

Co-op Research Matters is a monthly newsletter on what's happening in co-op research and WatCACE. We will profile published research, by us and others, and include a practitioner's viewpoint on the article. In addition, we will share updates on current WatCACE projects.

DECEMBER 2016

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Article #1: A lifespan perspective on cooperative education learning: A grounded theory.

Author: Linn, P. (2015)

Journal: Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 16(4), 301-326

Source: [Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education](#) (PDF)

Purpose: The aim of this study was to understand how co-operative education worked to help students learn, especially foster learning that those students judged to be important 50 years later.

Design/Methodology: 32 alumni participated in lifespan interviews wherein they constructed narratives of their lives and responses were coded for mention of how co-operative education might have impacted the trajectory of participants lives.

Key Findings: Participants highlighted the impact of co-operative education on a number of outcomes in their lives and on developing attributes such as emotional intelligence and self-efficacy, and facilitating career planning.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Rocco Fondacaro

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

A: Co-operative education and other forms of work integrated learning have been around for many years. Despite this long history, much of the interest and research has been on the outcomes of co-op learning. Typically the mechanisms that transform the individual is still a bit of a "black box". Patricia Linn has used two sets of archived narrative data from a sample of co-op students gathered fifty years ago at time of their work experiences and then in interviews with the same "students" fifty years later.

Insightful for me was the possibility, demonstrated by Linn's research, that we can begin to understand how co-op learning goes beyond more usual goals of career development to affect more encompassing ways that individuals "construct their entire lives". The author describes learning in terms of categories of different ways the individuals try to understand and to apply their work experiences more immediately after their work experiences and then again many, many years later to give meaning to the kind of person they had become. One interesting dynamic, for example, described how experiences on the job affected decisions and behaviours after work, weekends, and in other non-work situations. This "5-to-9 learning" highlighted how job challenges, tasks, problem-solving generalized to everyday life in the form of self-sufficiency and the development of long lasting social values and attitudes needed to get on with different people and everyday social and physical systems.

Article #2: The value of being a conscientious learner

Authors: Woods, S. A., Patterson, F. C., Koczwara, A., Sofat, J. A. (2016)

Journal: Journal of Workplace Learning, 28(7), 424-434

Source: [Emerald Insight](#)

UPDATES

Consider applying for the CAFCE research grant. Visit the [CAFCE Research Grant and Submission Guide](#) for more information.

Purpose: To examine the impact of the Big Five personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, neuroticism) on training outcomes to help explain variation in training effectiveness.

Design/Methodology: 99 junior medical practitioners were tested before and after a training session to examine the participants learning and impact of personality traits on learning.

Key Findings: Conscientiousness was related to post-training learning where those higher in conscientiousness exhibited better outcomes.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Andrew Brunet

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

A: This article helped me understand how the personality trait of conscientiousness tied a person's motivation to learn and desire to achieve learning goals. It made me better appreciate all of the programs, such as the SSO's Student Leadership Program, WatPD, EDGE, and Housing's Maximize Potential Certificate Program, that are aimed at high-achieving students. I also gained some insights into the value of conscientiousness in terms of employability, especially when employers are seeking recent graduates.

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

A: This article, specifically the *Implications for future research* portion, reinforces the importance of trainees adopting a positive mindset with respect to lifelong learning. It's important for employees to be intrinsically motivated to learn, develop, and change. For undergraduate and graduate students, it is a perfect time in their young careers to adopt that mindset and to put those learning habits into practice. As suggested in the article, perhaps it is through compulsory personality assessments, delivered via in-person workshops or online courses, where students learn more about themselves and develop plans to enhance their development during their work terms or other work-integrated opportunities.

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