational statements of strategic direction, and carefully analyse the costs and benefits of a strategic international alliance may still experience a failure in the alliance, because they chose the wrong partner. It is essential that for the university to undertake a careful process in choosing a partner who can bring to the alliance a range of contributions that enhance rather than diminish the effectiveness of the relationship. Failure to adequately assess and learn about a partner can lead to conflict and resistance if the partners lack an understanding of each other's operations. This is particularly true for a university and a corporate company.

Evidence suggests that it is important to get to know a potential partner by working with them firstly on small projects. Similarly, evidence also suggests that the most successful of joint ventures are those that had an extended courtship period.

Qualities of an appropriate partner

It has been suggested that partner choice is inevitably linked to the reason why the alliance is being considered. For example, if the strategy being considered requires a partner who provides a level of technical expertise relevant to the originating country and not available in the originating country, then the appropriate partner will be one who is able to provide the required expertise. Alternatively, if the strategy indicates that experience and reputation in international markets is the missing ingredient in the originating country, then a partner with these qualities will be sought.

Although the above approach to specifying an appropriate partner appears to be clear and unambiguous, it should be noted that the formation of strategy itself may be incomplete until the capabilities and contribution of each partner is determined. Further, the synergistic outcomes of two partners operating together need to be taken into account in the determination of the strategy.

It is important, therefore, for organisations to be able to recognise their own distinguishable market-driving capabilities, and to decide what can and cannot be traded in the alliance. It is also necessary to develop a clear picture of their existing student profiles and the intended partner customers and to ensure that they will be protected in the alliance. This must take place before the process of identifying and developing a profile of complementary, compatible and capability features that are required of a strategic partner. Victoria University of Technology committed itself to such a process in identifying international hotels in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia for their students in Hospitality and Business Studies.

A listing of the obvious qualities desired in an appropriate partner provides the following:

- commitment to the proposed alliance's vision and strategy
- required level of expertise, experience, reputation or influence
- financial stability and evidence of long-term viability
- decision makers and managers with values compatible with the originating organisation
- an organisational culture that can accommodate an alliance partner

- students who are prepared to collaborate with employees rather than compete with the employees of the partner organisation
- experience with successful alliances.

Placing an over-emphasis on the rationale of the alliance at the expense of a diligent partner assessment and selection is strongly discouraged. Such a strategy can lead to a poor choice of partner and, thus, negate the rational objectives that lead to the initial decision to engage in a strategic alliance.

Sourcing potential partners

Careful specification of the quantities and capacities that will be necessary in an effective partner is critically important, but it is only the first step in the process of creating the alliance. A search for potential candidates might include the following sources:

- networks of university contacts
- networks of business contacts
- contacts made in WACE
- contacts made in conferences, trade fairs, and with professional and industry associates
- international companies associated with business in Malaysia
- companies in related industries
- suppliers of resources and/or technology
- companies in emerging industries
- management consultants with international affiliations
- government departments, national and international data bases

Evaluating potential candidates

Following the search for candidates, the originating university should conduct a rough screen and then evaluate the remaining candidates systematically." A rough screening process should answer the following:

- Is the potential international partner available?
- Can the partner fulfil the role required in the development of students?
- Is the partner too powerful and likely to lose interest in training students?
- Are the objectives of the potential partner suitable to an alliance with an educational institution?

Choosing international partners

Although the selection of a partner within the same country requires very careful assessment, the difficulties are multiplied many fold when alliances with companies in overseas countries are considered. Apart from the obvious difficulties of coping with distance, time zones and possibly language, a significant issue that must be confronted is the set of cultural norms that exist in the country of the potential partner. The following list may be worth considering when exploring a possible alliance with companies in different cultures:

- perceptions of the importance of time - some cultures are prepared to take much time as in negotiations;
- openness in discussions-some cultures find it difficult to say 'no' to a proposition and, therefore, they say 'yes' while meaning 'no';
- negotiating positions - some cultures prefer to dominate while others prefer to adopt a quiet, calculating stance;

- requirements for particular types of courtesy-some cultures require extensive periods of time to be spent in affirmation before negotiations commence.

Working in cross-cultural alliances

What is culture?

Culture has been broadly defined as:

... the dominant set of learned, shared and interrelated behaviour within a society ... The cultural context of a given society is a conglomerate of individual or group values towards such things as: materialism, technology, time, aesthetics, kinship and family, which underlie religious, ethical, ideological status, educational and legal systems."

Why is an understanding of the concept of culture important, and why do cultural differences need to be understood and acknowledged? The following quote suggests one answer:

"National and even regional cultures do matter for management. The national and regional differences are not disappearing; they are here to stay. In fact, these differences may become one of the most crucial problems for management-in particular for the management of multinational, multicultural organisations, whether public or private."

