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## **Editorial**

It is with great pleasure I present the full papers of the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) National Conference 2014 held at Tweed Heads, NSW.

These papers represent a substantial contribution to the scholarship and research about Work Integrated Learning (WIL), and provide a collection of the national and world leading research in this area. The National Conference focusses on building institutional capacity to organize and manage procedures and processes that make the offering of WIL opportunities available to students a sustainable activity. This is timely given the signing of the [Statement of Intent](#). The signatories to the Statement of Intent (Feb, 2014) demonstrate interest in building closer ties between universities and business. Building and sustaining relationships to ensure all stakeholders are represented and work effectively to improve the preparedness of graduates to meet Australia's future workforce needs requires careful management. These published papers showcase current thinking, practice and recommendations for this important work. Overall, these proceedings support work integrated learning to develop a community of scholars and body of knowledge with in the broader framework of scholarship in higher education.

I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by Srivalli Vilapakkam Nagarajan (Sydney), Sonia Ferns (Curtin), Marina Harvey (Macquarie), Heather Smigiel (Flinders), Michael Whelan (SCU) and Michele Day (SCU) who provided invaluable assistance in managing the review process, checking amendments, and completing final drafts and editing papers. The team and the reviewers mentioned above have approached their tasks with a significant degree of goodwill to all authors that it is hoped has set the bar in the level of scholarship around WIL at this time.

Personally I hope these proceedings provide evidence of the evolving community of scholars and their area of interest. That their interesting works stimulate discussion and serve to inspire new research endeavours as Australia continues to invest in this important aspect of higher education.



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# Breaking down barriers: the implementation of work integrated learning strategies to transition creative and performing artists to industry

RYAN DANIEL

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The creative industries sector is complex and competitive, characterised by non-linear career paths driven by the individual, thereby requiring participants to have strong networking and work creation capacities. This paper reports on key work integrated learning strategies designed to enhance the transition of graduates to the creative industries sector and increase their capacity to succeed within this rapidly growing area of the global economy. Following contextualisation of the key issues, data gathered from employers and graduates in regional northern Australia is presented. A recently developed curriculum task is then described, which requires students to research and network directly with professional practitioners in the creative industries. Feedback on the process is presented and which reveals that, while challenging, it assists students in breaking down conceptual barriers to industry and improves their overall preparation for sustainable work in the sector.

Keywords: Artists, creative industries, networking, work integrated learning

## INTRODUCTION

Students around the world continue to enrol in higher education programs in the creative and performing arts (Harbour, 2005; Jeffri, 2004). The global creative and cultural sector includes highly trained practitioners, with a significantly higher number of university graduates compared to other sectors (Bauer, Viola & Strauss, 2011; Jeffri, 2004; Potts, 2009). In addition, graduates from the creative and performing arts will inevitably enter a highly competitive environment where there are “far more recruits ... than can be absorbed into available positions in the field” (Røyseng, Mangset & Borgen, 2007, p. 10). The sector to which they graduate, increasingly being referred to as the creative industries (e.g. Flew & Cunningham, 2010), is very different to many other areas of employment (Bennett, 2007). Ellmeier describes the sector as typically involving ‘part-time work, marginal employment, short-term employment and employee-like pseudo-self-employment’ (2003, p. 10). Success in the creative industries is also reliant on individual and collective capacities to be enterprising or entrepreneurial in practice (Bridgstock, 2010; Ellmeier, 2003; Peltz, 2011; Throsby & Zednik, 2011).

## PREPARING GRADUATES FOR CAREERS IN THE CREATIVE AND PERFORMING ARTS

Work integrated learning or ‘WIL’ has gained increasing attention in the literature in recent years as a means by which to link theory to practice (Patrick *et al.*, 2008). One of the key theoretical principles underpinning WIL is the social process of experiential learning as outlined by Kolb (1984), or what Beard and Wilson describe as the ‘sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment’ (2006, p. 2). While it has been a feature of many higher education disciplines for many years, (e.g. Education, Social Work, Hospitality), WIL has a shorter history in the area of creative and performing arts in Australia. There is however an emerging focus on WIL and across a range of areas including Design (Franz, 2007), Music Technology (Draper, 2008; Draper & Hitchcock, 2006), Visual Arts (Lord, 2010), Creative Writing (Hains-Wesson, 2012) and Performance (McKinnon & Lowry, 2012). While these studies reflect emerging practices and pedagogies, they each provide evidence of the benefits that WIL brings to students, including knowledge of work practices, greater understanding of the broader employment context, or direct opportunities to benchmark their work with industry standards.

## RESEARCH AIMS AND INTENT

This paper reports specifically on a second year undergraduate core subject designed to provide students with a deeper understanding of the complexities and realities of the creative industries sector in which they will seek to work, thereby increasing their capacity for potential success in developing a sustainable career. It involves three key areas:

- Learning about career theory, career types and paths in the creative industries sector;
- An industry research and networking folio; and
- A formalised internship in industry under the supervision of a professional practitioner.

To date, student engagement with and reflections on careers, career theory and internships have been investigated and reported respectively (Daniel, 2010; Daniel & Daniel, 2013), with both of these WIL-oriented strategies proving valuable to the majority of students. This paper therefore focuses on the industry research and networking folio, which is designed to connect students directly to the creative industries sector and to practitioners in the field.

## METHODS

As part of a focus on research-led teaching and therefore the embedding of current industry knowledge and feedback into the subject curriculum, the researchers developed two online surveys, one for graduates of the school's programs and the other for employers in the region. The surveys asked participants to rate a series of skills and attributes that were regularly identified in the literature on employability issues for creative and performing artists (e.g. Daniel & Daniel, 2013; Ellmeier, 2003; Peltz, 2011; Throsby & Zednik, 2011), and to provide advice to students on how to best prepare for a career in the creative industries. In terms of the sample, 250 recent graduates and 120 current employers on the school's database were invited to participate. Participation rates were generally positive, with 91 graduates (36% response rate) and 51 employers (42.5% response rate) fully completing the respective surveys.

Table 1 below overviews employer and graduate ratings of selected pre-requisite skills or attributes required for success in the creative industries. The mean rating result is presented for each item, with participants using a scale of 1 – not at all important, to 5 – extremely important.

TABLE 1. Employer and graduate ratings of pre-requisites for success in the creative industries

| Pre-requisite for career success            | Graduates<br>(n=91) | Employers<br>(n=51) |
|---|---------------------|---------------------|
| Make and maintain contacts                  | 4.6                 | 4.5                 |
| Ongoing development of expertise and skills | 4.6                 | 4.6                 |
| Development of a Portfolio                  | 4.3                 | 4                   |
| Passion for the art form                    | 4.5                 | 4.4                 |
| Initiative, confidence and self-promotion   | 4.6                 | 4.4                 |
| Persistence, determination and resilience   | 4.7                 | 4.5                 |
| Acquire and develop business skills         | 4.3                 | 4.2                 |
| Volunteer or complete work experience       | 4.2                 | 3.8                 |
| Develop strong communication skills         | 4.6                 | 4.4                 |
| Engage regularly in reflective practice     | 4.1                 | 3.8                 |
| Create a niche market and specialise        | 3.7                 | 3.3                 |

The feedback reveals that graduates and employers regard a number of attributes and skills as very important. Graduates rate most items slightly higher than employers, which could reflect the fact that they are actively aiming to develop a work profile and/or gain employment. The data certainly point to the fact that success relies very much on an individual's capacity to be motivated, networked and knowledgeable about industry realities. These findings are presented to the second year students early in the semester, in order that they are given a foundation set of insights into skills, attributes and qualities they will arguably require for a successful career. Following this, they are provided with an overview of the research and networking folio assessment task. This folio requires them to:

- Research and identify a series of tangible opportunities that they will pursue in future and across eight areas: 1) grants, 2) competitions, 3) scholarships, 4) conferences, 5) courses/workshops/residencies, 6) representative organisations or associations, 7) key stakeholders and/or artists in your field, 8) other opportunities; and
- Complete a series of ten case studies of practitioners in industry, including a minimum of five working internationally.

The key objective of the second part of the folio is to enable students to apply theory and exploit data presented to them in lectures to examine how they link to contemporary practice. In terms of the specific process of contacting practitioners, students are introduced to ethics and communication protocols and provided with a range of strategies by which to engage with potentially busy and time-poor professional practitioners. For each case study, students are directed to work to a template which requires that they identify and document the reasons they have chosen the practitioner, the skills and attributes identified as needed for a career in the area, as well as general advice and suggestions. They are then required to summarise the experience of networking with this person as well as how they will apply this new knowledge to their career planning and development.

It is also explained to students how the case study section of the folio, in particular, is designed to move them out of their comfort zone into a learning zone under the guidance of staff, as per the educational theory of Vygotsky (Daniels, Cole & Wertsch, 2007). Further, in addition to new knowledge, it is explained to students that this experientially-focused task will enable them to develop enhanced capacity through skills and attributes identified as significant by employers and graduates (as per Table 1 above), most notably persistence, resilience, networks, initiative and communication skills.

## RESULTS

The anonymous feedback presented in formal evaluation systems proposes that students appreciate the real-world nature of the tasks and the benefits that they gain from engaging directly with industry practitioners. In the previous three years of feedback, the majority of student comments presented were favorable about the benefits of engaging with this task. For example, in terms of the most recent feedback presented on the subject as a whole (26 of 91 students voluntarily participated), several positive comments were presented, including:

- *The folio was an eye opener and helped me evaluate what I was doing in the arts.*
- *It has given me much more confidence ... I have met new people and discovered new work.*
- *A lot of work but I feel I know more about the industry and can have an intelligent conversation about it.*
- *Being made to contact professionals in our field was a very valuable experience.*
- *It took me out of my comfort zone and out to make contacts.*
- *I learned a crazy amount about life, difficulties, how professionals in my area work, and how to contact and talk to industry professionals.*

At the same time, the following comments reflect the difficulties and level of challenge that some students experience:

- *I found it hard to contact so many people.*
- *The network portfolio is massive - it could be broken up into easier parts.*
- *Portfolio was too extensive.*
- *There needs to be a change to the marking to allow for us to not get replies from industry practitioners.*

It is clear that some students will struggle with direct industry contact and also the fact that many practitioners are very busy and will simply not be in a position to reply. Indeed it is often the students' lack of confidence, fear of rejection or no reply, or concern that they won't be taken seriously that is raised during class workshops and is an ongoing issue for the educators.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper has reported on a specific work integrated learning strategy designed to engage students directly with industry, through both research and networking, the latter representing a challenging but rewarding experience for most learners. For most students, the task of having to engage with industry practitioners provides them with an expanded network that enhances their capacity for success in the creative industries sector. Further, it requires students to reflect on how these networking experiences enable them to link research and theory to practice, given they apply these insights towards their career plans and goals. The area of students' networking with practitioners in the creative industries is certainly an area with additional research opportunities, such as the issue of student confidence, with the researchers frequently observing several students who create significant barriers for themselves as they approach the task of networking beyond the higher education environment. Therefore, the next phase of research might involve an exploration of issues around confidence, initiative,

resilience and persistence, these no doubt highly complex and intertwined factors given the inherently personal nature of the creative process.

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# Diggers Trail Wilderness Exercise (DTWE): A work-integrated experience for paramedic students

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The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a simulated wilderness exercise in the development of navigation, wilderness response and trauma care skills in senior paramedic students. Lack of skill and experience in these fields has been identified by Ambulance Victoria as a limitation of Bachelor of Paramedicine courses. The DTWE, conducted in a wilderness landscape in Central Victoria, Australia, was developed to address this identified gap.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used, namely, focus group, field diary and self-report survey, to give voice to students' perception of their learning facilitated by the field exercise ( $n = 60$ ).

Results identified three main themes; new understandings of self and others within the team, of professional identity and of own strength and capacity. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that DTWE provided students with more opportunity to apply knowledge and skills when compared with clinical placement with an emergency ambulance service ( $p < 0.01$ ). Participants considered DTWE to be an effective alternative to clinical placement with an emergency ambulance service ( $p < 0.01$ ). The DTWE offered opportunities to experience a wilderness response simulation rarely available during traditional clinical placement.

Keywords: Simulation, paramedic, clinical placement, wilderness response, ambulance, navigation

## INTRODUCTION

Paramedic education in Australia has undergone significant transformation over the last decade with the delivery of education moving from an in-house, post-employment model to a university based pre-employment model (Joyce, Wainer, Archer, Wyatt & Pitermann, 2009). The resultant increase in paramedic student numbers in higher education in Victoria has put pressure on Ambulance Victoria's capacity to provide on-road clinical experience (Joyce *et al.*, 2009). As such, one regional Victorian university is exploring alternative clinical placement modalities, particularly the use of simulated learning environments, a pedagogical approach found to realistically bring the workplace to the learner (Williams, Wong, Webb & Borbasi, 2011).

Simulated learning environments (SLEs) are considered to be a vital component in paramedic education. SLEs have been found to improve education across healthcare disciplines (Von Wyl, Zuercher, Amsler, Walter, & Ummenhofer, 2009; Williams, Brown, & Archer, 2009; Williams, Brown, Scholes, French, & Archer, 2010). SLEs have been found to offer safe learning environments for rehearsal of psychomotor, teamwork, communication and patient care skills (Williams & Dousek, 2012), proving useful in terms of skill transfer to real patient care (Boyle, Williams, Cooper, Adams & Alford, 2008). Although well evaluated educationally, there is little research into the use of SLEs as a replacement for real-time on-road clinical experience. One study evaluated video (DVD) simulations and found them to be educationally, professionally and clinically relevant, as judged by participating students (Williams, Brown & Archer, 2009). These authors suggested that DVD simulations have the capacity to replace some clinical placement rotations and should be integrated into standard paramedic curriculum. What is missing from the research literature is evaluation of real-time SLEs as appropriate replacement for on-road clinical experience.

### *Context of the inquiry*

The 'Diggers Trail Wilderness Exercise' (DTWE) project was developed to address the gap in supply of on-road clinical placements for senior undergraduate paramedicine students at a regional university in Victoria, Australia. In consultation with practising paramedics, a range of simulated clinical scenarios, drawn from real cases, was developed. Key foundational skills in search and rescue, trauma patient treatment and patient extrication in remote settings were identified through targeted learning objectives. The three-day DTWE was a busy, challenging event. Students worked in teams of up to eight and rotated through at least three extended scenarios on the first day and up to six smaller scenarios on the second day.

The research arm of the DTWE project aimed to:

1. Evaluate students' perceptions of the development of their clinical and other skills resulting from the DTWE clinical scenarios;
2. Determine students' opinions of the value of the DTWE as a replacement for on-road clinical placements.

### METHODOLOGY

A mixed method approach was used in this study, with qualitative methods of field diary and focus group being utilised to gain participants' deep, rich explanations and descriptions, and a self-report survey to capture numerical data (Castro, Kellison, Boyd & Kopak, 2011).

#### *Participants*

The study sample comprised a convenience sample of 3<sup>rd</sup> year paramedic students ( $n = 60$ ). Data were collected in 2012 and 2013. Overall, 71 students attended the field exercise with 84.5% ( $n = 60$ ) consenting to participate in the study.

#### *Qualitative data collection and analysis*

Participants were invited to keep a field diary of their personal experiences. They were instructed to use reflective journaling, that is, to record what they noticed / experienced (discuss feelings and emotions) to make sense (analyse and evaluate) and to make meaning (action plan for future development). Focus groups were conducted approximately one week after the field trip, with all conducted over 60 minutes in groups of up to 12 participants. Focus groups have been found to encourage engagement from participants in terms of contributing their attitudes, priorities and framework of understanding in open conversation (Kitzinger, 1994). All groups were audio taped and conducted by a member of the research team not involved in the field exercise.

Preliminary thematic analyses of qualitative data were conducted in small teams. The data were then examined by the entire research team (authors) for evidence of variation and/or commonality of themes. Identified themes were found to occur across all focus groups.

#### *Quantitative data collection and analysis*

The survey was based on a tool developed by Boyle, Williams, Cooper, Adams and Alford (2008) to assess paramedic students' clinical experiences during on-road clinical placement. With the permission of authors, the survey was adapted to assess and compare participants' clinical experiences in on-road placements with simulated clinical experiences at the DTWE. Participants were required to rate their clinical experiences using a 5-point Likert scale; with 5 representing strongly agree and 1 strongly disagree.

Survey data were analysed with SPSS version 20, descriptive statistics, chi square and a two-tailed paired-sample T-test were used.

