Successful Transitions for Students and Organizations: Research & Applications

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SAN DIEGO
CEIA 2020
COAST TO COAST: Empowering Student Success
Outline

- Context for research: University of Waterloo Co-op
- Research Topic, Literature Review, Research Questions, Proposed Model
- Methodology, Analysis, Key Results
- Panelists: Application of Findings
- Discussion/Questions
Co-op Model at Waterloo

• 22,000 + students in 120 programs alternate between 4 month academic terms and 4 month paid work terms
• complete 4-6 work terms over the course of their undergraduate degree
• 72% of incoming students say they wouldn’t have come to Waterloo if it wasn’t for co-op
CO-OP: A COMPETITIVE PROCESS

7,100+ active employers in 60+ countries

1,200,000+ co-op job applications

99,000+ interviews
1,500+ in a single day
63,900+ in person
22,900+ via Skype
12,700+ via phone

May 1, 2018 – April 30, 2019
CO-OP – GRADUATE’S WORK EXPERIENCE

88.4% had three or more different employers

68.6% had four or more different employers

68.4% worked in three or more industries, while only

7.7% worked in only one industry
Research Topic

▪ Students need to *adjust* to their roles, including:
  ▪ Knowing what to do
  ▪ Feeling confident to do it
  ▪ Fitting in with others

▪ Greater adjustment associated with:
  ▪ Performance
  ▪ Job satisfaction
  ▪ Organizational commitment
Literature Review (1/2)

- Students and organizations can contribute to adjustment together

- Most research focuses on organizational influences on adjustment

- What can students do to enhance adjustment? And, what can the institution do to support them?

- Our view: lifelong learning mindset and deep approach to learning
Literature Review (2/2)

- Lifelong learning mindset:
  - attitudes/motivations involved in self-directed learning
  - the *why* behind learning

- Deep approach to learning:
  - intrinsically pleasing, critical investigation of new material
  - the *how* behind learning

- We think:
  - (1) The lifelong learning mindset promotes deep learning
  - (2) deep (versus surface) learning should promote adjustment
Research Questions

- RQ1: Will students’ lifelong learning mindsets be positively associated with adjustment (after controlling for organizational resources)?

- RQ2: Does a deep (or other) approach to learning explain the relationship between lifelong learning mindsets and adjustment?
Proposed Model

Lifelong Learning Mindset

Learning Culture

Student-Supervisor Relationship Quality

Other situational, and demographic variables

H1

H7 (indirect)

H8 (indirect)

H9 (indirect)

Approaches to Learning

Deep Rational Disorganized

H4, H5, H6

Work Adjustment
Methodology

- Participants: co-op students \( (n = 137) \)
- Procedure: two questionnaires, beginning (time 1) and end (time) of work term
- Measures:
  - lifelong learning mindset,
  - perception of learning culture,
  - student-supervisor relationship quality,
  - approaches to learning at work,
  - adjustment,
  - other situational variables
- Analytical techniques: multiple linear regression and mediation analyses
Key Results

- Lifelong learning mindset enhanced a deep approach to learning

- Deep and rational approaches enhanced adjustment; disorganized approach minimized adjustment

- Organizational resources enhanced adjustment

- Organizational resources did not influence any approaches to learning
Panel: Implications

- Educator/Practitioner Perspective
  - Anne-Marie Fannon, Director of WatPD

- Student Perspective
  - Katie Ashcroft, WatCACE Research Assistant

- Employer Perspective
  - Anne-Marie Fannon, Director of WatPD
WatPD

- Series of online courses that support students’ skill development during WIL experiences
- Courses include pre-WIL preparation course (PD1) and “soft skill” courses taken during the WIL experience
  - Examples: PD3: Communication, PD6: Problem Solving, PD8: Intercultural Skills
- Reflective assignments are interwoven through the courses
- 20-25 hours in length; degree requirement for co-op students
- Approximately 22,000 registrations/year
Implications: Educator/Practitioner

- What struck you as interesting about the findings of this study from an educator or practitioner’s perspective?
- Do you think there are changes that could be made to curriculum or student support as a result of these findings?
Implications: Student Perspective

- How did this study change your thinking about what happens at the start of a work term?
- Were there other things about the findings from this study that you found interesting from a student perspective?
Implications: Employer Perspective

- In what ways do these findings align with the ways in which you onboard and support co-op students?

- In the time of COVID-19, you are going to be onboarding, training and supporting students in May to work remotely for the summer work term, are there implications from this research that can be used to help students transition into and be successful with work terms where students will be working from home?
Conclusions

- A lifelong learning mindset facilitates a deep approach to learning

- In turn, a deep approach to learning is critical for greater adjustment

- Learning cultures activate supervisors to help students adjust

- Supervisors help with adjustment beyond approaches to learning
Discussion/Questions

- In what ways do these findings match what you see with your WIL programs/students?
- Anything that surprises you?
- In what ways, and to what audiences will these findings be useful?
Thank you!

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