In alliances with foreign partners, the management interface must be conscious of the potential difficulties in perceiving one's own culture. These include the difficulty in being an objective observer; the tendency to see one's own way as the best, i.e., ethnocentrism; a lack of awareness of the number of assumptions held that may not fit with other cultures, for example, families should be nuclear, or men should not cry. A parochial view that 'my way is the only way is a definite hindrance when dealing with a foreign partner.

Because cultural differences do exist, it is important to become aware of them, to view them only as differences, but not to judge them. A culture is developed and maintained within a society because it has meaning, importance and validity to those who live by it. To undermine another culture is extremely rude and insensitive.

Compatibility

Extensive studies conducted on joint ventures in 1988 found that the ventures lasted longer when partners were of similar culture and asset size. When there is a significant lack of (national) cultural compatibility and little, if any, attempt to deal with this, the strategic alliance relationship is significantly strained. The primary result is an inability to build trust, or to severely undermine any trust that previously existed.

It is perhaps valuable at this point then to highlight the differences between nations in their approach to doing business. In order to do this, I have chosen two countries that Australia has significant links with, these being the United States and Japan.

The Japanese approach to decision making emphasises the significance of the process involved in arriving at a decision. How a question is defined is extremely important. It has been suggested that once a question is framed by a Japanese group, consensus on the decision itself is more likely. Emphasis is also placed on maintaining harmony during the decision making process. Conflict resolution between business partners is generally achieved through conferral and remaining flexible in the face of unfolding problems. In business arrangements the

Japanese do not favour formal contracts, although in their dealings with the West these are becoming more commonplace. Where some contractual language is necessary, one may find the following phrase: 'All items not found in this contract will be deliberated and decided upon in a spirit of honesty and trust'.

In contrast to the Japanese, the Americans emphasise the effectiveness and/ or efficiency of the decision itself rather the process involved in arriving at a decision. Conflict resolution between business partners is generally achieved through direct legal tactics if all else fails. A high use of business contracts providing for arbitration of commercial disputes is not uncommon.

In studies of Japanese-American joint ventures, trust has been identified as an essential element-particularly for the Japanese partner-influencing the success of the partnership. It has also been argued, in relation to such ventures, that if both parties trust each other then renegotiation of the formal contract, or the use of arbitration, is unnecessary.. In essence, , from the Japanese perspective, a request for arbitration may be seen as an admission of low trust, and a resolution of conflict through binding arbitration might lead to the decline in trust in the joint venture.

A further, more extensive, comparison of national cultures, is found in the work of Hofstede. Hofstede found differences in the behaviour and attitudes of people working in multinational companies from different cultures. He grouped these into four dimensions: power-distance, avoidance of uncertainty, individualism vs collectivism and masculinity vs femininity. A description of each of these dimensions is provided below and summarised in Table 1. Table 1 also provides examples of where some countries are placed in relation to each of the dimensions.

Power-distance

This dimension is a measure of the extent to which superiors and subordinates have distinctly different status and privileges. In a large power-distance situation the superior is always right. The subordinates are not consulted and, indeed, do not want to be because the superior is respected for the position that he or she holds. In contrast, a small power-distance society is much more egalitarian.

Avoidance of uncertainty

If uncertainty avoidance is low, the culture is one of tolerance towards ambiguity and risk, and the propensity to get by with few rules. In high uncertainty avoidance organisations there is likely to be many formal rules, less tolerance for deviation from the norm, desire for and pursuit of career stability, and lifetime employment.

Collectivism-Individualism

Collectivist societies have an orientation towards the group. There is generally a clear distinction between the 'in group' and the 'out group'. Responsibility to group members is strong and decisions are generally left to the group. Individualist societies place more emphasis on self-interest and personal achievement.

Masculine-feminine

In a masculine society the dominant ideas are assertiveness, ambition and materialism. There are often rigid sex roles. The feminine society stresses concern for quality of life, for the

family and for feelings, and interdependence is valued. It is considered appropriate for both men and women to be caring and nurturing and, overall, there is much less differentiation of sex roles.

When seeking to build a successful relationship with a transnational partner it would prove valuable to study the affect of national culture on work-related values and attitudes through the application of the Hofstede model.

