

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.

APRIL 2017

- Article #1
- Article #2
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ARTICLE #1

The development of a proposed global work-integrated learning framework (2016)

AUTHORS

McRae, N. & Johnston, N.

JOURNAL

Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 17(4), 337-348.

SOURCE

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

PURPOSE: To develop a Global Work-Integrated Learning Framework that can be used to compare different models of work-integrated learning (WIL) found within post-secondary education.

METHODOLOGY: A model was developed as a result of a presentation of the BC Comparative Matrix and based on feedback provided by researchers and practitioners at various conference presentations.

KEY FINDINGS: It was found that the framework provides a mechanism for rationalising many of the WIL offerings by connecting them through their shared attributes and providing a way to differentiate them through their unique aspects.

PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY KARI PASICK STEWART (Strategic Communications Manager, CECA)

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

A: This article provided a good summary of the theoretical underpinnings of WIL. While perhaps there is a larger conversation around how co-op is situated within this framework, it was helpful to reflect on the much-cited institutional benefits of WIL including improved recruitment and retention, enhanced relationships with external stakeholders and communities, and contribution to economic development and workforce needs through the education of work-ready graduates (340).

Q: Are these findings relevant for other stakeholders (e.g. students, employers, faculty)?

A: A framework may be helpful for faculties establishing new WIL opportunities on campus. The framework proposes that any WIL experience must identify the primary outcome for each of the learner, the program and the broader system. It must also describe and rank the attributes that define it within the WIL model. The study suggests that a globally recognized framework may make it easier to create tools, share best practices and conduct research on WIL. Methodology like this could help ensure that WIL programs on campus, beyond co-op, can be given a set of criteria within which to design, implement and measure quality practice.

ARTICLE #2

Employer understanding of Work-Integrated Learning and the challenges of engaging in work placement opportunities (2017)

AUTHORS

Jackson, D.,
Rowbottom, D., Ferns,
S., & McLaren, D.

JOURNAL

Studies in Continuing
Education, 39(1),
35-51.

SOURCE

[Taylor & Francis
Online](#)

UPDATES

WatCACE will be attending this year's [WACE Conference](#) (June 5-8) hosted in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

PURPOSE: To examine employer understanding of work-integrated learning (WIL), reasons for their participation, and the challenges and barriers posed during the WIL process.

METHODOLOGY: A mixed methods approach was used, including an employer survey and focus group sessions with employers of business students at four Western Australian universities.

KEY FINDINGS: Employers generally believed that student work placements are useful but there were a number of issues that impacted their participation in WIL such as identifying suitable projects for students to complete, hiring suitable students, concerns for student performance, and capacity to mentor/supervise students.

PRACTITIONER'S THOUGHTS BY **DIANE SCHUNK** (Account Manager, CECA)

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

A: The study was a unique collaboration between four universities and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in West Australia. Waterloo, as the world's largest co-op institution, has a wealth of information in this area, however most is based on anecdotal and undocumented information. It is refreshing to see the rigor of this study on industry-university collaboration. Not new to us in CECA but definitely nice to see validated, the study found that the main motivation for employer hiring was to create a pool of suitable talent for future recruitment. While employers generally believe that student work terms are useful, it did identify the most pressing WIL issues for organizations. These obstruct the organizations ability to engage a student and include: identifying suitable projects and tasks for students, identifying suitable students, concerns with student performance and the capacity to mentor/supervise students. The findings could inform many of our employer-based practices from questions we ask at account plan meetings to how we conduct job development. Not a finding of the study, but an important point for us at Waterloo, is the value of collaborating outside our boundaries and including industry in our research. I would like to see us use the study as a base for further investigation specific to our high need programs i.e. Chemical Engineering, Kinesiology, Biology. Building on the identified challenges and barriers, I would like to know if Waterloo employers that hire our focus program students share the same problems.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

Contribute

If you have suggestions for articles or would like to contribute to the practitioner viewpoint to any future issues, we'd love to hear from you at watcace@uwaterloo.ca.

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