## *Ethics*

Following receipt of ethics approval from the University's Human Research Ethics Committee, all students who were scheduled to attend the DTWE were invited to participate in the study.

## FINDINGS - FIELD DIARY AND FOCUS GROUPS

The text-based quotes below were taken from the full complement of participants. Minor corrections have been made to the quotes to enhance readability, namely, spelling and punctuation corrections, the addition of filler words (denoted by [ ]) and the omission of side issues (denoted by ...).

Several themes emerged from the analysis of field diary and focus group data, with a particular theme of relevance to the current study aim being 'new understandings - self-awareness within the team'.

### *New understandings: self-awareness within the team*

The clinical scenarios were challenging with often time-critical events for teams to manage. Participants recognised the existence of competitive personalities in teams, the behavior of whom stymied accurate, reliable decision-making, reported with the following statement by one participant '... such big personalities and everybody... wanting to lead' (Focus Group). The excerpts below, however, show the reflective nature of participants' responses to this 'chaos' (Focus Group), a self-awareness of their potential role in team performance, and the need for tolerance with each other so that team goals were achieved. The excerpt shows a participant's realisation that his/her natural inclination to act competitively and loudly in team decision-making was unproductive. In this incident, the team was faced with a difficult extrication of a sick child (manikin) and the urgency of the clinical situation led the team to argue over exit strategies.

I have a huge competitive personality and I am loud and everyone knows that but I decided to take a step back. I thought, for this to work I can't be all the way up high... I decided to step back. ... then I decided [to start] picking the points where I was going to have an opinion (Field Diary).

The participant below also reported her/his decision to change behaviour, in this case though, s/he spoke out with conviction in a situation where s/he would normally remain quiet.

... we all had really good communication and really good team work, but we didn't have any strong personalities that really stepped up to the lead. We were like, "oh what do you want to do?" and taking a consensus. So I said, I'm not sure what everyone else is doing, but I know I can get us out of the bush ... I know where we've been and I know how to get home (Focus Group).

Various participants reflected on how their team developed and re-shaped itself as the experiences and challenges continued throughout the exercise. A growing awareness and respect for teamwork is clear in the following excerpt where the participant notes that the team viewed itself as a collective from which various strengths could be rallied.

And yeah, in some shape or form we all, within our own groups, we all got to a point where we delegated roles to each other. We had our strengths and we played to them, which I thought was really good [for the] team (Focus Group).

Participants' reported a new awareness of belonging to a community of health professionals, and the beginnings of professional identity.

For me it kind of felt like we were part of it ... we are part of this developing professional community. Especially having ex paramedics [retired], current paramedics and people from the wider health care setting and military and all that. ... even just with the students, it kind of made this little community, which I don't know, creates a bit more sense of belonging in the [profession]. I felt like I was contributing to something (Focus Group).

## FINDINGS - QUANTITATIVE DATA

The survey was completed by predominantly female participants (68%) enrolled in the paramedicine degree ( $n = 41$ ).

Paired sample T-tests showed statistically significant differences in evaluation of clinical experiences in on-road placement compared with clinical experiences at the DTWE. Participants indicated they were given more opportunity to participate in patient care during DTWE when compared with on-road clinical experience ( $p < 0.01$ ), likewise they experienced more valuable learning experiences ( $p < 0.01$ ) and gained more constructive feedback from support staff ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Compared with on-road clinical placement, clinical scenarios at the DTWE provided significantly more opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in navigation ( $p < 0.01$ ) and wilderness response ( $p < 0.01$ ), to select and administer pharmacological agents ( $p < 0.01$ ), to apply drug dose calculations ( $p < 0.01$ ) and to understand the application of the clinical approach in paramedic practice ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Moreover, participants found the exercise relevant to their paramedic practice, and considered the DTWE an appropriate and suitable alternative to on-road clinical placement with an emergency ambulance service ( $\chi^2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Results from this study indicate that the real-time simulated learning scenarios at the DTWE enabled participants to engage in an authentic learning experience.

Through focus group and field diary, participants recounted their learning experiences and the development of self-awareness within the team, inclusive of their own capacity to make a contribution and professional identity. This finding confirms earlier research on real-time simulation, where learning in a controlled, structured and realistic environment was found to aid the development of collaboration, leadership and communication (Ker, Mole & Bradley, 2003; Boyle, Williams & Burgess, 2007).

Survey results confirmed the value of the learning experiences afforded by DTWE, with all participants reporting clinical scenarios to be relevant to their current clinical practice. Extension of clinical skills to the wilderness response skills of navigation, search and rescue, equipment familiarity and paramedic safety were strongly endorsed by participants as necessary adjuncts to their professional role. Early research by Kilner (2004) found these important attributes of paramedic personnel to be missing from paramedic curricula. The DTWE filled this gap in paramedic students' skill base.

Participants agreed that the DTWE was an appropriate and suitable alternative to on-road clinical placements. The DTWE offered clinical scenarios that prompted students to apply university learning and to also extend their learning to new cognitive and relational skills.

## CONCLUSION

The 'Diggers Trail Wilderness Exercise' (DTWE) was developed to address the gap in supply of on-road clinical placements for senior undergraduate paramedicine students at a regional university in Victoria. A range of simulated clinical scenarios, drawn from real cases, was provided to students over the busy and challenging 3-day event. The research arm of the project found participants to highly value the cognitive aspects of their learning, such as foundational skills in search and rescue, trauma patient treatment, patient extrication in remote settings. Participants also valued relational aspects of learning in terms of self-awareness within the team, inclusive of their own capacity to make a contribution and professional identity. Participants judged the DTWE to be an appropriate and suitable alternative to on-road clinical placements.

Further research is needed to examine a range of SLE modalities and their outcomes. This would assist the development of effective alternative or adjunct clinical experience programs that enable graduate paramedic students to be well prepared for their future professions.

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# The effect of work integrated learning in highlighting the complexity of work: A pilot study of work self-efficacy

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This pilot study aims to examine the effect of work integrated learning (WIL) on work self-efficacy (WSE) for undergraduate students from the Queensland University of Technology. A WSE instrument was used to examine the seven subscales of WSE. These were; learning, problem solving, pressure, role expectations, teamwork, sensitivity and work politics. The results of this pilot study revealed that, overall the WSE scores were highest when the students' did not participate in the WIL unit (comparison group) in comparison to the WIL group. The current paper suggests that WSE scores were changed as a result of WIL participation. These findings open a new path for future studies allowing them to explore the relationship between WIL and the specific subscales of WSE.

Keywords: Work self-efficacy; undergraduate psychology students; work placements; work self-efficacy inventory (WSEi); work politics; work-integrated learning

Acknowledgement: We would like to thank the students who participated in this study

Work-integrated learning (WIL) is a curriculum element that enables university students to undertake and learn through a work-related project or placement as part of their study (Eames & Coll, 2010; McNamara *et al.*, 2012). WIL programs result in improved generic skills (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011) as well as increased hope and greater confidence that students will achieve their goals (Purdie, Ward, McAdie, King, & Drysdale, 2013). Students gain knowledge and skills, and learn about workplace culture, that can ultimately assist in reducing the post-university transition stress often associated with entering a work setting (A. Bates & Bates, 2013; Brown, 2010).

## WORK SELF-EFFICACY (WSE)

WIL appears to facilitate WSE (M. Bates, Thompson, & Bates, 2013). Raelin *et al.*, (2011) suggested that a positive relationship exists between WSE and performance in an organisational setting. A study conducted by Raelin and colleagues (2011) exploring the effect of cooperative education on three dimensions (work, career and academic) of self-efficacy change, found that the WSE of university students was improved by WIL. Similar results were found in another study by Bates, Thompson & Bates (2013). However, in this second study, some of the sub components of WSE (i.e. learning, teamwork and sensitivity) were not improved by WIL involvement.

A South African study examining this relationship indicated different results (Junqueira & Matoti, 2013). Using an instrument that measured teacher self-efficacy (as opposed to the WSE measure used in the studies above), Junquera & Matoti (2013) examined self-efficacy beliefs of pre-service teachers before and after a six-month period of WIL. Students showed high self-efficacy beliefs before the WIL placement but their ratings decreased (although not significantly), after the WIL experience (Junqueira & Matoti, 2013).

This pilot study examines certain characteristics of a single WIL offering within an undergraduate psychology degree at an Australian university. The WIL unit is a single semester class taken by students in their final year of study. This unit is an elective and the students were required to attend placement in an organisation of their choice for a minimum of 50 hours across a semester and complete on-campus workshops to support their placement. This project will compare WSE between students who completed the WIL unit and a sample of students who did not complete the WIL unit. As part of a larger study, the aim of the current pilot study is to investigate the effect on student WSE as a result of participation in the WIL unit.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Participants were two groups of undergraduate students from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). The WIL group consisted of 21 participants enrolled in a WIL unit (PYB207 Psychology in the Community). The comparison group consisted of 7 participants in their final year of study who were not enrolled in the WIL subject. The majority of participants in the WIL group were female (62%;  $M = 23$  years old,  $SD = 3.20$ ) and had previous working experiences (86% previous employment; 21% psychology-related employment; 79% volunteer experience; 43% psychology-related volunteer experiences). Most of them were enrolled in a single degree (i.e. Bachelor of Behavioural Science (PY45);  $n = 12$ , 85%). Similarly, most participants in the comparison group were female students (71%;  $M = 21$ ,  $SD = 3.40$ ) and were also enrolled in the Bachelor of Behavioural Science.

The comparison group reported less previous employment (57%) when compared with the WIL group. However, it was more likely to be in a psychology-related area (29% psychology-related employment; 57% volunteer experience; 57% psychology-related volunteer experiences). The comparison group participants were recruited from PYB350 Advanced Statistical Analysis (a non-WIL subject). No incentives were given, participation was voluntary and the anonymity of responses was assured. This research had been approved by QUT Human Research Ethics Committee (reference number: 1300000300).

### *Measures*

This study is the pilot for a larger study. The data presented in this paper relates to WSE measured by the Work Self-Efficacy Inventory (WSEi) (Raelin *et al.*, 2011). This scale has been used in previous WIL research (i.e. Bates, Thompson and Bates, 2013; Raelin *et al.*, 2011). The WSEi has 30 items, each designed to measure the different dimensions of WSE. These were learning, problem solving, pressure, role expectations, teamwork, sensitivity and work politics (Raelin *et al.*, 2011). Answers were recorded on a five-point Likert scale from 1 "not at all" to 5 "completely". Table 1 contains the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for the WSE subscales. Two items removed were "Function well at work even when faced with personal difficulties" and "Listen effectively to gain information" from the "Pressure" and "Sensitivity" subscales, respectively in order to increase the reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the full WSE were .94 at both points in time which is comparable to values reported by Raelin *et al.*, (.94; 2011) and Bates, Thompson and Bates (.95; 2013).

TABLE 1. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients for Work Self-Efficacy factors at start of semester (all participants) and at end of semester

| WSE Factor        | Time 1 | Time 2 |
|-------------------|--------|--------|
| Learning          | .65    | .68    |
| Problem Solving   | .86    | .86    |
| Pressure          | .51    | .84    |
| Role Expectations | .85    | .88    |
| Team Work         | .83    | .75    |
| Sensitivity       | .63    | .64    |
| Work Politics     | .73    | .76    |

### *Procedure*

Participants in both groups were recruited during class through verbal invitation of the chief investigator. WIL students were recruited to complete two questionnaires during semester two, 2013. The first questionnaire was completed at the start of their placement (Time 1) and the second at the conclusion of their placement (Time 2). The non-WIL students (PYB350) were invited to partake in the study in another third year psychology lecture at the start of the same semester (Time 1 - Comparison). There were 28 students enrolled in the WIL unit in comparison to 139 students in the non-WIL unit. However, response rates were unable to be generated as class attendance was not mandatory and institutional policy prevented the monitoring of student presence.

## RESULTS

The results were analysed using the statistical package SPSS for Windows, Version 21.0. Statistical descriptives were conducted in order to compare students' experiences between the comparison group and the WIL group at Time 1 and the WIL group's pre-placement and post-placement scores.

Figure 1 presents students' WSE as a result of WIL experiences. While the sample size was too small to conduct analyses of statistical differences, a visual inspection was undertaken. Figure 1 suggests that students' self-efficacy scores were higher for those not undertaking the WIL unit (comparison group;  $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ) compared to the Time 1 scores for the WIL students ( $M = 3.83$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ). The WIL group's self-efficacy appeared to slightly decrease at Time 2 ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ).

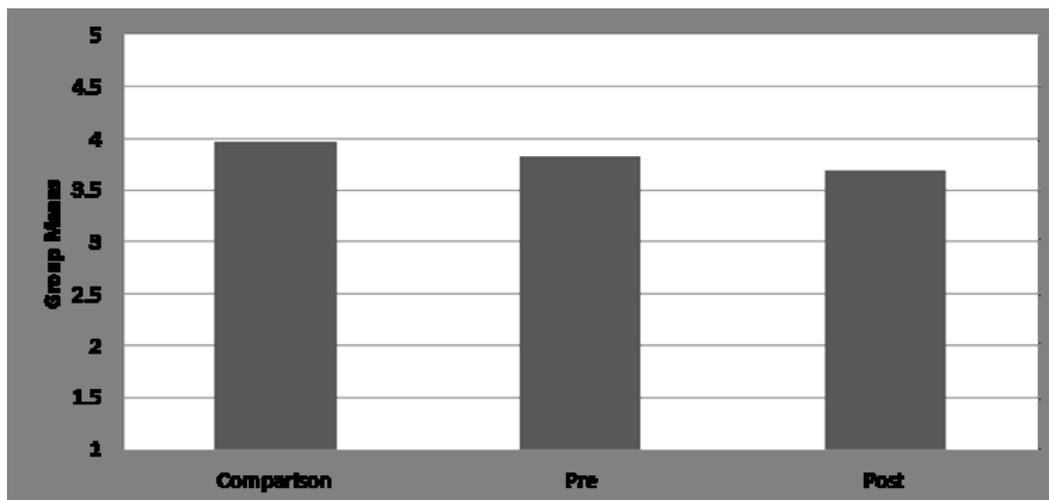


FIGURE 1. Work Self-Efficacy Means of the comparison, pre-Work-Integrated Learning and post-Work-Integrated Learning groups

Table 2 contains descriptive statistics of the different subscales within the WSEi (Raelin *et al.*, 2011). Overall, most subscale scores of the WSEi were similar between the comparison and placement groups' pre-WIL scores. However, the comparison group scored noticeably higher than the WIL group's pre-placement scores on the "problem solving" and "work politics" subscales. In contrast, scores for "role expectations" were lower in the comparison group compared to the WIL group's pre-WIL scores.

The WIL group pre-placement and post-placement scores were also inspected. Most subscale scores either decreased or stayed the same from pre-WIL to post-WIL. However, the subscale "work politics" was higher post-WIL compared to pre-WIL.

TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics comparing the differences between students' experiences for the comparison group and the work-integrated learning group (pre- and post- placement)

|                            | Comparison Group       | Pre-placement          | Post-placement         |
|----------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Number of Participants (N) | 7                      | 17                     | 16                     |
| Work Self-Efficacy Factor  | <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) | <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) | <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> ) |
| Learning                   | 4.18 (0.67)            | 4.29 (0.49)            | 3.97 (0.63)            |
| Problem Solving            | 3.75 (0.81)            | 3.33 (0.76)            | 3.34 (0.66)            |
| Pressure                   | 3.71 (0.45)            | 3.90 (0.66)            | 3.63 (0.82)            |
| Role Expectations          | 4.04 (0.60)            | 4.20 (0.70)            | 3.86 (0.69)            |
| Teamwork                   | 4.00 (0.75)            | 3.95 (0.77)            | 3.73 (0.67)            |
| Sensitivity                | 4.43 (0.57)            | 4.21 (0.65)            | 3.92 (0.56)            |
| Work Politics              | 3.89 (0.48)            | 3.30 (0.77)            | 3.53 (0.71)            |
| Work Self-Efficacy Scale   | 3.98 (0.51)            | 3.83 (0.58)            | 3.68 (0.53)            |

## DISCUSSION

Although the general patterns in WSE scores were higher in the comparison group than the pre-placement WIL scores, there were some subscales that showed the opposite trend. The subscales 'learning', 'pressure' and 'role expectations' were higher in the WIL group's pre-placement scores, compared to the comparison group. These subscales may have resulted in a different trend to the overall data due to students in the pre-placement WIL group anticipating a heavy workload and an increased sense of responsibility.

