

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.

June 2019

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Article #1

What can we learn from the iReflect project: Developing a mobile app for reflection in work-integrated learning (2019)

Author(s)

Harvey, M., Walkerden, G., Semple, A.-L., McLachlan, K., & Lloyd, K.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(1), 55-69

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To review the use of mobile technology to support reflective practice in work-integrated learning (WIL).

Methodology: A participatory action research (PAR) approach was used that involved literature reviews, student focus groups and surveys.

Key Findings: Nine user stories (students and teachers) provide guidance on what is required from mobile technology to support WIL reflective practice.

Practitioner's Thoughts By Logan Reis (WatCACE Co-op Student, WatCACE, University of Waterloo)

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

This article describes an application that is designed to fill the need of a mobile technology that encourages text-based reflection. The article was useful for me because it helped me realize that the most common mode of reflection for learning is text based. The use of an ecological framework was helpful for it explained that WIL is a complex concept and experience, and simplified it into three main components: pedagogical, technological and institutional. Also, I thought that it was interesting that for the app to be used to its fullest, the user is recommended to have the guidance of a knowledgeable subject convenor with the skills required to uptake the technology and to provide a stronger engagement in the reflective process, and that it could not simply be given to students as a tool to support learning. Despite this, the app acts as a good stepping stone into future reflective practices for WIL students by giving them a platform in which to log and express their learning and development.

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

This paper does a great job of collecting stories from those who already practice reflection; however some further questions came to me whilst reading. They gave clear guidance on what WIL students and teachers would require from a mobile app, but it would be interesting to investigate if the app would be useful for everyone. Reflection seems to require practice, so would the app not benefit newcomers to reflection? Does this app act as a gateway for reflection or is it an enhancement on the reflection process for veteran reflective practitioners? Further investigation could look into the retention rate of users, how active the user-base is in keeping up with their reflecting, or even if certain subject fields or different pillars of WIL reflect more or less than others.

Article #2

Comparison between employers' and students' expectations in respect of employability skills of university graduates (2019)

Author(s)

Lisá, E., Hannelová, K.,
& Newman, D.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(1), 71-82

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

News and Updates

- **WACE 21st World Conference 2019**

Date: August 3-7, 2019

Location:

University of Cincinnati
(Cincinnati, OH)

For more information, visit the [WACE Conference Website](#)

- **CEWIL Research Matters Summer Hiatus**

We will be taking a break in July and August. See you again in September!

Purpose: To compare the expectations of employability skills between Slovak employers and students of the Pan-European University in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Methodology: Authors sent a questionnaire to university students and local employers who hire their graduates to evaluate each group's perceived importance of, and satisfaction with, generic employability skills.

Key Findings: Employers ranked engagement and willingness to take on extra work higher compared to students. Students considered three skills as more important than employers: experience in the field, leadership and authority, and field knowledge. There was a clear gap between graduate and employer perception of the level of acquired skills.

Practitioner's Thoughts by **Mary Neil** (*EDGE Manager, EDGE Program, University of Waterloo*)

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

This article provides an interesting perspective for post-secondary institutions and their assumed responsibility around graduate employment. The study identifies the importance for institutions to prepare students to enter the workforce not only by developing skills and competencies (discipline-specific and "generic" skills), but to situate that learning around labour market trends, social capital and perceived employment. There are a lot of implications around this responsibility especially around the controversy of how employability fits in the altruistic mandate of higher education institutions.

For students, it clearly articulates a gap between graduate and employer perception of the level of acquired skills, indicating a clear need to incorporate self-assessment and reflection into curriculum, and to encourage students to use those skills throughout their lives.

Employers in this study advocated for WIL opportunities (such as internships) to lessen the gap between perceptions around skills and to also ease the transition into the workplace. Using the lens of labour market trends, in combination with perceptions around skills and undergoing a needs assessment with employers of an institutions' graduates, is an intriguing overall strategy to garner support and partnership for WIL opportunities with post-secondary institutions.

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wilresearch.uwaterloo.ca

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