

Co-op Research Matters is a monthly newsletter showcasing research in work-integrated learning (WIL) 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.

OCTOBER 2018

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Article #1

Where there is a WIL there is a way: Using a critical reflective approach to enhance work readiness (2015)

Author(s)

Wingrove, D., & Turner, M.

Journal

Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 16(3), 211-222

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To understand the best way to foster students' integration of learning and workplace tasks.

Methodology: A thematic analysis of students' reflective journals that were created by responding to prompts about their learning and their work.

Key Findings: Students can make more connections between school and work the more they practice reflection, and that assessing their learning helps students develop professional skills.

Student Thoughts by Laura Jackson (Research Assistant, WatCACE Co-op Student)

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

A: After reading this article, the main insight I gained is that of the importance of actively trying to integrate coursework knowledge and workplace tasks. With the ability to reflect critically on previous experience, one will be able to monitor their feelings and then be able to use their thinking to guide their actions and make better decisions. Another interesting insight is that when students reflect on their beliefs, they see themselves as future agents of change, which is what many employers want. These insights are useful to me as an undergraduate student as they have aided me in understanding my own way of thinking and how I can improve my work readiness.

Q: How might the results of this work impact how you do your job?

A: I now plan to take the time to reflect on how many links I can make between what I've been taught and what I am currently performing. I believe I speak for many students when I say that there are times in school when I am unsure why I am learning what I am, because as far as I'm concerned, I will never use this knowledge outside the classroom. By using a reflective practice, I believe that I will be able to prove to myself that I can use course knowledge in other contexts. I trust this will cause me to perform my job with more confidence and with more of a critical eye, solidifying the notion that school has equipped me for my future.

Article #2

Student placement service: An exploratory investigation of employer retention and a "Priority Partner" intervention (2013)

Author(s)

Walsh, F. D., & Byrne, S.

Journal

Education + Training, 55(2), 139-158

Source

[WIL Research Portal](#)

Purpose: To investigate the factors that lead to retention of employers for an undergraduate work placement program.

Methodology: An action research approach that involved an employer survey, workshops and the design of an intervention.

Key Findings: Employer retention is enhanced when thoughtful and specific employer engagement techniques are used to strengthen relationships.

Practitioner's Thoughts by Peggy Eichinger (Regional Manager, West, Co-operative Education)

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

A: The school conducting the study selected certain employers to have priority service which included early access to students, increased touchpoints, and a focus by the 'placement managers' on these particular relationships. While there are key differences in the recruiting models at this school and at Waterloo, it is gratifying to see common practices within Employment Relations and Employer Services here at Waterloo validated through research. Most importantly, there are clear indications that professional account management can enhance retention rates of employers.

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

A: There is an opportunity to investigate the end-to-end employer experience when hiring co-op students here at Waterloo, including employer surveys to assess what is working well and what could be changed. The survey framework in the article might be a good starting point for this work as it interestingly asks what might be done better at other schools. As well, we might investigate the 'priority partner' model further to see what could be adapted to our use for various employers. Perhaps modified recruiting processes, timelines or specialized services for certain industries or employers will lead to even stronger relationships here as well. Finally, a renewed focus on retention rate and studying the factors that keep our employers engaged with us or not, in a changing WIL landscape in Canada, would be beneficial.

News and Updates

- › WatCACE hosted a research seminar this week on Employers' Perspectives on Talent. Visit our [website](#) to view the presentation and livestream.
- › Stay tuned for a re-branding of Co-op Research Matters to **CEWIL Research Matters**. This is an exciting joint initiative between WatCACE and CEWIL Canada's [Research Committee](#).

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

Contribute

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

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