

Aligning competency orientated Work Integrated Learning models for Mining Engineers and Mine Surveyors

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ABSTRACT

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is recognized in the revised Higher Education Qualification Sub Framework (HEQSF) published in 2013 as a credit bearing learning activity. A counter argument postulates that WIL is orientated to developing already learned theory in a practical environment and develops “soft-skills” that should not bear credit. In response to the Higher Education Qualification framework of 2007, some institutions moved their focus away from including WIL in their academic programmes. The 360 credit National Diploma programmes was arguably impacted the most by the HEQF requirement that the institution would be responsible to find placement for WIL for all students registered in such a programme. This paper defines three stages of WIL on the way to professional registration and argues that it is important that government, industry, academia and Professional bodies re-evaluate how the various stages of WIL can lead to a competency based evaluation of professionals prior to being allowed to complete Government Certificate of Competency examinations. The programmes developed by mining companies to assist their bursars and Graduates in Training (GIT) through these three stages of experiential learning are discussed and used to propose a model that may improve the throughput in the final Government Certificate of Competency (GCC) examinations. It is unfortunately becoming increasingly rare that a student would be exposed to all three phases of experiential learning due to the current fluctuations in the South African mining industry. The author argues that WIL is an essential part of developing professional competency and should bear credit. The integration of these three forms of experiential learning would enable a sustainable model of development of future professionals.