Overall the WSE scores were highest when the students' did not participate in the WIL unit. One reason for this may be that a greater proportion of comparison group participants had psychology related employment experience. It was expected that WIL would increase WSE scores; however, the results did not support this prediction and WSE scores appeared to decrease between the pre-placement and post-placement testing. These results do not support the findings of previous studies that used the WSEi (Bates, Thompson and Bates, 2013 & Raelin *et al.*, 2011) but are broadly consistent with Junquera & Matoti (2013).

One explanation for the decrease in WSE post-WIL could be that the WIL students became aware of their lack of knowledge and skills that are related to the workforce. This change may be due to an increase in the students' awareness of the complexity of the workplace or due to unsuccessful experiences in the placement. Becoming aware of areas for development may be a very useful outcome of WIL, even if it results in reductions in WSE. While successful experiences in WIL can enhance WSE, unsuccessful experiences can aid learning by raising awareness about limitations or areas for development and allow planning for future training or practice (Raelin *et al.*, 2011). This improved insight could make students rate their WSE lower due to the realisation about their work inexperience. A second explanation could be that the observed differences in this study are not statistically significant. The decrease in WSE observed in the current experiment was similar to findings of Junquera & Matoti (2013). However, due to a larger sample size, they were able to test for significance and revealed that the difference in WSE scores was non-significant. It is plausible that the differences in WSE scores obtained in the current study were also non-significant and that there is no statistically relevant change between the pre-WIL and post-WIL scores.

While there was also a decreasing trend from the pre-placement to the post-placement WIL group, the subscales 'problem solving' and 'work politics' exhibited conflicting patterns with both subscales resulting in higher scores post-WIL compared to pre-WIL. Similar observations were made by Bates, Thompson and Bates (2013) noticing that not all components of the scale followed the overall WSE scores. It is important to note that the students in the current study were final year students but were completing their first work placement of their degree. Being the first experience of WIL could have possibly made the students realise the level of complexity and responsibility involved in professional work which may have differed to their pre-placement perceptions. The ongoing project, of which this pilot study was part, will consist of a larger sample that will facilitate the drawing of stronger conclusions.

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# Talking Like a Teacher: Identifying as a teacher and enhancing capacity building potential

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For many International Pre-Service Teachers (IPSTs) Australian classroom culture is a shock. Behaviours, such as children out of their seats, questioning the teacher, talking during class, not always listening and being loud and seemingly abusive do not match the IPSTs cultural perception of teachers, students, classrooms or schools. As a result many IPSTs fail their mandatory school placements. *Talking Like a Teacher* (piloted in Semester 1 2013) was designed to help assist international students to acculturate as teachers to the Australian (specifically Darwin) school environment prior to their first placement. Introduction of this program emphasises the capacity-building potential of immigrant teachers, since their status as teachers makes them catalysts between the dominant Anglo-Australian education community and their own minority communities. Further, immigrant teachers are models of successful professionalism for first and second-generation children of their minority communities. Anecdotal evidence is that *Talking Like a Teacher* successfully aided acculturation. This paper reports on a qualitative study that evaluates the project. Audiotaped interviews with program participants and school mentors were analysed and conclusions drawn which highlight elements of a program that better prepares IPSTs for mandated practicum.

Keywords: Teacher education, professional experience, acculturation, risk

## INTRODUCTION

The Northern Territory (NT) has a mobile teaching workforce, characterised by high turnover. Charles Darwin University (CDU) is attracting increasing numbers of prospective teachers who wish to migrate to Australia and live in Darwin in order to “improve their life and secure a better future” (Reid *et al.*, 2014). Gaining teaching qualifications requires them to cross borders from their culture of origin, to “the sub-culture of the university into the sub-culture of teaching” (Mulholland & Wallace, 2010, p. 882). Illustrative of risk society, (Beck, 1992) migrants face disintegration of previously valued social norms in order to meet the demands and expectations of a new, emerging society. The “uncertainty and disorientation” (Hellstén, 2002, p. 3), associated with crossing borders is exacerbated when host schools reject an International Preservice Teacher (IPST) at their first Professional Experience (PE).

Initial teacher education has seen a change in the language used to describe, conceptualise, structure and supervise work integrated learning (WIL) from practicum to Professional Experience (PE). In addition, the term pre-service teacher has replaced the term student teacher. A pre-service teacher is one who is undertaking an industry-recognized program of teacher education.

Pre-service teachers complete a mandated number of assessable PE days across their course. This is a time for learning ‘on-the-job’ by integrating “formal learning and workplace experiences” (Matoti, Junqueira, & Odora, 2011, p.1142). During PE pre-service teachers learn through observation, reflection and concept development, which they apply and test (Matoti, *et al.*, 2011). Pre-service teachers participate in the daily rituals of teaching, becoming involved in “the wider aspects of the teaching community through meetings and staffroom discussions” (Grootenboer, 2005/2006, p. 19) and rehearse dealing with the different and unexpected events that occur in schools.

For many IPSTs Australian school culture is a shock. Their success is impaired by challenges around issues such as dress codes, norms of behaviour, beliefs, values and attitudes and prior knowledge of schools and schooling. IPSTs have lowered confidence when talking to teacher colleagues (Ashman, Short, Muir, Jales, & Myhill, 2011), particularly initiating “conversations with other staff members”.

Despite these challenges, it is important that IPSTs succeed for two reasons. First, as a catalyst between the dominant Anglo-Australian education community and their own minority communities, they have the potential for “horizontal capacity building” (OECD, 2012, p. 2). This could result in reframing

“relationships, values and practices” (Suchet-Pearson & Howitt, 2006, p. 118). Second, immigrant teachers are models of successful professionalism for first and second-generation children of their minority communities (Cunningham & Hargreaves, 2007).

## TALKING LIKE A TEACHER

To scaffold the transition from international students to Australian pre-service teacher, the School of Education at CDU introduced Talking Like a Teacher (TLT) in Semester 1 2013. The program was designed to assist IPSTs to acculturate as teachers to the Australian (specifically Darwin) school environment prior to their first placement. Rather than focusing on classroom issues (managing behaviour, inclusive teaching and using technology) TLT aimed at familiarising the IPSTs with school culture and the “norms for how to talk in the community of practice” (Smith, 2005, p. 53). From a sociocultural perspective coaching IPSTs so that they could comfortably engage in the “particular goals and ways of communicating and acting that define teachers as members of the community” (2005, p. 53) opens a space for pre-service teachers to act and behave like teachers.

TLT focused on the staffroom, not the classroom. As a social space, the staffroom is a site “in which certain behaviours, attitudes and dispositions are sanctioned and reinforced while others are perhaps marginalized, dismissed or ridiculed” (Hunter, Rossi, Tinning, Flanagan & Macdonald, 2011, p.34). It is a place where teachers talk about teaching—the joys and the frustrations. It is also a site where “interactions [with experienced teachers] are very important in familiarising new teachers with the school (Saarivirta, 2008, p. 20). We wanted the IPSTs to understand that this space provided an opportunity to interact in order to “read, understand, negotiate, reconstruct, reproduce, resist or reconstitute” (p.34) their preconceptions about schools and schooling that were formed in different cultural contexts. This imperative was confirmed when the IPSTs reported that their preconceptions about schooling did not match what they saw in Darwin classrooms.

We set up a tutorial room as a staffroom with relaxed seating and refreshments. Academics and local schoolteachers were invited to chat and share ideas in a conversational manner with the IPSTs. The atmosphere was crackling and alive. Everyone contributed ideas, stories, and recollections—academics and teachers from their careers and IPSTs from their preparatory observational in-school visits. There were many laughs as experienced teachers recounted the situations that confronted them as beginning teachers. Very quickly the IPSTs realised that talking with other teachers is important. IPSTs, interviewed as part of the evaluation of TLT, all stressed how important the program had been in introducing them to teaching them about the culture of Darwin schools.

There were seven TLT sessions over twelve weeks. The first four sessions were weekly and scheduled prior to the commencement of the PE. Apart from the first introductory session the IPSTs were scheduled to attend one of four schools, two primary and two secondary, to observe a range of classrooms for two hours for three weeks (total six hours). This activity was scheduled the day before the next TLT session. These observational visits were preparatory to PE. They were at the core of TLT and designed to allow IPTS to see, hear, feel and smell Australian schools in order to adjust and readjust their preconceptions about schooling. At the TLT session they chatted about their experiences, sharing surprising, interesting, confronting, confusing or funny observations. They were often surprised at the commonality of their reflections. This factor helped them talk through a range of solutions for issues that arise at school, just as a mentor or more experienced teacher might do, in the relaxed atmosphere of the staff room. The next three sessions occurred fortnightly during their PE. The aim of these sessions was to practise the kinds of professional activities that may occur in the staffroom – staff meetings, bonding activities or brainstorming scenarios. The focus here was being an active member of staff, not a pre-service teachers sitting at the periphery.

Talking Like a Teacher was not an accredited university course. It carried no credit points, has no assignments and no formal assessment or evaluation. The sole goal was to avoid the problem of having IPSTs rejected by schools. Since none of this cohort was rejected, it seems to have met its target.

## EVALUATION OF TALKING LIKE A TEACHER

As the 2013 pilot wound up, the project team applied for funding to conduct a small-scale evaluation. A faculty small research grant, awarded in September 2013, enabled the evaluation to proceed. Ethics approval (CDU Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval Number H13121) followed in December 2013 and the evaluation, involving IPSTs who attended TLT, occurred in early 2014. It was decided to focus on a single site. An important decision was to evaluate, not only the IPSTs' responses to TLT, but also the carry-on effect of the program. Accordingly, all of the IPSTs who had participated in TLT who either attended that site for preparatory observational visits or PE during 2013 were invited to participate in the research. Of eight students approached, five, all female and of Asian origin, agreed to participate in individual digitally recorded interviews of up to 20 minutes conducted by Marilyn Kell. Additional data included field notes taken during the interviews, and artefacts collected during TLT sessions by the project team.

Since the deadline for papers for this conference coincided with the end of data collection, this paper reports on an initial analysis of the interviews. The five interviews were (professionally) transcribed, analysed and conclusions drawn which highlight elements of a program that better prepares IPSTs for mandated PE.

### *Method*

Jenny Robinson conducted a three stages interpretive analysis (Hellstén, 2002) of the transcriptions. The first stage involved listening to the interviews and reading their transcriptions several times to detect commonly occurring themes in descriptions and narratives.

The second stage involved coding the common themes, by grouping specific words that characterised the types of descriptions about crossing borders and acculturating to Australian school culture. These were highlighted enabling identification of emerging patterns. In the third and final stage coded themes were then printed, cut into coded strips and grouped into further emerging themes. As a result, the data converged to reveal findings.

This process guarantees that the commentary presented is representative of the participant sample and maintains the truth and value of the opinions held by them. To reinforce this point, the participants' words are written as transcribed. As they are speakers of English as a second or other language, this may include grammatical errors.

### *Findings*

Study participants collectively identify TLT as a significant and necessary support for developing successful Australian teacher behaviour. None failed their PE and all attributed TLT for teaching the confidence and resilience necessary for coping with different and unexpected events. Analysis of interview transcripts identified six main themes.

First, preparatory observational visits, prior to their assessed PE, are significantly powerful in reducing the gap between IPSTs' prior experiences and their assumptions about the Australian education system and culture. Participants observed schools and understood that "there's a difference between Chinese styles and Australian styles" (Participant 1). As "international student, we don't know...how the school setting is" (Participant 4). Even students who had some familiarity with Australian school culture found that the observational visits "did bring up some issues" (Participant 3).

Second, students value collegiality, a core learning process in TLT. Participant 2 likened TLT to "a team", indicating the level to which a collegial pedagogy binds international students, and validates group identity. Several participants commented on sharing ideas and learning "from the experienced teacher" (Participant 1). Importantly, the ability to gather together, share negative and positive experiences, "solve this problem" (Participant 2) and develop coping strategies (Participant 5) together, valued all voices. That is, expert teachers were prepared and willing to learn from IPSTs.

Third, receiving advice from experienced educators during the TLT activities helped IPSTs acculturate when on PE. Classroom management, for example, understanding and coping with learning behaviours associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Participant 5 and Participant 1), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Participant 2), general naughtiness (Participant 4) and considerations for Indigenous learners were fairly common difficulties experienced by the participants in this study. The experience of talking publicly about issues such as classroom management at TLT sessions helped during the PE and seems to have assisted with resilience and skill development.

Fourth, participants recognise that TLT prepares them for the upcoming PE. Participant 1 explained that because she had no notion of what the “real life” of teaching was like in Australia, TLT prepared her for “a totally different page”. Participant 4 nominated the observational visits as the most valuable element. Participant 2 also nominated the observational visits, particularly as the basis for sharing experiences and solving problems in TLT sessions.

Fifth, participants recognised the positive impact TLT has on IPSTs. Comments, such as, TLT “really give me...lots of ideas and feedbacks” (Participant 3) and it was, “very, very helpful” (Participant 5) especially in overcoming “culture shock” (Participant 4) indicate participants’ appreciation of the program. All recommend that every IPST should attend future sessions. General opinion was that the support provided by university staff, visiting teachers and principals provided for an affirmative and more confident PE experience.

Finally, the data indicated TLT impacted on the IPSTs’ ability to interact professionally with teachers in the staffroom and coaching sessions during the PE. All IPSTs reported that they welcomed the opportunity to discuss school matters with their mentors. They noted that ‘open’ communication resulted in receiving feedback, both positive and challenging, which contributed to their success and their professional learning. Examples of IPSTs engaging in professional conversations about challenging classroom issues are testament to their confidence in talking with teachers, like teachers. Participants reported that, having attended TLT they felt they were better equipped to function as Australian teachers.

## LIMITATIONS

This is a small-scale evaluation of a program piloted in a single university. The purpose was to determine if the design of the pilot program and the results justified the time and effort of academic staff. As such, it makes no claim to generalisability, although authors are happy to discuss the program and its protocols with other who are interested in replicating it.

## CONCLUSIONS

Australian pre-service teachers’ WIL consists of assessable, mandated periods of PE. For IPSTs the culture shock of this activity involves considerable risk. The study reported in this paper found that Talking Like a Teacher better prepares IPSTs for their first PE. It reduces risk and improves their capacity to be inclusive, productive teachers. TLT inherently values individual voices, builds trust and encourages IPSTs to talk with teachers, like teachers, about teaching.

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# Student-Led Clinics: Building Placement Capacity and Filling Service Gaps

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Alongside healthcare redesign, clinical placement providers face exigent placement capacity demands. This paper presents the Capacity Development Facilitator (CDF) model, and describes how a CDF supported Sydney hospital addresses physiotherapy placement and healthcare service gaps with Student-Led Clinics (SLC), for Transitional Care, Cardiac Rehabilitation, and Pre-Admission, and presents results. A Sydney metropolitan university, trialed the CDF-model in 4 Sydney hospitals. The study aims to investigate strategic innovations which increase placement capacity by providing a CDF whose key role is to identify, negotiate and expand placement capacity development opportunities within supported hospitals. Scoping interviews were conducted with physiotherapists, exploring placement characteristics including clinical supervision models and experiences, support, barriers, enablers, and strategic innovations to increase capacity. Data were analysed thematically. Student evaluation surveys were conducted and analysed with descriptive statistics, capturing experiences such as placement structure, support, barriers and enablers. Preliminary findings suggest that: (i) Physiotherapy SLCs can contribute to healthcare redesign service gaps at this CDF supported hospitals and (ii) SLCs potentially support building sustainable placement capacity. Prospectively, study results inform future SLC development, support, and identify barriers.

Keywords: Student-led clinic, capacity, innovation, enablers, sustainability, clinical education

## INTRODUCTION

Clinical placements are fundamental for university-based health science students ensuring preparation for employment. Barriers such as staff shortages and challenges such as delivering quality patient care continue to impact sustainable student placement capacity (SPC) across healthcare facilities (Davies, Hanna & Cott, 2010; Siggins Miller Consultants, 2012; Wright, Robinson, Kolbe, Wilding, Davison & May, 2013). Clinical educators (CE) perceive that students increase their workload (Wright *et al.*, 2013) and thereby decrease productivity (Holland, 1997). This presents as a barrier to building SPC. Ladyshevsky (1995) recognised that students increase productivity when collaborative clinical education models are implemented. Student-Led Clinic (SLC) literature has also demonstrated increased productivity and SPC (Frakes, Tykes, Miller, Davies, Swanston & Brownie, 2011; Kent, 2011). Reports by Siggins Miller (2012) and Wright *et al.* (2013), support the need for innovative models to manage capacity issues and placement quality.

