

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.

February 2019

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Article #1

Placement quality has a greater impact on employability than placement structure or duration (2019)

Author(s)

Smith, C., Ferns S., & Russell, L.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(1), 15-29

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To compare the importance of work-integrated learning (WIL) placement quality, program structure (part time or full time hours) and duration of WIL placement (measured in weeks) relative to employability outcomes for learners.

Methodology: Students from several Australian universities were surveyed about their WIL placement experiences including questions about the quality of their placements, prior work experience, the hourly requirement for their placement and demographic information. Respondents self-assessed aspects of their employment readiness related to life-long learning, integration of theory and practice, overall work-readiness, informed decision-making, collaboration and professional practice and standards.

Key Findings: The quality of WIL placement is a stronger predictor of students' work readiness than the duration of their placement or the placement structure (part time versus full time), even when controlling for previous work experience.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Erin Kaipainen (Senior Specialist, Experiential Learning, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary)

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

A: As we seek to expand experiential learning (EL) opportunities (including WIL) across degree programs, and contemplate the benefits and challenges with this expansion, it's helpful to consider other possibilities outside of a three-term co-operative education program or an extended internship opportunity. This research certainly confirms what we inherently know – that quality matters. As many institutions seek to scale up WIL, the findings of this paper are a good reminder that in our efforts to ensure all students have at least one WIL opportunity, that we're also focused on the quality, not just the quantity of placements, and determining how to best assess student learning and employability outcomes in this field.

Q: Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)? If so, in what ways could this information be shared with them?

A: I suspect these findings may be of value to students as well as faculty and advisors who support students in navigating EL opportunities. We've heard anecdotally from learners that not all students can pursue an additional year of study to complete a co-operative education designation. As we scale up EL at UCalgary, we're aware that a significant part of this work is the messaging we share with students, prospective students and their families. I sense that there may be some key messages here to counter beliefs that the benefits of WIL are only accessible to students who can commit to a long-term program; in fact, learners can improve their overall work readiness and make meaning of their work experience relative to their academic studies through high quality short term opportunities. The authors also note the tension between the needs of industry partners and the often inflexible timelines and requirements of post-secondary institutions. These findings offer another reason to consider flexible program options within our WIL offerings.

Article #2

The utility of case study as a methodology for work-integrated learning research (2018)

Author(s)

Lucas, P., Fleming, J., & Bhosale, J.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 19(3), 215-222

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To guide and support researchers who are considering a case study approach to their work-integrated learning (WIL) research.

Methodology: The authors present two vignettes demonstrating how they overcame the perceived limitations of case study as a methodology, and utilized case studies' potential benefits to advance theory and knowledge of WIL.

Key Findings: The diversity and complexity of WIL makes case study research a suitable methodology in how it richly portrays a strong understanding of context, allowing researchers and readers alike to draw similarities across their own diverse contexts and settings.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Rachel Braun (*Program Specialist, Experiential Learning, Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, University of Calgary*)

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

A: Before reading this article, I had never considered the advantages a researchers' "insiderness" can bring to certain kinds of research. My disciplinary background is a blend of Social Sciences and Humanities, so I have collected many strategies and critical reflection prompts to create as much "objective" distance between myself and my research subject as possible. Lucas, Fleming & Bhosale make a compelling case that a unique and positive benefit of case studies as research methodology is how they are uniquely flexible in incorporating multiple perspectives. While many qualitative research methodologies emphasize a researcher's role in interpretation, the authors emphasize that case studies as research methodology allow a researcher with insider knowledge simultaneously to contribute directly back to the case's context at the same time as advancing knowledge within the case's discipline and WIL broadly without compromising rigor. An "outsider" perspective may be more "objective" given its distance from the case under examination, but an "insider" perspective can bring more extensive knowledge of the nuances within (and beyond) the case under examination. When conducted with intentional ethical consideration and critical reflection on research practice, the insider perspectives can lead to rich interpretations and parallels to other contexts that may have otherwise been limited.

News and Updates

- **2019 WACE Research Grant**

The application deadline for the WACE Research Grant is March 1, 2019. Visit the [WACE website](#) for more information.

- **2019 CEWIL Research Grant***

The submission deadline for the CEWIL Research Grant is March 29, 2019. Further details can be found on the [CEWIL Canada website](#).

**This grant is sponsored by WatCACE*

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