

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.

October 2019

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Article #1

Enabling the transfer of skills and knowledge across classroom and work contexts (2019)

Author(s)

Jackson, D., Fleming, J., & Rowe, A.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 12(3), 459-478

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To explore the nature of students' transfer of skills and knowledge across workplace and classroom settings during work-integrated learning (WIL).

Methodology: A mixed-methods design using WIL student survey data and interview data from WIL supervisors across disciplines/professions in three universities in Australia and New Zealand.

Key Findings: Students tend to practice transfer during WIL in less complex tasks that relate to discipline-specific skills. Certain program and workplace characteristics enhance student confidence and capabilities in this process. Findings also highlighted the importance of educators taking a holistic approach to developing students' transfer ability.

Student Thoughts By [Jamie Nettinga](#) (WatCACE Co-op Student, Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education, University of Waterloo)

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

The findings support that WIL experience and academic curriculum both need to be carefully and thoughtfully designed in order to enable the transfer of skills between the two, as well as ultimately the transfer of skills from both of these experiences to the student's life and career after graduation.

For example, this article finds that a barrier to transferring skills is that students see a misalignment between university learning and workplace practice, and that supervisors also identified this as problematic. My institution can use this information to improve the integration between WIL experiences and academic curriculum. Courses and curriculum can be designed to directly communicate how the content relates to workplace activities, and supervisors can be better informed of what programs are teaching in order to better choose a student and ultimately create a better experience for themselves, their company, and the student. Further, placing emphasis on communicating to students and teaching them how to advocate for themselves, the skills they want to develop, and the level of challenge they desire during interviews in order to get better matched with a job or WIL experience for better knowledge and skill transfer. This knowledge will also help during the WIL experience so students can be enabled to transfer their knowledge and learn as much as they can.

Article #2

Student insights: The added value of work-integrated learning (2019)

Author(s)

Martin, A. J., & Rees, M.

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 20(2), 189-199

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To focus on student insights of the added value of work-integrated learning (WIL) on their professional and personal development.

Methodology: Analysis of 271 reflective journal entries from sport management and coaching WIL students at Massey University, New Zealand.

Key Findings: Students highlighted a number of positive outcomes of their WIL experiences, including enjoyment, achievement, reinforcement of career decisions, gratitude for the support provided by workplace mentors and academic supervisors, and development of several personal and professional attributes.

Student Thoughts by Zulfqar Sheikh (WatPD Co-op Student, Waterloo Professional Development Program, University of Waterloo)

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

This article was interesting in that it was able to reinforce ideas and insights about WIL, but in a way that isn't often articulated. Most often we understand the value and importance of WIL and WIL programs through the perspective of employers or institutions with these groups advocating the benefits of WIL to students. What this article does is provide insight on the student perspective and how they are able to synthesize their experiences into concrete takeaways.

There were a few takeaways that stood out to me for a variety of reasons. First, students frequently reported on the growth of self-management through WIL. The part I found particularly interesting was the subtle emphasis on growth. Students (by going through real experiences) were acknowledging that there is a definite learning curve in any work environment, and in doing so they were able to develop their habits. I personally believe that self-reflection and growth are essentially requirements of any substantive professional experience, and to see this isn't something I value alone is refreshing. It shows that students who experience WIL understand what it means to reflect on themselves and build on their understanding, and those are concepts that hold value in many aspects of life.

Secondly, students recognized the value of skill application and what it does for their employability. As a Teaching Assistant for WatPD, one of our continual goals is to help students work on their skill development in a practical sense. By learning that students genuinely recognize and appreciate the skill building aspects of WIL brings a sense of gratification. Students highlighted how one of the strengths of WIL is the ability to enhance soft skills that could not be learned in the classroom. It is one thing for employers and institutions to advocate that concept, but it is another for students to believe it, and it seems that students are doing just that.

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