The CDF is employed by the university. The CDF-SLC model combines three clinical education models: Teacher as Manager Model (Romonini *et al.*, 1991), Peer Learning (Ladyshevsky, 2010), and Critical Companions Model (Titchen, 2001). CDF-SLC networks with managers, CEs, students, healthcare professionals (HCP) and facility services to map service gaps that could be met by students and thus sustain SPC.

The CDF mentors CEs to manage student group (4-6 students) and network with staff to provide learning opportunities, complete student clinical assessments, and encourage students to develop sustainable peer learning resources for future placements.

Research questions addressed in this paper are: (i) Can SLC increase SPC? (ii) What are the CE and students perceived barriers and enablers to increasing capacity? and (iii) Can SLCs address healthcare service gaps?

## METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted within the physiotherapy department of a 150 bed Sydney hospital. University Human Research Ethics was approved (Project No: 2013/1009). Physiotherapy staff and CDF mapped physiotherapy service delivery gaps that could provide sustainable student placements over the academic-clinical year. Low risk-high volume patients in an aged care Temporary Stay Unit (TSU), cardiac rehabilitation

and pre-admission were focused on. From this, planning commenced to develop SLC in TSU (SLC<sup>TSU</sup>). No additional infrastructure or set-up costs were required. Allied health (AH) services are not funded in TSU and referrals are considered 'low priority' against acute ward referrals. Most patient admissions are greater than 2-3 months, resulting in family/carer complaints regarding inadequate service provisions.

Currently, seven physiotherapists and thirteen students have participated in this study. Clinical placements blocks run consecutively back-to-back for the academic year. Placement blocks discussed will be referred to as Block 1, Block 2 and Block 3. Over the 3x5 week placement blocks, during the period 27 January to 9 May 2014, thirteen students (undergraduate and graduate entry masters) rotated through SLC<sup>TSU</sup>.

SLC<sup>TSU</sup> commenced in Block 1, 2014. Students rotated weekly through SLC<sup>TSU</sup>, and were orientated and facilitated with patients for 1-3 days by CE and CDF. SLC<sup>TSU</sup> does not require the provision of one-to-one supervision. Students managed 12-20 patients, and were supported by ward nursing staff. CEs were available by pager. CDF support was provided through weekly onsite visits and reflective journal tasks.

Seven CE interviews and thirteen student surveys were conducted by the CDF, the principal author of this study, at the end of each 5-week block. Four primary CEs and three assisting CEs participated in the interviews. Thirteen students completed the surveys. Table 1 lists the topics of the interview and survey. The purpose of the interviews and surveys was to explore placement barriers and enablers, supervision models and experiences. The CDF collated and completed a content analysis of the responses.

TABLE 1. Topics for CE Interview and Student Survey

|   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative &amp; Clinical Load</li> <li>• Placement Structure &amp; Model</li> <li>• Enablers &amp; Barriers</li> <li>• Perception of Satisfaction, Stress, Department Support, University Support               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CE: Perception of CE Role</li> <li>○ Students: Perception of CE &amp; placement</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|---|

## RESULTS

For the purposes of this paper, results will focus on the SLC<sup>TSU</sup>. During the 15 weeks of this project, the results support that SLC increase SPC and meet hospital physiotherapy service gaps.

### *Capacity*

Table 2 compares the increase in student capacity for the Block 1 to Block 3 placement period from 2012 to 2014. Compared to the same three block period in 2012, SPC increased by 280% (14 students) in 2014.

TABLE 2. Student Placement Capacity for Block 1 to Block 3 placement period from 2012 to 2014 at site of study

| Student Capacity | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | Total Increase Capacity since<br>2012 Block 1-3 (gross) |
|------------------|------|------|------|---|
| Block 1          | 3    | 4    | 7    |   |
| Block 2          | 0    | 3    | 6    | 14 students   |
| Block 3          | 2    | 4    | 6    | (280% increase)   |
| Total: Block 1-3 | 5    | 11   | 19   |   |

DATA SOURCE: University Clinical Database

### *Meeting Physiotherapy Service Gaps*

In NSW hospitals, Transitional or TSUs are federally funded. As LHDs are state funded, there is no allocated budget supporting AH services in TSUs. With the implementation of SLC<sup>TSU</sup> at this study site, TSU patients have access to physiotherapy services. Additionally, during the Block 1-3 period (2014), the hospital introduced mandatory falls screening by physiotherapists for all at-risk patients. Students in SLC<sup>TSU</sup> conducted falls screening as there is no funded physiotherapist to deliver this service.

## Barriers and Enablers

Table 3 list the barriers encountered by CEs as identified from the analysis of interviews at this site to sustain SPC. Staff interaction, team dynamics and caseload complexity were reported. CEs also reported a reluctance to allocate students to SLCT<sup>TSU</sup> when the student demonstrated poor attitude, knowledge, responsibility or commitment.

Table 4 list the enablers encountered by CEs as identified from the analysis of interviews at this site to sustain SPC. Common enablers included support, quality of care provided by students and communication between CEs and students. CEs reported that student participation in SLCT<sup>TSU</sup> services enabled students to successfully develop graduate skill-competencies required for employment. All students successfully attained competency for their clinical placement.

TABLE 3. Barriers identified from interviews and surveys Block 1 to Block 3

| Theme                  | Sub-theme  | Sample Quotes   |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Clinical Placement     | Student Characteristics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor attitude, responsibility or commitment to placement &amp; patients</li> <li>Theoretical application knowledge</li> <li>Not presenting for placement</li> </ul> | <i>PT Students represent our service in TSU – a poor attitude and commitment close down the open lines of communication ...</i>   |
|                        | Supervision & assessment of students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing underperforming students</li> <li>Risk Management</li> </ul>  | <i>... the same supervision ... is not available in TSU ... remains a barrier if students do not remain focused and committed to patient care and interaction.</i>  |
| Clinical Educator Role | Confidence   | <i>In my 11 years we are not taught to teach – we are expected to do this role as a clinician ...</i>   |
|                        | Stress   |   |
|                        | Time for CE responsibilities   | <i>This is a big issue for me and I almost quit my job last year because of this extra stress.</i>  |
|                        | Workload (Clinical/Administration)   |   |
|                        | Caseload complexity  | <i>Time restraints due to own ... complexity of caseload ... restricts available time for adequate feedback sessions ...</i>  |
| Site Staffing          | Short-staffed  | <i>Student dropping-out ... required reshuffling of clinical workloads &amp; rotations ... and change in team dynamics.</i>   |
|                        | Managing periods of leave  |   |
|                        | High proportion of part-time staff   | <i>Student services (TSU) have been appreciated by staff &amp; patients ... in some cases it has created a culture and impression that physio would be a regular occurrence – this does become an issue when students aren't here. A complaint was made by a patient's family regarding no physio when students aren't around</i> |
|                        | Staff dynamics   |   |
|                        | Managing clinical & administrative caseload with students  |   |
|                        | Award interpretation for CEs & placement coordinators  |   |

TABLE 4. Enablers identified from interviews and surveys Block 1 - Block 3

| Theme                           | Sub-theme  | Sample Quotes   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Model Impact                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Support</li> <li>• Student experience</li> <li>• Staff/Student Satisfaction</li> <li>• Patient care &amp; service provision</li> </ul>              | <p><i>This is a great model of education that needs to roll-out across other health &amp; education providers. Students learn their own boundaries and practical &amp; theoretical skills that prepare them for their future careers.</i></p>                                     |
| Clinical Educator Role          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive networking &amp; communication</li> <li>• Imparting knowledge/expertise</li> <li>• Workforce development</li> </ul>                            | <p><i>Identifying and working with student weaknesses. Then working with them in an open manner to overcome this.</i></p> <p><i>I think I'm patient; allowing student to think on their feet and make mistakes but provide assistance on how to find the right knowledge.</i></p> |
| Patients & Family Feedback      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality care &amp; service provision</li> <li>• Participation</li> </ul>  | <p><i>... overheard family members telling their loved one that exercise is really important so it seems families really value the student physio input...</i></p>  |
| Staff Feedback                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satisfaction with patient care &amp; service provision</li> <li>• Supportive</li> </ul>   | <p><i>Feedback from TSU staff ... very positive ... praised the students on their professionalism and appreciate the extra activities that they provide the patients ... NUM in particular has been very supportive and appreciated the classes...</i></p>                        |
| Student Contribution & Feedback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supported &amp; satisfied with experience</li> <li>• Feel valued &amp; part of team</li> <li>• Professional identity &amp; role responsibility</li> </ul> | <p><i>I felt very responsible and proud as well when TSU NUM and senior nursing staff of TSU referred me one of the patients in TSU.</i></p> <p><i>I think the student physio service will be really effective once handovers week to week flow well.</i></p>                     |

## DISCUSSION

Despite perceived barriers, the results of the CDF-SLC model presented demonstrate that SLC can increase SPC and address physiotherapy service gaps in aged-care at the study site.

*Setting up SLC<sup>TSU</sup> by addressing barriers and enablers.*

Prior to setting up SLC<sup>TSU</sup>, the CDF, physiotherapy manager and staff canvassed clinical placement needs, enablers, barriers and support required to enable sustainable SPC. Responses mirrored results from a qualitative HETI study (Lloyd, 2012) and Wright *et al.*, (2013), including balancing heavy clinical workloads, short staffing, staff leave support during placements, and limited funding to service gaps. The department had positive enablers to drive SPC such as a supportive manager who participated in Hospital Healthcare Redesign (ARCHI, 2014) initiatives, and encouraged staff professional development. Additionally, SLC<sup>TSU</sup> incurred no infrastructure costs and patients were readily available, allowing the service to commence as soon as students were allocated.

### *Building placement capacity*

The CDF-SLC model presented in this paper has demonstrated that SLC have the potential to increase SPC. Despite being a small facility, SLC<sup>TSU</sup> increased SPC by 280%. SLC<sup>TSU</sup> is not a traditional one-to-one supervision model, thus enabling capacity for additional students.

### *Addressing physiotherapy service gaps*

SLC<sup>TSU</sup> provides a daily ward-based physiotherapy service for patients that was not previously available and referrals are not longer required. Students have experienced working interprofessionally with nursing staff to develop interprofessional teamwork and communication skills. Students also have had the opportunity to build communication skills with the families of TSU patients.

The findings of this study are supported by SLC research (Kent, 2011, Frakes *et al.*, 2011, Wright *et al.*, 2013), which include: (i) Providing patients with access to healthcare services; (ii) Building placement capacity; and (iii) Providing interprofessional student training opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

The study is limited by its small sample size and duration to date. There is potential for SLC<sup>TSU</sup> to expand into an interprofessional SLC, as infrastructure and patients who could benefit from interprofessional care are readily available. Barriers to this are that other AH CEs work part-time or across facilities and still utilise traditional CE models. The CDF-SLC model presented may provide a pathway for AH CEs to explore as a means to support SPC demands.

Results suggest that physiotherapy CDF-SLC can support sustainable placement capacity and address physiotherapy healthcare service provision. Study results inform SLC development and identify barriers. Future plans are in place to further investigate this model's impact on patient outcomes and further include other students to increase AH SPC.

Future research of the CDF-SLC model will include: (i) Investigation of quality of services provided by students within SLC through patient/carer satisfaction surveys; (ii) Systematic collection and analysis of quantitative service data relating to occasions of service and length of stay to reflect improvements in service provision; (iii) Investigation of further capacity and sustainability over the academic year by developing additional partnerships within the hospital, as SLC<sup>TSU</sup> has the potential to expand into an interprofessional SLC. This will involve scoping nursing and interprofessional staff to identify needs and patient service quality measures.

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# **“The only rule is that there are no rules”: Understanding the impact of WIL on staff workload**

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Work integrated learning (WIL) courses can be more time consuming and resource intensive to design, teach, administer and support than traditional classroom based courses, as they generally require different approaches to curricula and pedagogy, as well as additional administrative and pastoral responsibilities. Workload and resourcing issues are reported as key challenges to the implementation of WIL, but to date most of the reported evidence on WIL workload is anecdotal. To address this gap in the literature and inform institutional practice, a two-year study was initiated to collect empirical data on the type and amount of work involved in the provision of WIL courses within an Australian university. This paper reports qualitative findings from the first year of the study. An analysis of interview responses from eight academic staff identified three key differences between WIL and classroom based courses: i) the continuous nature of staff workload in WIL; ii) the demands of individual case management of students and partners; and iii) increased administrative responsibilities. Implications for policy and practice are discussed.

Keywords: Administration, qualitative research, teaching, work-integrated learning, workload

## **INTRODUCTION**

Work integrated learning (WIL) courses can be more time consuming and resource intensive to design, teach, administer and support than traditional classroom based courses. WIL generally requires different approaches to curricula and pedagogy, as well as additional administrative and pastoral responsibilities (Bates, 2011). Sourcing, negotiating and maintaining industry/community partnerships, designing and embedding WIL activities in the curriculum, and managing risk are examples of tasks which are either intensified by, or unique to WIL. Workload and resourcing issues are reported as key challenges to the implementation of WIL (e.g., Dickson & Kaider, 2012), but to date most of the reported evidence on WIL workload is anecdotal.

To address this gap in the literature and inform institutional practice, a two-year study was initiated at [name of university removed] to collect empirical data on the type and amount of work involved in teaching, administering and supporting WIL courses. Workload implications for staff at this university are particularly significant and complex because of the scope and scale of the WIL program that has been implemented at an institutional level. The program incorporates many diverse forms of WIL including inter alia community development projects, service learning, practicums and internships. These activities can be undertaken by students on or off campus, locally, regionally, internationally, as well as virtually.

Following an extensive and participatory research design phase, data collection commenced in 2013. The focus of this paper is qualitative findings from interviews undertaken with staff in the first year of the study. Specifically, participants' comparisons of WIL and 'traditional' classroom based courses are reported.

## **METHOD**

A series of questions were developed for the semi-structured interviews, including one asking participants about their “overall impressions” of the amount of time and sorts of tasks involved in teaching/managing a WIL course vis-à-vis a “regular” course (named ‘units’ at the institution where this research was undertaken). One member of the research team interviewed all participants, usually accompanied by a research assistant, with interviews digitally recorded and professionally transcribed. Eight staff participated in interviews (7 females, 1 male), all of whom were academics teaching across a range of disciplines, multi-disciplinary subjects, modes of delivery and session offerings relating to WIL.

Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was used to identify common ideas from the transcripts. Members of the research team first coded transcripts independently then met and discussed identified themes. This was an

iterative process where categories and themes were revised based on group discussions and re-reading of the transcripts. The matrix coding query function in NVivo was used to identify the top 10 coded categories (sub-themes) relating to participants' comparisons of WIL and traditional courses. This query identifies areas of overlapping text, i.e. where participants draw comparisons, while at the same time referring to particular issues. Frequency measures, including the number of participants who mentioned each coded category and the number of references to each coding category was used as a proxy to signify the importance of ideas. Related categories were then grouped in a hierarchical structure under broader themes (Table 1).

## FINDINGS

This paper explores three key differences between teaching WIL courses and conventional classroom teaching: i) the continuous nature of staff workload in WIL; ii) the demands of individual case management of students and partners; and iii) increased administrative responsibilities.

TABLE 1. Themes derived from participants' comparisons of teaching WIL and classroom based courses

| Themes  | Sub-themes  |
|---|---|
| Continuous workload   | Continuous workload   |
|   | Overlapping semesters/sessions                              |
|   | Forward planning  |
|   | Time flexibility  |
| Individual case management  | Individual case management                                  |
|   | Student support and supervision                             |
| Administration  | Administration – general                                    |
| Other key factors (not discussed in this paper due to word limitations) | Hidden workload   |
|   | Workload models not adequately capturing WIL tasks and time |
|   | Student assessment and feedback                             |

### *Continuous Workload*

The first factor differentiating WIL from traditional classroom based teaching is the continuous nature of workload. Participants reported having little or no down time between semesters and during semester breaks, with preparation starting months in advance where placements are identified, students-partners matched and related administration completed. Participants stated that workload was “ongoing”, reducing opportunities for research and/or rest because of the “overlap with... planning for next session and next year”. This was especially the case when organising international placements. One participant observed:

... a normal academic, once you've done your exam marking you've got that period of time where there's no students, they're not going to bother you apart from some grade appeals. But [in conventional courses] you don't have that responsibility of partners' matching, advertising for students to fill those roles, interviewing review, it's basically a recruitment process. (Participant 4)

There was a flexibility aspect of WIL that distinguished it from traditional courses. One academic stated: “[In a traditional unit] I'd know exactly what I was doing. But in fact, I don't know what I'm doing for the whole of the semester” (Participant 6). This was in response to the requirement to continually adjust course content to match current projects students were working on, or issues they were facing in their WIL activities, which could differ substantially from previous semesters. Greater flexibility was also required when managing students. For example, proactive students often contacted academics before semester started in order to commence their placement early. On the other hand, disengaged students sometimes failed to complete their placements on time, requiring continued management after the semester to complete their placement and/or related assessments. In summary, the boundaries of WIL courses are less well defined than traditional classroom based ones, with workload frequently spilling over into other semesters and reducing the amount of time that staff can spend on other academic activities, including research.

