LOOKING BACK: WATCACE RESEARCH IN 2015

Research Assistants:
Colleen Nevison
Lauren Cormier
• Description of WatCACE and its objectives
• Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students
• Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being
• The Impact of Co-op and Reflection on the Development of Vocational Self-Concept
• The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences
• Questions
WatCACE

Three Objectives

**CONDUCTING AND FACILITATING RESEARCH**
- Projects undertaken by 'core' team
- Collaborations with both on and off campus partners
- Sponsored through WatCACE research funds

**THOUGHT LEADERSHIP**
- Involvement in on-campus and off-campus committees to provide input and to gain insights to inform research direction for WatCACE

**DISSEMINATION**
- Presentations on and off campus
- Publications
- Research seminars
- Website, Daily Bulletin

Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education
Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

CENTRE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION
Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

- The creation of meaningful work is an important goal for organizations
- Meaningful work is a key component of program success in work-integrated learning programs
- Little research has been conducted in order to examine how meaningful work can be created for students
- The purpose of this study was to investigate one mechanism through which meaningful work can be established
Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students
Methodology

Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

• 1,937 co-op students were surveyed
• The survey measured the following constructs
  • Learning environment
  • Relatedness to academics
  • Relatedness to career
  • Meaningfulness of experience
• Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS to
examine the theoretical model
Results

Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

• The learning environment had a significant positive effect on relatedness to academics and career goals
• The learning environment also had a positive influence on meaningfulness derived from a work term
• Both academic and career relatedness had significant positive effects upon perceived meaningfulness of a work term
• Relatedness partially mediates the influence of a learning environment on meaningfulness
Recommendations

Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

• It is important to foster a learning environment in order to fully engage co-op employees
  • By increasing the meaningfulness of students’ experiences, this will result in greater engagement of the student, higher productivity, and greater performance

• Students can play a proactive role in enhancing the meaningfulness of their work term experiences
  • Finding meaning in your employment experiences will increase your job satisfaction, productivity, and performance
Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being
Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

• Subjective Well-being (SWB):
  • High satisfaction with life, high positive affect, and low negative affect
• Bottom-up theory: happiness comes from combination of pleasurable and unpleasurable moments and experiences
• Over 20% more first work term students unmatched after main round than total co-op students
Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

Research Questions:
1. How does the main round job match effect SWB for first work-term students?
2. What other external factors impact this effect on SWB?
Methodology

Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

- Participants: first work term students
  - 2700 recruitment emails sent
  - 154 usable responses (6% response rate)
  - 64% female, 36% male

- Procedure: two electronic surveys (self-report)
  - T1 Pre-test: after main round interviews, before match
  - T2 Post-test: after match results

- Measures:
  - Rejection Sensitivity (RS): T1
  - Subjective Well-being: T1 & T2
Results

Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

Estimated Marginal Means of T2PASCAL

Estimated Marginal Means of T2NASCAL

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Recommendations

Co-op Interviews and Subjective Well-being

• Test coping interventions to improve SWB after rejection/failure
• Test interventions specifically directed toward RS to buffer against low SWB after rejection/failure
• Test effects of other possible moderating variables
• Implement program into PD1
  • For all students before match
  • For vulnerable, unmatched students after main round
• Improve awareness of counselling services/increase social support
Influence of Co-op and Reflection on Vocational Self-Concept
Introduction

Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

• Higher education plays an important role in preparing individuals for the workplace
• This might include helping individuals to form a clear vocational self-concept (VSC)
• There are many theories which try to explain how vocational self-concept is developed
• It is possible that co-op and other WIL programs may play a role in helping students to develop VSC
Literature Review

Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

Degree type (Co-op/non)  REFLECTION  Vocational Self-concept

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Methodology

Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

• 1,564 graduating students were surveyed in 2010, 2011, and 2013
• The survey measured the following constructs
  • Degree type
  • Reflection
  • Vocational self-concept
• Mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro in SPSS to examine the theoretical model
Results

Critical Reflection and the Development of Vocational Self-concept

- The degree type had significant impact upon the development of vocational self-concept
- The degree type had significant positive influence on the amount of reflection a student did
- The amount of reflection a student engaged in had a positive impact on a student’s vocational self-concept
- The amount of reflection partially mediated the effect of degree type on vocational self-concept
Recommendations

Creating Meaningful Workplace Experience for Co-op Students

• Institutions can support the development of VSC by reframing work experiences as learning experiences
• There should be continued use of reflective practice within both co-op and non-co-op curriculums
• For those in regular programs of study, educators can use academic contexts to facilitate reflection
• Journaling may be one way to enhance reflection on previous work experiences
The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences
Introduction

The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

• Not all experiences are educative
• The quality of the co-op work term experience influences students’ development
• Lack of research on the role of the work term in co-op student development
• Identifying the important attributes of a quality experience will help us to understand and manage students’ work terms
Literature Review

The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

- **Role Characteristics**
  - Role clarity
  - Work-family Balance
  - Autonomy

- **Interpersonal Dynamics**
  - Leader-member Exchange
  - Relational Coordination

- **Organizational Elements**
  - Learning Environment

**Co-op Work Term Quality**
- Learning
- Impact
- Relatedness (school and work)
Methodology

The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

• 1,937 second, third, or fourth year co-op students were surveyed
• The survey measured the following constructs
  • Role clarity
  • Autonomy
  • Work-family balance
  • Leader-member exchange
  • Relational coordination
  • Learning environment
  • Co-op work-term quality
• Regression analyses were conducted using SPSS to examine the theoretical model
Results

The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

• Number of employees in team has no effect on perceptions of quality, but number of employees is negatively associated with quality.

• Number of work terms positively associated with quality.

• All three role characteristics (role clarity, work-family balance, and autonomy) were positively associated with quality.

• Relational coordination but not leader-member exchange was positively associated with quality.

• Learning environment was positively associated with quality.

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Recommendations

The Indicators, Influencers, and Outcomes of Quality Co-op Experiences

• Employers should note what their employees look for in a high-quality work-term (i.e. learning, relatedness, impact)
• Supervisors should consider giving students more freedom and autonomy
• Future research could examine connection between co-op work term quality and student development
QUESTIONS?