

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.

ISSUE #3: JUNE 2016

- Article #1
- Article #2
- Updates

Article #1: Analyzing student and employer satisfaction with cooperative education through multiple data sources.

Authors: Jiang, Y. H., Lee, S. W. Y., & Golab, L.

Journal: Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 16(4), 225-240

Source: Visit the [Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education website](#) to access the article.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this paper was to determine the factors affecting student and employer success and their satisfaction with their co-op experience. Factors examined included work term level and program of the student, length of work term, country of work term and whether the student arranged the job.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY: Used uWaterloo co-op data from 2009-2011, containing 36,615 evaluation pairs (of the employer by student and the student by employer), job titles and descriptions from 4,709 employers for 19,093 unique positions.

KEY FINDINGS: There are a number of interesting findings in the paper, including that overall and category performance ratings improve from one work term to the next. Senior students are less likely to be rated as N/A for their leadership skills. Students who continue at the same organization during an 8 month work term are more likely to be rated higher on goal setting, judgment, conflict management, initiative and leadership. However, students with an 8 month work term who worked at two different organizations were rated higher on ability to learn, quality and quantity of work, creativity, problem solving and reliability.

PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY DIANNE BADER

What insights do you have about Waterloo co-op as a result of reading this article?

My first thought is about the value of our data and how we need to, as an institution, get our data to a place where we can do much more of this type of analysis. We are starting down this path as part of the WaterlooWorks project, but it will only be the first step. We need a series of databases capturing our data over time in a way that can be easily accessed. And just as importantly, we need data with integrity. We are working through some data issues now as we prepare to move to WaterlooWorks, some just due to different system requirements but some of it is data integrity. This article reinforces the value of this work now and ongoing.

My second thought was how can we work more closely with researchers at the University to help us solve some of our business problems? For example, from an Operations perspective, we have moved a significant number of our interviews from face to face to web and phone. We did this in order to manage the volume increases over the years, but I have to wonder - does the interview method impact the quality of the match between employer and student? It would be interesting to use some of this same data and link it to the interview method.

We have a lot of data! What other data fields would we want to do some analysis on? What are our biggest business problems as a department that data might help? Using our data in this way could result in the next game changer for Waterloo co-op.

Article #2: Developing career management competencies among undergraduates and the role of work-integrated learning.

Authors: Jackson, D., & Wilton, N.

Journal: Teaching in Higher Education, 21(3), 266-286.

Source: Visit the [Teaching in Higher Education journal](#) to access the article.

UPDATES

New resources have been added to the WatCACE website:

- Slides of presentations by WatCACE at the WACE research symposium
- Slides and video of the presentation, "Recent Trends in WIL Research" by Dr. Karsten Zegwaard (Research Seminars section)

PURPOSE: The purpose of this paper was to explore the influence of work-integrated learning (WIL) on undergraduate student competencies in career self-management.

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY: Undergraduate students rated their personal career self-management capabilities and the perceived impact that WIL had on these capabilities. Students were also given the option to qualitatively report on what aspects of their WIL experience influenced these competencies.

KEY FINDINGS: Students who participated in WIL placements were significantly higher in self-awareness and transition learning than those who did not, but only if they were employed. Employment status seems to be the key mediating factor in understanding the influence of WIL on career self-management.

PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY JAYNE HAYDEN

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

Although this study was conducted with Business students in non-North American universities, its findings resonate with my experience here at Waterloo, across disciplines. It is reassuring that students participating in WIL generally appear to embrace self-reflection and thus have increased awareness of their interests, values, personality, strengths, as well as areas requiring development. Such self-awareness is indeed important in successfully managing one's career. However, this represents just one career management competency of an 'employable graduate'. Other career management competencies found in the study to be less robust, when taken collectively, indicate the need for practitioners to step up efforts to help students fold this self-knowledge into an effective career decision-making strategy that will also enable them to better assess appropriate future employment opportunities. Additionally, there is evidently a need for us to broaden and strengthen efforts to educate students on how to conduct labour market research and effective post-graduation job searches.

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

One competency that was only briefly mentioned and merits greater emphasis is that of the role of chance: the study found that students were less equipped with tactics to manage this aspect in their career development. Since chance is now recognized as a significant component in today's increasingly non-linear career paths, here is a loud call to action for us to aid not only in increasing student recognition of the very likely role chance will play in their careers over the lifespan, but also how to actively incorporate it into their career development. The means to achieve this goal requires further investigation and discussion.

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