### *Individual Case Management*

The ‘individualised’ nature of WIL courses was the second factor differentiating WIL from classroom-based teaching. The management of a diverse array of activities (e.g., placements, project work, volunteering) was

viewed as a key driver of workload, particularly in areas such as assessment, group work, supervision and pastoral care of students. As one participant summarised:

... the nature of the activities are very individual, whereas in a traditional unit you could group students. So you could have 100 students and work on something that would apply to the 100 students. In this case [i.e. WIL] each student is different. Even if they're working in a group they're different. (Participant 8)

Managing multiple stakeholders including individual students, groups and partner organisations across a variety of locations (i.e. on and off-campus, virtual environments), was particularly time consuming, especially when issues and problems arose.

... every student is a case. Every organisation is a case. You deal with all those organisations and all those students, which are different people and different activities, different sorts of organisations. Everyone has different issues. (Participant 2)

The workload associated with individual case management was described by one participant as an “additional stress” because she felt “conscious all the time that they [students] had to do good stuff” in order not to “let the clients down” (Participant 7). As discussed below, this increased sense of personal responsibility was raised in relation to a number of other WIL-related issues. A further aspect of individual case management, which appears to differentiate WIL from conventional courses, is the unique attributes and skill set required of staff. In particular, the “ongoing management of students and organisations” via mediation, negotiation and frequent communication requires “good interpersonal skills”, and is a role “not every academic is really suited to.” Similar findings are reported by von Treuer, Keele and Sturre (2012).

#### *Administration*

The third key difference mentioned by respondents was the increased administrative workload involved in teaching WIL courses. Most of this additional workload relates to student and partner management, including: developing, maintaining, tracking and evaluating relationships with partner organisations; advising partners on the design of activities that will enable students to achieve the learning outcomes of a particular course; negotiating legal agreements; matching students with appropriate WIL partners and activities; identifying, assessing and monitoring potential work, health and safety, and ethical risks students may be exposed to while on placement; ensuring students engaged in WIL activities involving research are doing so in accordance with relevant research ethics protocols; and handling partner and student inquiries related to insurance, intellectual property rights, administrative processes and the like. As one respondent observed: “it’s a very intensive unit ... in terms of administration ... I have no doubts this is a very different unit from other units taught at university”(Participant 2).

Another respondent problematised the ‘administrative’ nametag associated with these tasks.

It's more than administrative too... If you use that term then people think you're just dealing with paper ... [but] you're not, you're dealing with people, with the partners and the student. And all of that is key for it to work - and that's not just administrative, I think it's more than that. (Participant 8)

This observation alludes to an additional point of difference between WIL and more conventional teaching. Not only are the tasks involved in teaching WIL courses different and more time-intensive, many academics reported feeling an increased sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of students, for the experience of WIL partners, and for the reputation of the University if either of these was compromised during the WIL experience.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

WIL involves pedagogical approaches and a range of activities related to partner and student management that the staff, structures, systems and workload models of universities are not necessarily equipped to handle. This paper has highlighted some of the key differences that academics involved in teaching WIL courses report as distinguishing WIL from more conventional classroom teaching. More broadly, our findings suggest that current faculty workload models do not adequately capture WIL tasks and time, with many participants perceiving that their academic colleagues, including Heads of Department, do not fully appreciate the workload involved in delivering quality WIL.

The lack of institutional recognition of WIL workload is problematic for both policy and practice, as universities across Australia and globally increasingly embrace this form of learning and teaching (e.g., Patrick *et al.*, 2008). Unless workload models and other institutional resourcing mechanisms (e.g., faculty funding models) are cognizant of the different and additional demands of teaching and managing WIL, the quality and sustainability of WIL delivery is at risk. Adjustment of resourcing models, while vital, is not the only available policy and practice response however. Better understanding the key drivers of workload for different types of WIL can also open other avenues for addressing the problem. The wider research project, of which the findings reported here form a part, is seeking to quantify the differentiated nature of WIL workload across diverse delivery modes. It is hoped the results will suggest ways in which the delivery of WIL can be made more efficient and sustainable, while retaining an overriding commitment to effective and equitable practice.

Findings reported here highlight other problematic aspects of WIL workload for staff and universities. Participants consistently reported having little 'spare' time for other academic activities, particularly lack of time to undertake research. As well as potentially impacting on job satisfaction and promotion prospects of individual staff, this poses a problem for universities engaged in WIL who aspire to increase their research intensity. 'Down time' was another casualty of WIL workloads, indicating the potential for staff burnout. These observations, and the lack of awareness noted above, accord with other reports in the literature that workload associated with WIL is rarely valued, recognised or rewarded at department, faculty or institutional level (Cooper & Orrell 1999; Emslie 2011). These are not insurmountable problems, however. We hope by highlighting these issues our research will contribute to a better understanding of, and development of strategies to address what Cooper and Orrell (1999, p. 2) term the "invisibility" and "marginalisation" of WIL staff, and in so doing improve the sustainability of WIL as an engaged model of learning, teaching and inquiry.

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# Going Global: International WIL building future health work force capacity

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In recognition of escalating globalisation and a growing diversity in local populations, there is demand for healthcare professionals with cultural competence. Universities have therefore begun incorporating international work-integrated-learning (WIL) experiences into their curricula to produce 'employable' graduates for the global environment. While anecdotal evidence suggests students develop practical skills and capabilities as a result of international WIL, there is little empirical research investigating the degree to which this occurs, the specific learning benefits, and the components of international WIL that contribute to this learning. This study aimed to investigate how Health Science graduates and teaching staff perceived the value of an international WIL experience in building generic graduate attributes. Questionnaires using the Graduate Employability Indicators were completed by graduates and teaching staff to measure their perceptions of the extent to which international WIL contributes to the attainment of graduate attributes. Findings of this study indicate that graduates and teaching staff perceive that international WIL experiences enhance important graduate attributes including intercultural understanding, understanding different social contexts, contributing to the welfare of communities, teamwork, problem-solving and thinking critically and analytically. This suggests that international WIL can facilitate the development of key graduate attributes that will serve to build the capacity of the future health workforce for a global environment.

Keywords: Work-integrated-learning, students, international fieldwork, employability, graduate attributes

## INTRODUCTION

With the increasing spotlight on work integrated learning (WIL) as a means to provide authentic learning experiences for students to develop their graduate capabilities, fieldwork programs are becoming more important within the curriculum. Fieldwork is seen as the main instrument of integrating theory and practice, enabling students to deal with the real world and to apply and test theories and principles of their chosen profession (Bonello, 2001; WFOT, 2002). The forces of internationalisation and globalisation have caused higher education institutions to recognise the importance of incorporating international elements into their graduate attribute statements (Harvey & Bowers-Brown, 2004; Cranmer, 2006); to produce capable and 'employable' graduates. Many tertiary institutions have responded by augmenting learning experiences through the internationalisation of curricula and by offering students opportunities to participate in international practice placement education (Westcott & Whitcombe, 2003, Kinsella *et al.*, 2008). In light of the growing demand for 'globalised' graduates, the prospect of international WIL fieldwork programs has become a favourable option.

Despite the professional and personal benefits that have been attributed to international fieldwork, the recognition that employers value an international perspective and the increasing focus of Australian higher education on employability, little has been written about how international fieldwork experiences impact on graduate employability (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). Employability encompasses a range of capabilities and attributes, additional to 'cultural sensitivity' and 'global perspective,' that have not been explored in research pertaining to international fieldwork. It is therefore necessary to systematically investigate whether international fieldwork programs support the attainment of the suite of generic graduate attributes that contribute to 'employability' in Health Science graduates.

The aim of this study was to determine whether graduates and teaching staff perceive that participation in an international WIL program enabled the development of generic university graduate attributes.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Setting*

The international WIL fieldwork program explored in this study is Curtin University's Go Global program. The Go Global program is a nationally recognised international and interprofessional program that offers cross-cultural clinical placement opportunities for final year students from different disciplines across the Faculty of

Health Science. This program received the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Award in 2010 for a program that enhances learning as it creates opportunities for students to develop skills and apply knowledge in a service-learning context, with the aim to work with host partners to improve health care service delivery to the local communities. Placements currently occur at four international partner sites in China, India, Cambodia and the Ukraine and are four weeks in duration.

#### *Participants and recruitment*

Go Global graduates were selected from the Go Global Alumni membership database. To participate, graduates were required to have more than six months work experience since completing their degree and must have completed a Go Global placement within the last five years. All academic staff members involved in the Go Global program were invited to participate. These included Fieldwork Coordinators, Country Coordinators for the four host countries, and clinical supervisors. An email was sent directly to the relevant graduates and teaching staff inviting them to complete the questionnaire electronically using Qualtrics software, Version [2013], (Provo, UT). A participant information sheet and informed consent form were also included in the email. Approval for this study was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee of Curtin University (HR173/2011).

#### *Tools and procedures*

The Graduate Employability Indicators (GEIs) was developed as a result of an Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Competitive Grant, *Building course team capacity to enhance graduate employability* led by Beverley Oliver (2011). The GEIs comprise of three online employability surveys which capture the perceptions of graduates, employers and teaching staff on the importance of key capabilities to new graduates' early professional success, and the extent to which those capabilities are demonstrated by new graduates. The GEIs were designed to provide valuable information about the effectiveness of a course in nurturing employability capabilities from the perspectives of each of the relevant stakeholders (Oliver *et al.*, 2011).

The questionnaires gather data on:

- a. The extent to which new graduates demonstrate each of the graduate capabilities as a result of participating in their course
- b. The importance of each capability to the employment success of new graduates

For this study, modified versions of the GEIs were used to capture graduate and teaching staff perceptions of the extent to which Curtin University's Go Global program contributes to the attainment of important graduate attributes for employability.

Go Global graduates were asked to rate the 'importance' of 15 graduate attributes to the employment success of new graduates in their chosen profession (e.g., Occupational Therapy). Teaching staff were asked to rate the importance of these attributes to the employment success of new graduates of a Health Science degree in general. Options were 'very little importance', 'some importance', 'quite important' or 'very important'. The 15 attributes (Appendix 1) address the range of skills and personal qualities evident in pre-existing surveys currently recognised by various universities' Graduate Attributes across Australia (Oliver, 2010).

Graduates were also asked to give a rating of the extent to which their Go Global experience contributed to their development of the same 15 graduate attributes. Teaching staff were also asked to rate the extent that new graduates generally demonstrate each of the attributes as a result of participating in Go Global. Options were 'very little', 'some', 'quite a bit' and 'very much'. Responses to this question therefore aimed to collect data on the type of skills, attributes and qualities that Go Global offers students who participate in the program.

#### *Data analysis*

For ease of interpretation, responses regarding '*importance to employability*' were collapsed into two categories: i) 'more important' which included responses indicating 'quite important' and 'very important' or ii) 'less important' which included responses indicating 'very little importance' and 'some importance'. Similarly, responses to the '*extent to which attributes are demonstrated/developed as a result of participating in the Go Global*' were grouped as i) 'more' ('quite a bit' and 'very much') or 'less' ('very little' and 'some').

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to present frequencies. Radar charts are presented to visually demonstrate any difference and the size of the gap between the respondents' ratings of 'important attribute to employability' and 'extent to which the attribute was developed through Go Global' for each of the graduate attributes.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### *Go Global graduates*

A total of 152 questionnaires were distributed to Go Global graduates, of which 49 (32.24%) were returned and used for data analysis. The majority of respondents were female (96%) with about 70% of them within the 22-25 age range (Table 1). The majority of the respondents were either Occupational Therapists (67%) Speech Pathologists (18%) or Physiotherapists (12%). About half (51%) of the respondents graduated within the last 2 years and 84% of them are currently in full-time employment (Table 1).

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of Go Global graduates (N=49)

| Characteristics                                   |                          | N  | %   |
|---|--------------------------|----|-----|
| Gender  | Female                   | 47 | 96% |
|   | Male                     | 2  | 4%  |
| Age group   | 21 or younger            | 2  | 4%  |
|   | 22-25                    | 34 | 69% |
|   | 26-30                    | 11 | 22% |
|   | 30 or older              | 2  | 4%  |
| Number of years since completion of Go Global     | Less than 1 – 1 year ago | 11 | 22% |
|   | 2 years ago              | 14 | 29% |
|   | 3 years ago              | 7  | 14% |
|   | 4 years ago              | 7  | 14% |
|   | 5 years ago              | 8  | 16% |
| Course enrolled in at time of Go Global placement | More than 5 years ago    | 2  | 4%  |
|   | Physiotherapy            | 6  | 12% |
|   | Occupational Therapy     | 33 | 67% |
|   | Speech Pathology         | 9  | 18% |
|   | Pharmacy                 | 1  | 2%  |
| Current employment status                         | Full-time                | 41 | 84% |
|   | Part-time                | 4  | 8%  |
|   | Not currently employed   | 4  | 8%  |
| Current location of employment                    | Australia                | 39 | 87% |
|   | Europe                   | 5  | 11% |
|   | Other                    | 1  | 2%  |
| Location category of current employment           | Rural/Remote             | 5  | 11% |
|   | Urban/Suburban           | 40 | 89% |

At least 65.3% of the Go Global graduates indicated that all 15 attributes were *more important* to the employment success of new graduates. More than 90% of graduates identified that the attributes of 1. Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, 2. Understanding different social contexts, 3. Contributing to the welfare of communities, and 4. Working effectively with others were demonstrated *more* as a result of participating in Go Global. At least 63.3% indicated that 10 out of the 15 attributes were demonstrated *more* as a result of participating in Go Global. A summary of the graduate attributes that graduates considered 'more developed' or 'less developed' as a result of participating in Go Global is presented in Tables 2 and 3.

TABLE 2. A summary of the graduate attributes that graduates considered 'more developed' as a result of participating in Go Global

| Graduate attribute  | Percentage of Go Global graduates identifying the attribute as 'more developed' |
|---|---|
| Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds | 98%   |
| Understanding different social contexts                     | 95.9%   |
| Contributing to the welfare of communities                  | 93.9%   |
| Working effectively with others                             | 91.8%   |
| Solving complex, real-world problems                        | 87.7%   |
| Thinking critically and analytically                        | 83.7%   |
| Developing a personal code of values and ethics             | 79.6%   |
| Overall work-readiness                                      | 67.3%   |
| Learning effectively on your own                            | 65.3%   |
| Speaking clearly and effectively                            | 63.3%   |

TABLE 3. A summary of the graduate attributes that graduates considered 'less developed' as a result of participating in Go Global

| Graduate attribute                         | Percentage of Go Global graduates identifying the attribute as 'less developed' |
|--|---|
| Using computers and information technology | 83.7%   |
| Writing clearly and effectively            | 77.5%   |
| Work related knowledge and skills          | 65.3%   |
| Analysing quantitative problems            | 57.1%   |
| Developing general industry awareness      | 55.1%   |

A graphical comparison between the perceived *importance of each attribute for employability* and the *extent to which the attributes were developed* as the result of Go Global identified four graduate attributes that were very consistent, that is, there were no gap or only a small gap between these two responses (Figure 1). These attributes were teamwork, intercultural understanding, problem solving and social context (Figure 1). Three attributes were however perceived as *more developed* as a result of Go Global than their importance in contributing to employability and these were intercultural understanding, community engagement and social contexts.



FIGURE 1. Radar chart of Go Global graduates' perceptions

Figure 1 contains a Radar chart comparing the Go Global graduates' perceptions of the *extent the Go Global program contributes to capability development* (blue line) with the *importance of those capabilities for employability* (red line). Quantitative items = percentage of graduates who stated "more" agreement to statements regarding importance/developed in Go Global.

### Teaching Team

Twenty questionnaires were distributed to Go Global teaching team members, of which 15 (75%) were returned. The majority of the teaching staff in this study were females (80%) with varying years of working experience in the university setting (Table 4). Most of the staff considered themselves as having extensive industry experience (73.33%), having worked in a Health Science related field for more than five years either as a clinician, a researcher or a consultant. Of the 15 staff who responded, 14 (93.3%) indicated very recent experience (in the last 1-2 years) with Go Global (Table 4).

