

# 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 2020

• Article #1 • Article #2

## Article #1

Work-integrated learning and health literacy as catalysts for Roma empowerment and social inclusion: A participatory action research (2019)

## Author(s)

Karlsson, L. E., Ringsberg, K. C., & Crondahl, K.

## Journal

Action Research, 17(4), 549-572

## Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

**Purpose:** To determine how health literacy and work-integrated learning (WIL) could function as tools of empowerment for the marginalized Roma population in Sweden. The second goal was to reflect upon a participatory action research (PAR) framework within the context of this project.

**Methodology:** A case study of PAR in Sweden that involved two phases: 1) Planning, mapping, pre-course and analysis, in which the Roma communities were involved on a voluntary basis; and 2) Based on the results, implementation of the planned competence development activities.

**Key Findings:** WIL within a PAR framework enhanced the health literacy and empowerment of the Roma coordinators despite some structural discriminatory obstacles. WIL may be a worthwhile approach for enhancing individual empowerment.

**Practitioner's Thoughts By [Katelyn Copage](#) (*Indigenous Experiential Education Coordinator, University of New Brunswick*)**

### Does this study raise questions for you that require further research/investigation?

The authors believed that the combination of WIL within a PAR framework would ensure that the Roma persons participating in the project were the leads of this study and the holders of the knowledge/data. In essence, this is similar to the slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us" which gained popularity in North America in the 1990s as part of the disability movement and has become an expression Indigenous nations have adopted as a slogan of protection for themselves and their knowledges.

However, the authors concluded that while the Roma participants did experience self-empowerment throughout the duration of the study, the barriers erected by their respected Universities dissolved their intention of a Roma-led (PAR) framework, hindering the study from teaching its full potential. This structural discrimination speaks volumes to the institutional barriers marginalized populations face when accessing societal resources, particularly education. This article raises many questions for me, specifically through the lens of my position as coordinator of experiential education for Indigenous students at the University of New Brunswick. Most glaringly, how do I/we provide meaningful and equitable opportunities for marginalized society members when there are institutionally/societally erected barriers specifically in place to keep us from accessing opportunities which foster and nourish self-empowerment?

## Article #2

Examining students' perspectives on gender bias in their work-integrated learning placements (2019)

## Author(s)

Bowen, T.

## Journal

Higher Education Research & Development, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2019.1677568>

## Source

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**Purpose:** To answer the following research questions: 1) What are students' perspectives on the challenges they faced at their internship placements?; 2) Which of these challenges did they see as complicated by gender bias?; and 3) What are their perspectives on the conditions that support gender bias in the workplace?

**Methodology:** As part of a pilot study, 15 WIL students from a Canadian university participated in focus groups.

**Key Findings:** Due to students' inexperience in a workplace setting and a desire to be 'successful' in their WIL placements and eventual employment, many participants (particularly male participants) upheld practices that perpetuate gender bias in the workplace.

**Practitioner's Thoughts by Sarah King (PhD, Director, Office of Experiential Education, University of New Brunswick)**

### In what ways do these findings have the potential to change practice at your institution?

As someone whose personal and professional background focuses more on community-engaged experiential education, I believe that the solution to many of the problems Bowen highlights lies in literature and practice in that field. Universities need to ensure that students have the tools and frameworks to enable them to be thoughtful, careful citizens in the world (surely we want them to have rich, meaningful lives that include but are not limited to gainful employment). Based on the results of this study and others, it is important that our universities structure all experiential learning opportunities, including WIL, as opportunities for students to gain critical reflection skills and to disrupt the systems and structures that create inequitable conditions (for those of all genders, races, abilities, sexualities, etc.). Experiential education programs have the potential to be changemakers for our employers, community partners, students, and institutions by modeling and promoting equity for all students. I know I will be working hard to make sure that all experiential learning programs at my institution offer these opportunities for critical reflection, and the necessary training and knowledge students need to be changemakers in their communities. This is exciting work, and I hope the WIL field will take work like Bowen's seriously as we continue to improve our practices and efforts.

## News and Updates

### • WIL & Co-op Month

CEWIL Canada is celebrating WIL & Co-op Month all throughout March. Join in the conversation using #WILPower and learn more on the [CEWIL website](#).

### • CEWIL 2020 National Conference

Registration details coming soon!

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[wilresearch.uwaterloo.ca](http://wilresearch.uwaterloo.ca)

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