

Co-op Research Matters is a monthly newsletter showcasing research in work-integrated learning and co-operative education. We profile published research by WatCACE and others, feature practitioner viewpoints on highlighted articles and share updates on current WatCACE projects.

JUNE 2018

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Article #1

A framework for managing the impacts of work-integrated learning on student quality of life (2018)

Author(s)

Jenna Gillett-Swan & Deanna Grant-Smith

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 19(2), 129-140

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To showcase the importance of recognizing and appreciating student diversity in personal circumstances and experiences when undertaking work-integrated learning (WIL).

Methodology: WIL well-being is introduced as a construct to identify potential impacts of WIL on participants' well-being within and beyond learning contexts.

Key Findings: Connecting WIL and well-being emphasizes the importance of nurturing a combination of individual coping strategies, formal policy and informal institutional support, and provides a framework for higher education institutions to address the impact of WIL on students.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Richard Wikkerink (Manager, Employment and Co-operative Education Services, CCA)

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

A: The authors present a concept of WIL well-being as being a fluid integration of five dimensions: economic/environment, physical, social, psychological, and cognitive. Students are both affected by and have the capacity to affect the pressures associated with WIL experiences. WIL well-being can be strengthened by the intersection of three areas: personal coping strategies, institutional support, and community support.

1. Students who are able to access support from these three areas are more likely to build on previous learning and experience the benefits of WIL.
2. External factors that contribute to barriers (e.g., financial, disabilities, lack of family/peer support) require more intentional support from employers, institution, and/or peers.
3. Wellness is a concept that encapsulates the whole person and provides a more complex lens from which to consider how policy and process support or hinder WIL well-being.

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

A: What would it look like for us to do an assessment of the WIL well-being of students on co-op work terms? I would be curious to know how WIL well-being changes over time as a student moves through their co-op program and learn which institutional supports maximize well-being.

Article #2

Facilitating collaborative capabilities for future work: What can be learnt from inter-professional fieldwork in health (2018)

Author(s)

Margo Brewer & Helen Flavell

Journal

International Journal of Work-Integrated Learning, 19(2), 169-180

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To explore the value of contact theory to understanding how interdisciplinary fieldwork learning might be facilitated, and the impact on the quality of interactions between members of different groups.

Methodology: Interviews were conducted with ten students from different professions who had experienced interprofessional education at three different community sites.

Key Findings: Contact theory created an interprofessional learning experience where students reported functioning as collaborative teams who shared equal status and communicated effectively to achieve common goals in relation to client-focused service delivery.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Dr. Sherilyn Houle (Assistant Professor, School of Pharmacy)

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

A: I appreciated the students' perception that respectful relationships between staff and students and the elimination of a hierarchical relationship between supervisor and students strengthened their learning experience. Especially within a professional program, I think it's important that we recognize ourselves not only as the students' instructor but also their colleague. We all have strengths we bring to the profession, and learning really can flow in both directions.

Q: How might the results of this work affect how we support professional practice with our students?

A: I think this work reminds us that co-op offers students not only the opportunity to develop and apply their discipline-specific knowledge, but also to learn about other disciplines they may work with in the future, and how to navigate shared responsibilities as a member of a team. Whenever possible, we should encourage our students and co-op employers to look for opportunities to work closely with others from different disciplines to provide students with the interpersonal and interdisciplinary skills to succeed in a workplace that increasingly values teamwork over individual efforts. While not all workplaces will have the space available for close and on-going contact like the sites in this paper did, even time spent shadowing individuals from other disciplines one-on-one will help enrich the student's co-op experience.

News and Updates

Co-op Research Matters' Summer Hiatus

Our newsletter will be taking a short break in July and August. See you again in September!

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

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Suggest articles or contribute to future issues by emailing us at watcace@uwaterloo.ca.

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