TABLE 4. Demographic characteristics of Teaching Team involved with the Go Global program (N=15)

| Question  | Possible responses            | N  | %     |
|---|-------------------------------|----|-------|
| Gender  | Male                          | 3  | 20%   |
|   | Female                        | 12 | 80%   |
| Type of contract  | Full-time continuing contract | 4  | 27%   |
|   | Full-time fixed-term contract | 4  | 27%   |
|   | Part-time continuing contract | 1  | 7%    |
|   | Part-time fixed contract      | 5  | 33.3% |
|   | Sessional/casual contract     | 1  | 7%    |
| Years teaching at the university                            | 3 years or less               | 5  | 33.3% |
|   | Between 4 and 7 years         | 5  | 33.3% |
|   | More than 7 years             | 5  | 33.3% |
| Extent of industry experience*                              | More extensive                | 11 | 73.3% |
|   | Moderately extensive          | 4  | 26.7% |
| Recentness of experience related to the Go Global program** | past 1-2 years                | 14 | 93.3% |
|   | 3-5 years ago                 | 1  | 7%    |

Note. \*Extent of industry experience refers to participants' experience in industries either as a full time, part-time clinician, researcher or consultant related to a Health Science degree (e.g. Occupational Therapy) and were categorised as: 'More extensive', if they have had experience for more than 5 years; 'Moderately extensive', between 1 and 5 years or 'Less extensive' less than a year.

At least 80% (n = 12) of the teaching team members indicated that all 15 attributes were *more important* to the employment success of new graduates. 100% of the teaching team respondents identified seven attributes as being demonstrated *more* as a result of participating in Go Global. At least 53.8% of teaching team members (n = 7) indicated that 12 out of the 15 attributes were demonstrated *more* as a result of participating in Go Global. A summary of the graduate attributes that the teaching team members considered 'more developed' or 'less developed' as a result of participating in Go Global is presented in Tables 5 and 6.

TABLE 5. A summary of the graduate attributes that teaching staff considered 'more developed' as a result of participating in Go Global

| Graduate attribute  | Percentage of Go Global graduates identifying the attribute as 'more developed' |
|---|---|
| Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds | 100%  |
| Understanding different social contexts                     | 100%  |
| Contributing to the welfare of communities                  | 100%  |
| Working effectively with others                             | 100%  |
| Solving complex, real-world problems                        | 100%  |
| Learning effectively on your own                            | 100%  |
| Developing a personal code of values and ethics             | 100%  |
| Overall work-readiness                                      | 92.3%   |
| Speaking clearly and effectively                            | 84.6%   |
| Thinking critically and analytically                        | 84.6%   |
| Work related knowledge and skills                           | 69.2%   |
| Developing general industry awareness                       | 53.8%   |

TABLE 6. A summary of the graduate attributes that teaching staff considered 'less developed' as a result of participating in Go Global

| Graduate attribute                         | Percentage of Go Global graduates identifying the attribute as 'less developed' |
|--|---|
| Using computers and information technology | 84.6%   |
| Writing clearly and effectively            | 62.2%   |
| Analysing quantitative problems            | 61.5%   |

A graphical comparison between the perceived *importance of each attribute for employability* and the *extent to which the attributes were developed* as the result of Go Global identified seven graduate attributes that were very consistent, that is, there were no gap or only a small gap between these two responses (Figure 2). These attributes were teamwork, independent learning, intercultural understanding, problem solving, values and ethics, industry awareness and social context (Figure 2). The attribute, community engagement, was however perceived as *more developed* as a result of Go Global than its importance in contributing to employability (Figure 2).

Figure 2 illustrates the perceived extent to which learning opportunities provided by the Go Global program are enabling the development of desired/important attributes for employment from the teaching staffs' perspectives.

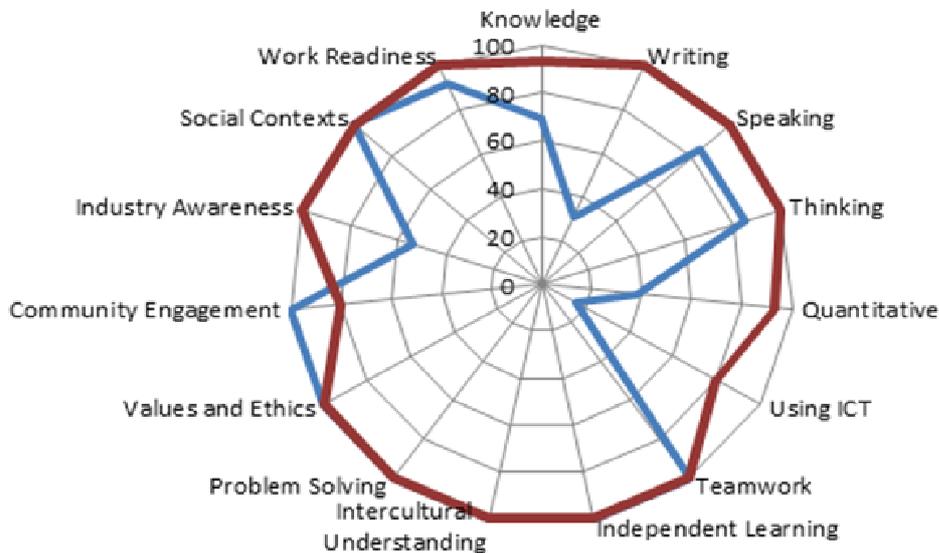


FIGURE 2. Radar chart of teaching team members' perceptions

Figure 2 contains a Radar chart comparing the teaching team's perceptions of the *extent the Go Global program contributes to capability development* (blue line) with the *importance of those capabilities for employability* (red line). Quantitative items = percentage of teaching team members who stated "more" agreement to statements regarding importance/developed in Go Global.

## DISCUSSION

The impact of international fieldwork programs on the attainment of the suite of generic graduate attributes that contribute to 'employability' is currently not well documented. This study investigated the perception of both graduates and teaching staff regarding the impact of an international WIL program (Go Global) on the attainment of graduate attributes that will contribute to employability. According to the graduates in this study, the main graduate attributes that are perceived as important for graduate success and were developed through the Go Global experience were 1) intercultural understanding, inferring understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, 2) understanding different social contexts, 3) contributing to the welfare of communities, 4) teamwork, that is the ability to work effectively with others, 5) solving complex, real-world problems and 6) thinking critically and analytically. These findings were supported by teaching team members who perceived consistently similar main graduate attributes that are important for graduate success and those developed through the Go Global experience. The teaching staff identified more attributes compared to the graduates and

this possibly could be due to exposure to more students and across different years and therefore based their perception on a wider range of students they have encountered in their teaching experience.

The findings suggest that the Go Global experience provided learning opportunities that facilitated the development of key attributes for employment. These findings support those found in other earlier studies that have investigated the learning benefits of international fieldwork. Studies of various international fieldwork programs often indicate that students report an increase in their cultural sensitivity as a result of participating in the experience (Anderson *et al.*, 2006; Gilin & Young, 2009; Tesoriero, 2006; Simonelis *et al.*, 2011), which is reflected in the attribute of 'understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds' in this study. Furthermore, students and teaching staff reported that the Go Global experience developed students' understanding of different social contexts, which is reflected in studies by Callister & Harmer (2006) and DeDee & Stewart (2003). The findings of this study also add to the current literature on international WIL fieldwork, as new employability attributes are identified. For example, additional attributes to the commonly reported cultural sensitivity, personal and professional growth and the development of professional identity have been identified as being developed through an international WIL placement. This study, however, focussed on Health Science students and a health-related international fieldwork program, therefore making direct comparisons to other international WIL programs e.g. business (Crossman & Clarke, 2010) or environmental science (Lumkes *et al.*, 2012) not possible.

The design of the Go Global program may potentially facilitate in the development of these graduate attributes. The interprofessional nature of the placement may contribute to the students' development of effective teamwork and communication, when compared to other international WIL experiences where students travel independently or in uni-professional groups (Simonelis *et al.*, 2011, Barker *et al.*, 2010, Gilin & Young, 2009). While the duration of the placement, being four weeks, may facilitate greater community engagement and understanding of the social context (identified by both staff and graduates) when compared to other international WIL experiences where students spend a shorter duration in the host country (DeDee & Stewart, 2003) and, hence, have little opportunity to develop an engagement with the local community or understanding of the social context. In addition, the distant-supervision structure of the program may also serve to support students' develop problem-solving skills and the ability to think critically and analytically, which was identified by both staff and graduates. The ethos of the program may further contribute, as the service-learning model may support the development of skills of contributing to the welfare of communities and understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. These findings could serve to shape and inform teaching practice across other universities, as other international WIL programs could replicate these elements in their program design to facilitate the attainment of graduate attributes.

This study is limited by its small sample size - particularly that of the teaching staff members and the relatively low response rate from the graduates. The small staffing structure of the Go Global program made this unavoidable and the data consequently represented a small cohort. The study was also limited to the Go Global context, and therefore the results have reduced generalisability to other international WIL programs. Future studies should include multiple international WIL programs across faculties and universities. Given that internationalisation of tertiary education programs across Australia is likely to continue to increase in future years, there needs to be collective vigilance regarding the development of such programs with respect to quality and impact on graduate employability.

## CONCLUSION

This study suggests that international WIL fieldwork programs are highly valuable learning experiences that can facilitate the development of key graduate attributes beyond those reported in the literature. Important attributes for new graduate success including intercultural understanding, understanding different social contexts, contributing to the welfare of communities, teamwork, problem-solving and thinking critically and analytically can be developed through participation in the Go Global program. This suggests that international WIL can be a means of building the capacity of the future health workforce for a global environment.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Graduate capabilities (Oliver, 2010)

| <b>Abbreviated title</b>       | <b>Full text in survey</b>                                  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Knowledge                   | Work related knowledge and skills                           |
| 2. Writing                     | Writing clearly and effectively                             |
| 3. Speaking                    | Speaking clearly and effectively                            |
| 4. Thinking                    | Thinking critically and analytically                        |
| 5. Quantitative                | Analysing quantitative problems                             |
| 6. Using ICT                   | Using computing and information technology                  |
| 7. Teamwork                    | Working effectively with others                             |
| 8. Independent Learning        | Learning effectively on your own                            |
| 9. Intercultural Understanding | Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds |
| 10. Problem-solving            | Solving complex, real-world problems                        |
| 11. Values & Ethics            | Developing a personal code of values and ethics             |
| 12. Community Engagement       | Contributing to the welfare of your community               |
| 13. Industry awareness         | Developing general industry awareness                       |
| 14. Social contexts            | Understanding different social contexts                     |

Appendix 1. List of 15 graduate attributes identified by Oliver (2010) that are used in this study.

# Innovation in clinical education: The Capacity Development Facilitator Model

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This paper reports on a study investigating the development of sustainable innovative strategies and models of clinical education. The project was instigated to cultivate clinical placements to meet increased student numbers and workforce constraints on supervision. The project involved a university located in the Sydney metropolis trialling the Capacity Development Facilitator (CDF) model in four Sydney hospitals to expand student clinical placement opportunities. A facilitator was employed to work with staff identifying enablers and barriers to placements and collaboratively developing solutions, providing organisational and learning support and fostering opportunities for interprofessional learning. Strategies needed to increase capacity but ensure patient quality of care, sound clinical education experiences and support of students, educators and staff.

A mixed methods study was undertaken collecting data from pre-entry students enrolled in Physiotherapy courses and their clinical educators. At completion of placement students and clinical educators completed a survey. This was analysed for themes about placement structure, productivity, barriers, enablers and support. Clinical educators were also interviewed. A preliminary finding suggests that the CDF model increases capacity, provides robust learning experiences and is a satisfying model of delivery for placements from the hospital, university staff and students' perspectives.

Keywords: Capacity, innovative models of clinical education, sustainable, placements, facilitator, enablers, barriers, learning

## INTRODUCTION

Clinical education is a major component of pre-entry allied health curricula and is perceived as essential to the development of clinical interpersonal skills and attitudes (Romanini and Higgs, 1991). It refers to the provision of clinical opportunities to apply practical skills and theoretical knowledge developed in academic study through interaction with clients and professional practitioners in the workplace (The University of Sydney, 2014). Students' perceptions of placement correlate to the experienced gained and attitudes of their clinical educator (CE) (Bennett and Hartberg, 2007).

Lekkas *et al.* (2007) report concern around sustainability of current models of clinical education (e.g. one educator to one student) due to workplace fiscal constraints, an exponential growth in universities providing programs, work force constraints, training costs and decreasing length of patient stay (Lincoln and McCabe, 2005). There is a need to develop and evaluate models of placement that increase placement capacity which are cost-effective, efficient, ensure quality student learning outcomes and good patient care.

Health Workforce Australia (2012) reported perceived barriers to student education including the dual workload demands of patient care and student education, decreased productivity (i.e. patient services when students are present on placement), time constraints at commencement of placement, the workplace undervaluing clinical education, lack of access for CEs to their peers, experts, management and organisational support, funding, part-time staff, and stress associated with challenging students.

Davies *et al.* (2011) reported that CEs perceive the benefits of student education to be intrinsic (e.g., gratification, reflection and knowledge). Productivity is a key performance indicator measured by the increase in number of occasions of service that students and their clinical educator deliver during placement compared with those delivered by the educator when students are absent. Ladyshevsky (1995) reported that two students equals if not exceeds the productivity of one full time clinician.

This paper reports on the Capacity Development Facilitator (CDF) model to increase student placement capacity and addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the enablers of the CDF model?
2. What are the barriers to the CDF model?
3. Does the CDF model increase capacity for student placements?

#### PROJECT DETAILS AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The project described in this paper involves a university located in the Sydney metropolis trialling the CDF model in several Sydney hospitals. Sites selected had access to skilled staff, clinical and professional networks, robust clinical governance, specialty areas, endorsement by management that education is valued and open communication between stakeholders. Strategies implemented aimed to increase capacity, provide quality clinical education experience for students, educators and staff through extra support and create sustainability in the future.

This study involved year 3 and 4 Undergraduate, and year 2 Graduate Entry Masters (GEM) students enrolled in Physiotherapy and their CEs. Prior to the commencement of the study the university employed 1.5 full-time equivalent CDFs who were responsible for capacity building at two sites each. Students engaged in clinical placement in five-week blocks throughout the academic year. A minimum of 6 students per block undertook their clinical placement at the CDF sites. The time required of the CDFs to be onsite varies due to student needs, CEs workloads, challenging students, and meetings to review progress of the project. On average 9 hours was spent face-to-face with students in weeks one and two and reduced to 6 hours in weeks three to five. The responsibilities of the CDF are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: CDF Responsibilities

| Responsibility                                | Tasks  |
|---|--|
| Increase capacity and placement opportunities | Investigate underutilised areas and opportunities for interprofessional student engagement.  |
| Active engagement with staff                  | Provide organisational support for CEs (e.g. struggling students).<br>Conduct additional learning activities to provide down time for CEs.<br>Involve junior staff in clinical education.<br>Hold regular meetings to ensure key performance indicators (e.g. occasions of service) are being met.<br>Provide workplace workshops. |
| Develop Resources                             | Provide customised learning resources for students and CEs.  |
| Evaluate CDF Model                            | Analyse surveys/interviews and disseminate findings at staff meetings, monthly inservices.   |
| Future Placements                             | Assist the upgraded CEs to maintain the structure developed throughout the project to ensure ongoing capacity and sustainability.  |

The university provided funding to upgrade a clinician for twelve months in each participating hospital. The upgrade was to allow the CE to focus on providing education to a minimum of 6-8 students per placement block, work closely with the CDF and liaise with other clinicians to create new placement opportunities. The upgraded clinicians were selected on the basis of demonstrating an interest in clinical education, performance at interview and currently working at a level 2 or above according to the New South Wales Health Allied Health Award. The upgraded CEs responsibilities are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2: Upgraded CE Responsibilities

| Responsibility  | Description   |
|---|---|
| Design placements to increase capacity mutually beneficial to students and site | Work with staff, manager and CDF identifying potential student placement opportunities including student led clinics.<br>Recruit staff for involvement in clinical education.<br>Coordinate full-time placements across part-time staff.    |
| Education of students   | Provide novel learning experiences.   |
| Independent learning activities (ILAs)  | Work collaboratively with the CDF developing ILAs for students to reduce active supervision time.   |
| Develop action plans to provide sustainable new placements                      | Promote benefits of student education for professional development and productivity.<br>Ensure a culture of positivity is maintained after the departure of CDF by establishing systems (e.g. 'teaching teams' to share student education). |
| Mentoring   | Provide junior staff with support to improve their teaching skills.   |

The upgraded CEs and CDFs work collaboratively to increase student placement capacity, develop quality learning resources and provide sound learning experiences. The model is sustainable as the CDF and the upgraded CE develop new approaches to placements by utilising the resources developed to provide activities that require less direct supervision, foster peer learning and reflective practice. Networking and active engagement of staff established throughout the project will continue whilst placement capacity is being achieved or expanded further.

