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.

SEPTEMBER 2016

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**Article #1:** Examining the effects of perceived relevance and work-related subjective well-being on individual performance for co-op students

**Authors:** Drewery, D., Petti, T.J., & Barclay, S. (2016)

**Journal:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 17(2), 119-134

**Source:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education website

**Purpose:** To examine the relationships between co-op students' perceived relevance of their work term, work-related subjective well-being (SWB), and individual performance at work.

**Design/Methodology:** Survey of 1,989 Waterloo co-op students upon completion of a work term.

**Key Findings:** Co-op students who believe their work experience is relevant to their academic program are more satisfied with and engaged in their jobs. In turn, this leads them to be more proficient in their roles and be more likely to go above and beyond the expectations of their organizations.

**Practitioner's Thoughts by Gabrielle Smith**

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

**A:** The findings truly support the goals of co-operative education. As an organization, we should continue to create opportunities that align with students' academic pursuits. These strong connections felt by students lead to higher levels of reported work-related subjective well-being, which directly contributes to more engaged employees for organizations.

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

**A:** Knowing that this level of engagement and investment in roles occurs for many of our students, CECA advisors can use this article in their goal of supporting all students. It may be specifically helpful when having conversations with students who may not feel the relevance or connection to their positions on specific work terms. In understanding the importance of reflection and goal setting, advisors have the ability to facilitate these impactful discussions. Through the support of their advisors, students are empowered to develop plans for their future – looking to create their ideal work terms, searching for and finding opportunities that align with their values, interests and aspirations. This article acts as a reminder to all advisors of the important role they play in helping students be successful throughout their co-op experience.
**Article #2: Exploring stakeholders’ perspectives of the influences on student learning in cooperative education**

**Authors:** Fleming, J. (2015)

**Journal:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Special Issue, 16(2), 109-119

**Source:** Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education website

**Purpose:** To explore the influences on student learning in a sport cooperative education context.

**Design/Methodology:** Interpretive case study

**Key Findings:** Learning in the workplace was influenced by the direct guidance and support given by industry supervisors, as well as the attitude of the student. Through interactions with supervisors and co-workers, students developed an understanding of the role of a professional in the sports and recreation industry.

**Practitioner’s Thoughts by David Everest**

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

**A:** This article emphasizes that students can enhance learning by critically reflecting on their activities in the workplace. It is not enough for students simply to follow instructions from their supervisor about how to accomplish specific tasks relevant to their role. Deep and contextual learning happens when students ask questions such as how their tasks contribute to the work of the organization, what knowledge and skills are required to complete the tasks, what could be done better next time, how do people in the organization behave and communicate with one another, etc.

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

**A:** Journaling is an effective way to achieve critical reflection. Another is engaging in discussion with advisors from the academic institution, especially since critical reflection is not easy, and students may not be proficient doing it.

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