Partnerships with the east

Table 1 Dimensions of cultural differences

Power Distance

| Small power - distance | Countries | Large power-distance | Countries |
|--|-------------|---|-------------|
| Inequality among people should be reduced | Denmark | There should be a degree of inequality, where everyone has a rightful place | Philippines |
| Leaders and followers consider each other to be just like themselves | Austria * | Leaders and followers view one another as being different | Mexico |
| Those in power should try to appear less powerful | Israel | Those in power should try to appear powerful | India |
| | New Zealand | | |

Avoidance of uncertainty

| Weak avoidance | Countries | Strong avoidance | Countries |
|--|-------------|---|-----------|
| There should be few rules | Scandinavia | There is a need for written rules | Greece |
| Competition can be used constructively | Gr Britain | Competition can unleash aggression and should, therefore be avoided | Japan |
| | India | | Belgium |
| Authorities should serve citizens | Hong Kong | Citizens lack competence compared to authorities | Portugal |
| | Singapore | | |

Individualism versus collectivism

| Individualist | Countries | Collectivism | Countries |
|---|-----------|---|----------------------------|
| "I" consciousness is dominant | US | 'We' consciousness is dominant | Japan |
| People should strive only for themselves and their immediate family | Australia | People belong to extended families or clans | Thailand Taiwan |
| Emphasis on initiative and leading | UK | Emphasis on belonging and following | Mexico Peru Pakistan |

Masculinity versus femininity

| Feminine | Countries | Masculine | Countries |
|--|-------------|---|-----------|
| Men need not be assertive but can be nurturing | | Men should be assertive and women should be nurturing | |
| Equality of the sexes is ideal | Scandinavia | Men should be dominant in society | Japan |
| People and environment are valued | | Wealth and goods are valued | |

Adapted from Hofstede, G. 1980, *Culture's Consequences*, Saga Publications, New York

Learning about a partner's culture is the first important step in creating potential for the development of long-term relationships. Being able to demonstrate some knowledge of the

local customs and culture will go along way. Learning a little about the language is even better. Even simple things such as how to hold a gift that is given can make a significant first impression. For example, in China it is considered important when giving or receiving a gift to hold it with both hands. The giving and receiving of business cards requires different approaches across cultures so as not to offend.

Table 2 Strategic alliances between East and West

| East | West |
|---|--|
| When to do business | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the personal relationship comes first | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wants to get down to business first and socialise after |
| Saying or meaning no | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saying no directly causes loss of face - you are supposed to be clever enough to know that it has been said | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saying no is usually quite appropriate |
| Using intermediaries | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often prefer to deal through intermediaries, which means they may have to defer a meeting to check back with head office as they don't have the authority to decide at that point | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually have the authority to make some agreement and become frustrated that others don't. |
| Size of party | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will often send a team of people to negotiate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually just send one or two, which doesn't give them much status in the eyes of the East. |
| Use of silence | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Japanese, in particular, are comfortable with pauses in communication. It gives them time to find the right phrases that allow them to be precise and polite at the same time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not so comfortable with silence, often jump in and make concessions when things are too quiet. |
| Use of lawyers | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often indicates a distrust of the other party | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quite common |
| Contracts | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not always seen as a legally binding document. May be only a working agreement for the moment (e.g. Malaysia) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legally binding documents |

Adapted from Reeder, J.A. 1987.26

Table 2 summarises some of the major differences between East and West when doing business. Seven major areas of difference are highlighted. These include: when to do business, saying or meaning no, use of intermediaries, size of party, use of silence, use of lawyers and use of contracts.

Creating acceptable contracts

The creation of a workable and acceptable contract necessitates certain actions on the part of all parties to the contract. The following points summarise the main issues and acts as a checklist of important actions.

- 1 Exchange letters of intent to confirm interest in establishing the partnership, to highlight the potential objectives, partner contributions and time frames, and to initiate movement towards a formal contract.
- 2 Determine the basic structure of the venture.
- 3 Identify financing requirements.
- 4 Identify and resolve major foreign legal issues.

5. Exchange an Information Exchange Agreement.
6. Organise for a formal contract to be drawn up and ensure due care is taken to include all the necessary elements, e.g.,
 - prefatory clauses
 - definition of major terms
 - currency provisions
 - alliance structure and management responsibilities dispute resolution procedures and choice of law termination
 - representations and warranties
 - provision for unforeseen events (force majeure) patents and technology protection confidentiality and proprietary rights granting of licences
 - disclosure and grant backs.
7. Organise the preparation of ancillary agreements (where necessary) to spell out in more detail items contained in the formal contract and operational aspects of the alliance.
8. Obtain legal counsel.

Conclusion

In the fast developing internationalisation of trade, commerce and education there is an opportunity for universities committed to work integrated learning to identify and initiate innovative alliances with international organisations.

Both the necessity to develop intelligent and creative people to lead and manage wealth creation through international business and participate in technology transfer between national companies are the very ingredients that a well managed and international work integrated learning program provides for its graduates.

Achievement of these ideals will necessitate the development of innovative approaches to strategic alliances with a network of organisations across a broad spectrum of business and human resource requirements.

The development of effective WIL initiatives will be dependent on the creativity of the academics in broadening their concepts of WIL and adapting the potential programs to align with the visions and needs of participating organisations with full understanding of the cultural requirements in the network countries.

WIL is the learning program for the 21st Century but its potential is currently limited to the narrow view of supporting student development. When universities perceive their overall role in wealth creation rather than just education then the opportunities presented in this paper will be fulfilled.