The project was approved by University Human Research Ethics (Project No: 2013/1009). From December 2013 until beginning May 2014, semi-structured interviews of 20 minutes duration with each of the four CEs surveys were conducted. The CE surveys contained 11 questions (4 in the Likert Scale format) relating to workload (administrative and clinical roles), structure of placement, learning programs provided, professional development needs, enablers and barriers to clinical education, satisfaction in being a CE and support provided by their department and the CDF.

Twenty nine student surveys were administered. Student surveys included open-ended questions and Likert scale responses. Questions related to clinical load, indirect patient roles (e.g. case conferences), placement structure, resources provided, feedback from CE and patients, success of placement, peer learning experiences, educator strengths and barriers encountered. Students ranked their satisfaction with their CE, stress experienced in week 1 and 5, support provided by the workplace and CDF. All surveys and interviews were undertaken by the principal author of this paper (employed as a CDF).

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Analysis of the four semi-structured CE interviews and survey data revealed common themes about placement structure, productivity, barriers, enablers and support. Table 4 summarises the data.

Table 5 outlines the enablers and barriers identified in interviews and surveys by CEs about the CDF model of clinical education. Direct quotes from the CE data are shown in italics.

Student survey responses were analysed and summarised in Table 6. Respondents frequently questioned why this model was not available on all clinical placements. The learning support and resources were identified as being superior to other placements.

Placement allocation data at participating sites currently shows increases in student placement capacity ranging from 63-153%. Pre-CDF placement numbers averaged 4 and increased on average to 11 after CDF work commenced. Work continues to explore ways of sustaining student capacity as the CDF is gradually withdrawn.

TABLE 4: Themes Arising from Clinical Educator Interviews and Surveys

| Theme                               | Survey Summary  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Workload                            | Increased week 1 but having the CDF onsite to provide tutorials/ independent learning activities decreased active supervision time.   |
| Occasions of Service                | Decreased weeks 1 and 2 but increased weeks 3, 4 and 5.   |
| CE experience of the CDF model      | Worthwhile, enjoyable, challenging.<br>Students more self-directed, could be given more responsibility.   |
| Diversity Of Skills                 | Improved teaching skills.<br>Changes implemented were to meet the needs of students and placement type.   |
| Barriers /Stressors                 | The CDF model provided CEs time away from the student to complete other duties, being assured the students were engaged in relevant learning activities.                                  |
| Departmental Support                | Management constantly monitoring impact on staff roles but supportive.  |
| University Support                  | CDF presence allowed CEs more time to complete other duties. Mutual respect developed establishing a good working relationship.   |
| Time spent with students wk 1 vs. 5 | Time spent with students decreased by week 5 and the CEs role consisted of assigning patients to students, countersigning notes, and finalising the Assessment of Physiotherapy Practice. |

TABLE 5: CE Views on Enablers and Barriers of the CDF Model

| Theme                | Enablers  | Barriers   |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Workload             | CDF providing ILA to students.<br>Peer learning activities.<br>Other staff.<br><i>'Good to have the CDF in week one to do the generic tutorials which take up a lot of time'</i><br><i>'Good to have someone from the university to talk to about struggling students.'</i>                   | Time spent orientating students in week 1.<br>Student lack of knowledge.<br>Workload stress.<br><i>'The number of patients being seen in week 1 is less than I would normally see.'</i>  |
| Service Delivery     | Increased number of students provided patients with more extensive treatments.<br><i>'Patients like the students as they can give them more time.'</i>  | Occasionally patient numbers did not support student numbers.<br><i>'Had to be mindful of not overwhelming patients with lots of student.'</i>   |
| Skills               | Different learning styles of students resulted in reflecting on teaching skills.<br>Debriefing with peers. .<br>Resources provided by the CDF (e.g. journal articles).<br>Mini workshops on site.<br><i>'The department now has a comprehensive bank of resources' [for student learning]</i> | Decreased confidence in ability.<br><i>'I am not sure that I have the skills to take multiple students as I have not read enough about the other models of clinical education that are being talked about.'</i>                    |
| Departmental Support | CDF project supported by Physiotherapy Manager.<br>Physiotherapy Department valued Clinical Education.<br><i>'The boss is supportive of the project but I still have to ensure that I complete all my normal responsibilities.'</i>   | Ensuring key performance indicators are achieved (e.g. occasions of service) and normal administrative duties completed.<br><i>'At times I find it difficult to combine my normal workload with the education of my students.'</i> |

TABLE 6: Student Feedback on CDF Model

| Criteria   | Student feedback  |
|--|---|
| Clinical load  | Increased as placement progressed.<br>'As the placement progressed I was given more patients and received less supervision.'  |
| CE Interaction   | Supportive, positive.<br>'Patient, supportive, encouraging.'  |
| Assessment Process   | Supportive.<br>'It was a two way process and my placement goals could be discussed.'  |
| Satisfaction with the CDF model  | Majority of respondents reported satisfaction at all times.<br>'Tutorials , journal club , presentations and peer learning activities were great'<br>'Enjoyed the time with the CDF as it allowed me to interact with my peers and learn about what they were doing.' |
| Placement stressors  | Stress levels decreased as students became more familiar with the model and environs.<br>'The staff and the CDF helped decrease my anxiety.'  |
| Workplace support  | Increased, positive experience.<br>'Supportive staff.'  |
| CDF support  | Increased, positive and supportive.<br>'Good to have someone impartial onsite to discuss concerns with.'  |
| Resources<br>(e.g. handouts, resource folders, papers from journal club) | Resources increased and valuable for future placements.<br>'Developed a resource folder that was quite large by the end of placement.'  |

## CONCLUSION

Preliminary findings suggest that the CDF model supports increased capacity, provides robust learning experiences and is a satisfying model of delivery for student placements from the perspectives of the hospital and university staff and students. The uptake of any model involves judgement about its consistency, generalisability, applicability and impact. Careful consideration and interpretation of evidence by stakeholders is required. The limitation to the current study is the small sample size and the data collection timeframe. The rollout of the CDF model and its evaluation in different contexts is continuing to identify key factors to its success and sustainability. Further research is required to ensure the cultivated mutually beneficial relationships, improved student learning outcomes and enhanced services for consumers is maintained (Rosenwax, Gribble and Margaria, 2010) along with increased and sustained capacity.

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# **A strategic approach for building partnerships to enhance graduate employability: driving institutional engagement**

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The student experience is enhanced through authentic learning experiences in settings that reflect the workplace. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) supports the provision of authentic learning, in a variety of contexts, within curricular and co-curricular programs, thus facilitating the development of generic skills highly sought after by employers. With increasing accountability measures facing the higher education sector and societal demands that the higher education experience prepare graduates for the dynamic environment of a global workforce, curriculum development and focus requires a paradigm shift.

Curtin University values authentic learning and is committed to developing graduate capabilities through embedding WIL in all courses through scaffolding skill development across curriculum. Established partnerships and flexible arrangements with business, industry and community enable the development of professional practice to be embedded within those contexts, promoting reciprocal and mutually beneficial outcomes. The three-year WIL Strategic Project aims to enhance the employability of Curtin graduates through industry and community relationships; an experiential curriculum; and co-curricular work experience opportunities. This paper will outline the strategies implemented by the project team to achieve the University's ambitious strategic goals; introduce innovative approaches for establishing an institutional framework; and for enhancing the student experience through WIL.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, institutional capacity, sustainability, strategic project

## **INTRODUCTION**

Higher education institutions are facing a profoundly challenging landscape, arguably the most significant in the history of universities (Thomas, 2012). To respond to the multiple contemporary influences, universities need to reconceptualise teaching and learning approaches and rethink leadership strategies and institutional priorities (Barber, Donnelly & Rizvi, 2013). Despite the notion of universities as creators of knowledge and innovation, they are recognised as highly reluctant to reform (Fullen & Scott, 2009).

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is increasingly recognised as a mechanism for universities to meet the demands of stakeholders such as industry, community, students and government. The student experience is enhanced through authentic learning experiences in settings that reflect the workplace (Ferns, Smith & Russell, 2014; Yorke & Knight, 2004). WIL supports the provision of authentic learning, in a variety of contexts, within curricular and co-curricular programs, thus facilitating the development of generic skills highly sought after by employers. WIL is a contextual-dependent, highly complex and multi-faceted pedagogical approach (Hodges, 2011). Establishing an institutional culture which promotes sustainable partnerships with external stakeholders requires a shift in focus and delivery approaches.

This paper describes a strategic approach to the enactment of a three year project. The overarching aim of the project is to enhance institutional capacity by establishing and implementing a WIL framework for enhancing the student experience through the provision of curricular and co-curricular opportunities to augment employability capabilities in graduates. Strategies encompassed engaging staff, executive management, and the student body. Showcasing best practice and establishing an institutional approach to

WIL were pivotal to initiating university-wide uptake of WIL approaches to teaching and learning.

#### AUTHENTIC STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The essence of WIL pedagogy is ensuring an authentic and relevant student experience which ultimately enhances the development of employability capabilities and thereby employment outcomes for graduates. Authentic learning experiences are designed to reflect real world scenarios (Shavelson, Klein & Benjamin, 2009). Authentic assessment incorporates students performing real-world tasks that require meaningful application of theoretical concepts in a practical setting (Mueller, 2012). An authentic student experience is fundamental to incorporating a WIL philosophy across an institution.

#### PROJECT OVERVIEW

This three year WIL Strategic Project aims to enhance the employability of Curtin graduates through a range of approaches. The strategies implemented by the project team to achieve the University's ambitious strategic goals are outlined below. The project was initiated early 2013 with the allocation of targeted strategic funding. The project has been in progress for almost eighteen months, recently surpassing the half-way mark with a proposed completion timeline of December 2015.

The key objectives of the project are:

- Develop a sustainable institutional framework for defining, positioning and evaluating WIL.
- Provide a quality Work Integrated Learning (WIL) student experience that aligns graduate capabilities to meet student, graduate and employer expectations.
- Differentiate Curtin through a systemic and collaborative approach to implementing curricular and co-curricular WIL aligned to industry and community needs.
- Be recognised as leaders in the sector, by employers and in the community in facilitating engagement and partnership opportunities.
- Evidence graduate employability capabilities across the student lifecycle.

The project plan was developed using a phased approach which include:

- Establishing a cohesive WIL team
- Building an institutional framework
- Community and industry engagement
- Staff engagement
- Student engagement
- Dissemination and Collaboration
- Project sustainability.

#### ESTABLISHING A COHESIVE WIL TEAM

Strategic planning sessions were coordinated which involved the negotiation of a strategic plan that included formulating a vision, mission and strategic goals for the WIL team that aligned to the broader strategic aims of the project. It was imperative that the WIL team were a united entity in order to drive high-level strategic initiatives. Senge, 1994 attests that 'sharing the emerging purpose and destiny of the group shifts a community from a reactive to a creative orientation' (p. 298). The robust discussion and negotiation in which the WIL team partook in articulating the vision and mission, was instrumental in clarifying individual roles, collective imperatives and key performance indicators to evidence project outcomes. With an agreed way forward, the WIL team were poised to determine the shape of the team and reframe position descriptions to ensure individual roles and responsibilities were framed to explicitly address the team vision and mission and ultimately the project key objectives. A clear team identity was established with an agreed vision, mission, and responsibilities of individuals. A symbol was developed that reflected the WIL philosophy and established a recognizable identity for the WIL team.



FIGURE 1. Work Integrated Learning team symbol

## BUILDING AN INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

### *WIL Guidelines*

The purpose of the WIL Guidelines was to establish a university wide framework for collaborating with industry and community to ensure a quality experience evidenced by authentic assessment. The guidelines are not intended to be a prescriptive policy compliance document. They comprise quality indicators that align to several dimensions. The dimensions include learning design, assessment and moderation of WIL, delivery of WIL programs, community engagement and industry partnerships, and innovation in WIL. Agreeing on the Guidelines facilitated robust discussion across the university ensuring WIL was firmly on the university agenda.

### *Governance*

A WIL Steering Committee and WIL Advisory Group were created to establish a consultative approach to implementing WIL initiatives and facilitate streamlined communication channels. Feedback is sought on project processes and enterprises to inform progress and implementation.

### *Communication strategies*

Communication provides the nexus between drivers of change and the community required to embrace that change. Calculated and deliberate communication channels are pivotal to the dissemination of innovative practices (George *et al.*, 1987). A comprehensive communication plan was developed for the project to ensure clear messages were broadcast to staff and students. The plan comprises four distinct sections: meetings, written and electronic communication, social media and national dissemination. These meetings with formal agendas and minutes provide a conduit to all university personnel. Written and electronic communication includes the regular reporting requirements which are valuable mechanisms for dissemination.

The project team developed some targeted approaches to communication. The *Goodwil* newsletter is a monthly electronic publication that is sent to both internal and external stakeholders. Figure 2 below shows an example of the front page of the newsletter. Figure 3 displays the home page of the WIL website which the team developed. Both these communication forms are useful for showcasing best practice, sharing opportunities and promoting the progress and innovations driven by the WIL team.



FIGURE 2. An extract from the Goodwil newsletter

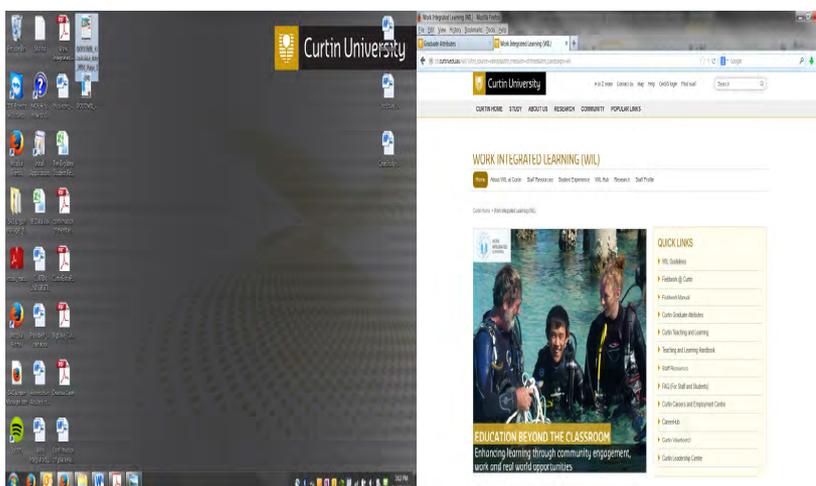


FIGURE 3. Home page of the WIL website

## ENGAGEMENT WITH HOST ORGANISATIONS

WIL requires strong partnerships between all partners: students, university staff and host organisations. An effective engagement framework for WIL enables staff at Curtin University to:

- Enrich the teaching, learning and research experience
- Enhance the work-readiness of Curtin graduates
- Build effective business, industry, government and community relationships that support the teaching and learning experience and leads to excellence in research innovation and sustainability
- Foster close and ongoing relationships with Alumni and other graduate networks
- Create and leverage connections to enable the exchange of knowledge and learning
- Become the preferred provider of work ready graduates in our local communities

Most importantly, engagement is multifaceted and takes diverse forms. Engaging with host organisations is a dialogue and engagement activities must be clearly articulated and communicated. It requires a collaborative and coordinated approach and consideration must be given to the context in which the

engagement occurs and how categories differ. The WIL team at Curtin University is committed to engaging with host organisations in a way that facilitates and provides engaging, rewarding and authentic WIL opportunities.

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT

Engaging all university staff is essential for embedding WIL practices in the life cycle of the student. The program team adopted several key strategies to address this necessity.

### *Staff Resources*

A chapter on WIL was written for inclusion in the Teaching and Learning Handbook, the key Curtin University resource for teaching staff (Curtin University, 2014). A print version and electronic version are available for staff. Importantly, this publication connects WIL to the broader teaching and learning context at Curtin. To complement the WIL chapter in the Teaching and Learning Handbook, a Foundations of Learning and Teaching (FOLT) module has been developed and is delivered by the WIL team. FOLT is Curtin's primary professional development for teaching staff - including casual employees - thereby reaching a wide audience.

