Parameters of a “Good” Professional Experience: Employer Perspective

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Introduction

- Long-term viability of WIL requires mutual value creation (Fleming & Hickey, 2013)

- Research on students’ perspectives is well represented in the current WIL literature (e.g., Drewery et al., 2016; Hurst, Good, & Gardner, 2012)

- Research on hosts’ perspectives more limited, focuses on perspectives of supervisors’ roles (e.g., Fleming, 2015; Winchester-Seeto, Rowe, & Mackaway, 2016)
Research Gaps

- We know less about hosts’ views towards their WIL students (Pretti, Drewery, & Nevison, 2016)

- Recruiters’ perspectives essentially overlooked, but may be different from others stakeholders’ views (Rowe, 2014; see also Barr & McNeilly, 2002, *Journal of Marketing Education*)

- Empirical inter-institutional research is sparse, yet important for generalization and comparison
Hosts’ Perspectives: So What?

- Examining hosts’ perspectives towards students provides insight into motivations and expectations of important organizational members.

- Supervisors’ motives and expectations important for sustained success of WIL.

- Recruiters’ perspectives may have implications for student employment and experience.
Present Investigation

This study seeks to examine host organization members’ perspectives towards WIL. Specifically:

**Q1:** What do hosts believe students are in the organization to do?

**Q2:** How do hosts define successful work terms?
Data and Participants

Two online surveys:

1. WatCACE survey of supervisors’ perspectives, \( n = 374 \)
2. CERI recruitment trends survey (sub-sample \( n = 1191 \))
Measure of Perspectives re: Students’ Roles

Example Items

I see my students as... 1 = an employee first and a student second, 6 = a student first and an employee second

I expect my [WIL] student to... 1 = give the organization as much as they get back, 6 = get from the organization more than they give
Measure of Perspectives re: Success Criteria

Participants ranked importance (1 = most important, 10 = least important)

Student-focused criteria (e.g., The student learns from the experience; The student is genuinely interested in the work/organization)

Organization-focused criteria (e.g., The company's profit rises due to the student's presence/actions; The student completes work that would otherwise not be completed)

Supervisor-focused criteria (e.g., [My/supervisor’s] personal burden of work is lowered; “The student does not need much training”)

Results Part 1: Hosts’ Perspectives
Supervisors’ Perspectives

- Segment 1: Students, recipients (32%)
- Segment 2: Employees, generators (30%)
- Segment 3: Employees, recipients (38%)

Recruiters’ Perspectives

- Segment 1: Employees, mutual (28%)
- Segment 2: Employees, recipients (46%)
- Segment 3: Employees, generators (26%)
Highlights

- Notably: three segments for both groups

- Supervisors relative to recruiters see students more so as students, $t(1702) = 8.35, p < .001$, and also see students more so as recipients of value, $t(1709) = 5.98, p < .001$.

- All three recruiter segments tend to view students primarily as employees
Results Part 2: Defining Success
Highlights

- Consistent across segments and between supervisors and recruiters, student-focused criteria are ranked as being most important, with little difference between organizational and supervisor-focused criteria.

- Recruiters tend to rank supervisor-focused criteria as being slightly more important than organization-focused criteria.
Discussion

Q1: What are students in the organization to do?

- There is a diversity of perspectives amongst hosts (some see students as “students” while others see them as “employees”)

- Recruiters may be thinking of hiring an “employee” while supervisors believe they are working with “students” (though the difference is not very pronounced)

- Still, most agree that there should be mutual value between students and organizations

Q2: What does success look like?

- Regardless of position (supervisor and recruiter) and views towards students’ roles, hosts agree that students’ success must come first
Conclusions

- Organizations may be prioritizing student outcomes as a good business policy → it may create commitment (Pennaforte & Pretti, 2015) and conversion (Hurst et al., 2012) and may contribute to students’ performance (Drewery et al., 2016; Drewery, Pretti, & Barclay, 2016)

- Additional research is required
  - Future research could look at perspectives of host groups within the same organization
  - How are these perspectives formed and how do they influence selection and supervision in WIL?
Thank You

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