

CEWIL Research Matters

CEWIL Research Matters is a monthly newsletter showcasing research in co-operative education and work-integrated learning. The newsletter is a joint initiative of the CEWIL Canada Research Committee and WatCACE (University of Waterloo). We profile published research that we believe will be of interest to the CEWIL Canada community and feature practitioner and researcher viewpoints on the articles.

November 2018

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Article #1

Investing in skills and innovation: New strategic tasks for public administrations (2014)

Author(s)

Buligina, I., & Sloka, B.

Journal

European Integration Studies, 8, 115-123

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To identify the opinions and views of policy makers and experts regarding the training of innovation in vocational education and training (VET) systems.

Methodology: Textual analysis of policy documents and academic publications, along with qualitative and quantitative analyses of an expert survey.

Key Findings: Innovation training is primarily seen as the responsibility of higher education, research and development. Practical guidelines are needed to implement innovation training into VET systems.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Tanya Behrisch (Program Manager, Business Co-op, Beedie School of Business, Simon Fraser University)

Q: What insights did you gain from reading this article that were useful to you?

A: This article raised my awareness of the role public policy plays in shaping innovation in post-secondary education. The authors focus on vocational training in Latvia, so the data and conclusions are country-specific, but the themes likely have some parallels with a Canadian context. The authors found that policy makers and public administrators perceive innovation in education to be primarily the domain of higher education, research and development, not vocational training. However, for vocational training to evolve around economic demand for new skills, curriculum innovation is key. Cooperation between policy makers and professional education administration is essential for innovation to take place.

At present there is no consensus between professionals in these areas, which sheds light on the need for a broadly understood innovation agenda across educational sectors. The implication for work-integrated learning (WIL) in Canada is that innovation of WIL curricula in vocational programs is just as deserving of attention from an educational policy perspective as degree programs with WIL curricula. Innovation in vocational internships and apprenticeships is key to aligning skill development in Canada with economic demand for new skills. WIL can play an important role in new skill development.

Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)?

A: I'm a non-voting member on my school's Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (UCC) where faculty make decisions about which courses to introduce, maintain, change and retire. Innovation in education, including WIL curricula, must happen. I believe our applied programs need to respond to market-driven changes in the economy. For curriculum innovation to happen, buy-in and cooperation between policy makers who impact program funding and professional education administration is essential. Feedback regarding emerging skill gaps and curriculum data is essential. These findings are relevant to any WIL practitioners who sit on their school's UCC because we can bring that specific feedback to our faculty and admin who decide on WIL course offerings and how those are integrated into vocational and academic credentials.

Article #2

Using electronic portfolios to explore essential student learning outcomes in a professional development course (2016)

Author(s)

Alanson, E. R., & Robles, R. A.

Journal

Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 17(4), 387-397

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To determine the impact of ePortfolios on students' employment competencies.

Methodology: Students in an Introduction to Cooperative Education course were assigned an ePortfolio project and completed pre-assignment and post-assignment confidence surveys.

Key Findings: Incorporating ePortfolios into higher education assignments may enhance student confidence in numerous valued career education competencies.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Stephanie Greaves (Co-op Coordinator, School of Interactive Arts and Technology, Simon Fraser University, Surrey Campus)

Q: In what ways do these findings have the potential to change practice for us at SFU?

A: Having ePortfolios be a part of students' co-op experience is a powerful idea that can definitely enable students to showcase their skills in action. This medium has great potential to change SFU's practice because it will require students to not only articulate their learning through describing their experiences, but by also pointing to concrete artifacts that came out of those experiences which will aid employers truly grasping students' competencies.

One thing that occurs to me is that some disciplines lend themselves more easily to this form of visual storytelling than others. It therefore may be an interesting challenge for some students engaged in particular roles to figure out how to both 'show' and 'tell' what they did, how they did it, and what they learned from the experience.

In my work with visual and media designers, I have learned that there tends to be a real focus on the end product; however, the most telling part of the portfolio pieces are the iterations along the way. Students who take a mindful approach to their work and document their earliest ideas, prototypes, failures, and final forms will have a rich story to tell that showcases not only what they can do, but what was behind those decisions and how much wiser they became in the process of the doing. While I think this research article raises some very compelling evidence to support the benefits of ePortfolios, I believe that in order for them to be really meaningful, there will need to be a curricular emphasis on students sharing their process as much as the end products.

News and Updates

• CEWIL Members

There is now an option for you to include 'research' as an area of interest in the CEWIL Café Ten Thousand Coffee community. Select or add that option for your profile and/or look for other CEWIL members who have indicated they would like to talk about research interests.

- Take a look at the recently released [Draft Framework for Quality WIL, AAA*](#) prepared by Dr. Norah McRae (Associate Provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education, University of Waterloo) and the WatCACE team. We'd love your feedback!

Contribute

Suggest articles or contribute to future issues by emailing us at watcace@uwaterloo.ca.

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