### *Authentic Assessment Framework*

Tools for engaging staff in reconceptualising curriculum have been developed. The Authentic Assessment Framework (AAF) was developed to determine the authenticity of curricular assessments and learning activities thus ensuring a developmental and student-focused approach. The AAF challenges curricula through providing the graphic evidence of the level of authenticity in the student experience to ensure real-world relevance (Bosco & Ferns, 2014). To provide another avenue for engaging staff and disseminating initiatives, the WIL project team runs a series of events and professional learning opportunities. To date these have included:

- An international webinar titled *Engaging diverse students in WIL*.
- A workshop titled *Assessing Work Integrated Learning*.
- A monthly community of practice event called *Let's talk about WIL* where WIL practitioners are invited to showcase best-practice WIL initiatives.

### *Staff Recognition*

Rewards and staff recognition are central to staff engagement and the perception of the value-add of participation (DeZure (Ed). 2000). Staff competed for funding for *WIL in Curriculum* initiatives with two projects allocated to each Faculty. The recipients of the funding are currently planning implementation of their initiatives for semester two, 2014. An award for innovative approaches to teaching and learning that incorporate WIL pedagogy is planned for inclusion in the university wide Excellence in Teaching awards. The WIL team is also involved in national and international collaborations and research activities enabling an evidence-based approach and instilling credibility and integrity of the WIL team among staff (Fullen & Scott, 2009).

## STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Preparation workshops prior to students embarking on a WIL work-placement and de-briefing sessions to ensure students gain optimal outcomes from a work-based experience have been developed and are offered on a regular basis. A WIL Blackboard site provides information for the student body and the opportunity to register for WIL activities. The WIL team offers a series of interactive workshops where students engage in conversations about the culture of the Australian workforce, work-readiness skills, self-reflective practice, and ethical behaviour.

Two WIL units (subjects) have been developed by the WIL team and recently approved: *Engaging with Communities 300* and *Engaging with Industry 300*. These units are designed to provide students with a WIL experience that nurtures employability capabilities and is evidenced by authentic assessment.

#### COLLABORATION AND DISSEMINATION

The WIL team has intentionally established both internal and external networks to maximise the impact of the project outcomes and ensure impact of deliverables with the added bonus of a vital communication pathway. These collaborations ensure the WIL initiatives are connected to the organisational infrastructure and are embraced holistically.

The WIL team has established strong networks with peak educational bodies focused on WIL and engagement. The WIL team is represented on the Board of Directors for both ACEN and Engagement Australia. These connections ensure the team maintains currency of global developments and provides opportunities to participate in collaborative research and liaise with leaders in the field of WIL. The academic representatives of the WIL team are also actively engaged in research on WIL and industry and community engagement at a national level.

#### SUSTAINABILITY

The collective impact of all the phases outlined above incorporates the overarching aim to instil sustainable practices across the university. A more targeted initiative was for a representative from the WIL team to reside in each of the Faculties. The intention is that the role of the Faculty representatives will be an ongoing requirement post-project. Ensuring the sustainability of the project deliverables is now a keen focus for the project team as the project transitions into the final stages of implementation for completion in December 2015.

#### CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined a strategic approach to building institutional capacity to provide an authentic and holistic student experience that embodies WIL pedagogy as an essential component of the teaching and learning philosophy. The multi-pronged, phased approach to driving a cultural shift across the institution highlights the importance of a strong and cohesive project team who share common goals; the establishment of a clear and coherent institutional framework which reflects long term ambitions; the development and enactment of a comprehensive communication plan; the implementation of manifold approaches to staff and student engagement; and creating extensive internal and external collaborations to effectively disseminate outcomes.

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# Connecting the dots: Building WIL capacity within and across university boundaries

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The best co-op placements are those where industry and universities are seen as equal partners involved in the planning of the overall experience and student's professional development (Martin in Howe and Patrick, 2007). A qualitative study, conducted across a small representative sample of stakeholders (within and across university boundaries) involved in a 12-month placement program, found that regardless of the diversity of work placement settings and the uniqueness and value differentiation of the individuals involved, there was evidence of a breadth of opportunities for learning, professional formation and individual development. The study concluded that through promoting knowledge sharing, collaborative relationships and active engagement within and across a number of levels of university and organisational contexts, capacity can be built at individual, leadership and institutional levels.

Keywords: Relationship development, placements, professional development, communities of learning

## INTRODUCTION

Work placements offer unique learning opportunities for students. However some students return from work placement programs having changed little or not at all. The research literature points to any combination of factors that impact on the co-op experience and identifies tensions existing between the various stakeholders as to whose responsibility it is to maximise students' chances of success in their work placement.

Martin in Howe and Patrick (2007) and others contend a successful work placement program is the shared responsibility of the student, the employer and the university and is most successful with the active involvement of all parties.

A recent qualitative study, conducted for the purpose of uncovering the views of individual stakeholders involved in one-year placement programs at an Australian university, revealed greater capacity building of individual stakeholders where responsibilities were shared.

## METHODOLOGY

The setting for the study is an undergraduate information systems degree within the Business College at the RMIT University. The 4-year program includes a mandatory 12-month paid co-operative education program (co-op) in the 3rd year. Work placements are found in a diverse range of small, medium and large businesses across a wide range of industry sectors.

A single case study approach was used to gather insights from a sample of 26 stakeholder representatives involved directly and indirectly in the Co-op program. The sample included managers, academics, students, alumni and practitioners. The study adopted an inductive design and engaged qualitative techniques to guide the capture, interpretation and analysis of individual perspectives of the sample. The validity of findings was addressed through the triangulation of the multiple perspectives from the diverse sample. In-depth, one hour, semi-structured interviews were conducted. The semi-structured nature of the interviews offered opportunities for unexpected insights to be gained as well as encouraging participants to speak in their own voices and elaborate on responses.

All interviews were recorded and fully transcribed for further analysis. Interview transcripts were analysed through a number of readings and systematic processes of coding and categorising data to identify emerging patterns and themes. A wealth of perceptions and insights were collected and reported from which "fuzzy generalisations" (Bassegy, 1998) or assertions (Stake, 1995) could potentially be made across the whole category of co-op work placements. This paper presents the findings relating to evidence of capacity building for WIL across individual, leadership and institutional levels.

## FINDINGS

The findings from this study re-enforced a shared belief that the workplace can provide a rich and powerful environment for professional learning and skills development for students. However some students changed more than others. A great number of individual, social and contextual factors were found to influence the co-op experience; in particular the work readiness of the student; the quality of the workplace supervision; membership in a workgroup; and the extent and quality of both the organisational and university affordances.

The findings indicate that the extent of preparation of both the students and of the workplace, before the placement, has a great impact on the richness of the work place experiences and learnings. There was evidence to suggest that the value organisations place on co-op is reflected in the supervision and support the student is given and the subsequent development of the student. Jobs also needed to be meaningful to the student and beneficial to the organisation. Guidance, instruction, direction and support during the placements maximise learning opportunities.

The value the organisation places on the placement program was reflected in the affordances given to the workplace supervisor and the student, and was found to have a great impact on the students' experience. Differences in organisational affordances were found across organisations such as in the planning arrangements for the new intern; the thoroughness of the induction; the assignment of the supervisors; the opportunities for career learning and development; the support and mentoring given to the student; and the time given by organisations to supervision.

In the next section these findings are discussed with reference to the literature review across the areas of workplace and organisational learning, professional formation, adult learning, higher education, co-operative education and work integrated learning.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

### *Work readiness of students*

Both the literature and the study uncovered differences of opinion as to how best to prepare young people for employment and life. Broadly speaking universities believe a solid foundation of formal knowledge and skills will provide their graduates with the necessary attributes to enter the workforce and society. Employers on the other hand find graduates lacking in the knowledge and skills necessary to work effectively (DEST, 2007). The importance of good oral and written communication, teamwork skills and an ability to learn and adapt quickly were common themes arising from the interview responses and supported research findings that good interpersonal skills were the catalyst for speeding up new employees' survival, task performance (Te Waita, 2006) and identity development (Beckett, 2010) in the workplace.

Nevertheless, the notion of embedding the development of generic skills within university courses to generate better learning in the workplace (Hager, Holland *et al.*, 2002), was generally not acknowledged by the academics interviewed. It was reasoned students could develop these skills through their class and assignment work and in activities outside the University. What became evident in the study was the lack of understanding (across the stakeholder groups) of the nature of skills such as oral communications and team working and that they are best developed through doing a variety of tasks in different situations (Billett, 2008).

It was also found that most of the students coming into the placement year had no idea what to expect and what they wanted from the year. Wyn (2009) and others propose universities can do more to facilitate student career preparation and transition into the workplace. This was confirmed by supervisors in this study:

They [the students] need to come to work with a better understanding of the expectations an employer has of employees in the work setting [and] to understand what commitment they are making to the employer.

### *Engagement of workplace supervisors*

Research literature in the areas of workplace learning and professional practice highlights the need for supporting structures. Although participation in everyday activities has the potential to develop competencies, without structure, organisation and refinement, Billett (2006) purports such learning may promote bad habits, be

limiting, lack guidance and support, lack understanding or inhibit future development. In general, the study found supervisors were more than ready to guide (and be guided) in providing students useful advice and support.

But there were instances where the supervisor was not well-versed by either the company or the University as to his duties and responsibilities for his student. Often decisions made regarding co-op programs such as where the student was located and who would be the supervisor, was made at upper management levels and not relayed to the individuals involved. Consequently the workplace supervisor (and members of the workgroup) did not necessarily have the best interests of the students at heart, the experience or inclination to supervise the student and may/may not have been welcoming or supportive (Pepper, 1997).

#### *Organisational Affordances*

The workplace learning literature (Down, 2006) found organisational affordances can promote or restrict learning. This was evident in the study that highlighted good and bad placement experiences. Some organisations have strong learning cultures with well-developed recruitment, induction and graduate programs and require little direction by the university; while other organisations are productivity-driven and rely on individual agency and autonomy and leaving students to their own devices. Some students accept the challenges and shine, while others become anxious, withdrawn and unhappy. Preparing students with the knowledge and skills in the first instance to recognise organisational cultures through organisation profiles and job interviews will enable students to make more informed decisions regarding the nature of the working environment.

#### *University Affordances*

Many academics interviewed saw university management support for WIL and placement programs as rhetoric and with management “not putting their money where their mouth is”. Weisz and Smith (2005) and others observed that universities do not support the staff involved with co-op, by training, professional development, support structures and pathways to promotion and rewards. Insufficient budget allocations see most placement programs employing administrators rather than academics to deliver placement programs. Consequently academics with legitimate promotional aspirations do not want to be directly involved in co-op programs.

#### JOINING THE DOTS

The study found the social and contextual dimensions of learning, engagement and influence contribute to building capacity for WIL across university and organisation contexts. It is proposed the university can facilitate building capacity for WIL through bringing together various cohorts of stakeholders, at different levels, for various purposes.

#### *Planned program of engagement*

The diversity of organisations and the uniqueness of individuals involved within each placement call for approaches that promote relationship development across university and organisational contexts. At the local level, key stakeholders involved in the work placement (student, supervisor and university advisor) negotiate the rules of engagement, and together, monitor and review students’ progress, professional development and well-being; while at the undergraduate program level, relationship opportunities are created between students, alumni, co-op partners and the profession through for example mentorships, site-visits and career development workshops. Long-term industry collaborations and research partnerships with major organisations are developed at higher management levels.

#### *Planned program of learning*

Program teams can design and deliver programs and courses that intentionally inform and prepare their students for placements. Curriculum design could be such that students are encouraged to take ownership of their own learning and development. Active learning environments have been found to be conducive to the development of proactive, agentic students. However, the design and delivery of such courses and conditions requires informed, capable and engaged teaching academics that have the relevant training and experience for designing curricula that incorporate work-related knowledge and delivery techniques that promote active

learning environments. Planned, regular interactions between various cohorts during the placement can ensure that continuing learning and development stay at the forefront of placement agendas.

#### *Planned program of influence*

Work placement programs have the potential to provide useful feedback to the undergraduate program team for course renewal and program accreditation and identify emerging industry trends requiring further research. Students located within organisations connect universities with organisations. Planned opportunities for connecting students with students, alumni and industry personnel could give way to more informed co-op preparation, knowledge sharing and constructing new practice knowledge. However, the management and operations of these programs relies heavily on the co-ordinated and close workings of teaching academics, practitioners, professional staff and management that together can provide the necessary educational and working knowledge, teaching and working experience and opportunities for networking.

#### CONCLUSIONS & FURTHER RESEARCH

Diversity of organisational contexts, complexity of work placement relationships and individual value differentiation within and across stakeholder groups suggest no two placements are alike. It is proposed both the University and industry should take responsibility, not only providing resources, support and opportunities to enable students to become contributing members of their professional and society, but for affording their own staff with resources, support and opportunities with the skills, knowledge and experiences to be involved in university-industry engagements such as work placements.

A new leadership approach within the university is called for that crosses functional areas and management levels and moves across university boundaries, to engage, enable, enact and encourage cognition distribution. A distributive leadership approach (Jones, 2012) invites individuals with the willingness, capacities and freedom to be actively engaged in developing relationships through mutual respect and trust, to grow professionally and effect change. However such a model requires participating organisations and the university to develop and advocate strategies, structures, processes and policies that encourage, recognise and support distributed leadership capabilities in each individual. It is through such an approach universities can use WIL programs as the means to progress organisational and university sustainability and growth.

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# Student Reflections on the Pilot WIL Partnership Capacity Building Model in a Human Resource Management Qualification

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South Africa (SA) has a population of 50 million people. Nearly 70% are under 35 years old. The national vision aims to reduce youth unemployment using education, training and skills development initiatives.

A work integrated learning (WIL) partnership model was developed to build an industry partner base. The model was piloted in a South African university in 2013 to provide work-ready, qualified and skilled graduates entering the SA economy. Research conducted focused on whether the WIL model was a viable, cost-effective and practical solution for capacity building of potential entry-level staff.

This paper presents an analysis of the self-administered questionnaire completed by the students subsequent to their WIL experience. The background to SA cooperative education and WIL provides the backdrop. The aim of the paper is to reflect on whether the model contributed to economic and social capacity building and industry partnership development.

This paper adds value on a strategic, theoretical and practical level by contributing to national imperatives for human resource development, adding to the body of knowledge on WIL initiatives in SA and outlining a user friendly WIL partnership model to allow students to enter the world of work with confidence.

Keywords: Capacity building, human resource management, industry partnership development, student placement, work integrated learning

## INTRODUCTION

Approximately 30 million (70%) South Africans are under the age of 35, of which 12.5 million (25%) were unemployed in 2011. One of the aims of the country's National Development Plan: Vision for 2030 is to reduce unemployment to 6% in 15 years. Education, training and skills development are the tools to enable this vision (South Africa [SA], 2011).

The University of Johannesburg implements a 'learning to be' philosophy that is embraced by the Human Resource Management (HRM) Programme in the Faculty of Management. HRM qualifications aim to create graduates who are 'future-fit leaders'. In response to national imperatives and to bridge the theory-practice gap, a WIL Partnership model was researched and conceptualised. The model exposes students to the workplace to gain HRM skills, attitudes, values and knowledge; thus enabling them to make an easier transition into the formal workplace as HR Practitioners and Professionals (Taylor & Govender, 2013; De Vos, 1998).

The WIL partnership model was designed to build a partner industry base and to allocate students to approved partners for mentoring, job shadowing and project-based workplace learning. The five-phase WIL partnership model was developed and implemented over a period of 10-12 months as follows: Phase 1: Design, development and approval; Phase 2: Preparation for implementation; Phase 3: Implementation; Phase 4: Evaluation; and Phase 5: Review.

Phase 4: Evaluation, gains feedback from the lecturer, student and industry partners; and recognises partnerships. Phase 5: Review, focuses on improving the model. The focus of this paper is on the student evaluation of the model as per the survey questionnaire feedback received.

The model is set in the theoretical framework of experiential education, with an emerging focus area of partnership development as a requirement for successful implementation. A concise review of the legislative developments of post-school education, training and skills development in the SA context provides a backdrop to the study and paper.

## WIL IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION AND TRAINING CONTEXT

The best-known theories of experiential education include those of Dewey (1938), Kolb (1984), Lewin and Schön (Schön, 1983). In SA, the Council for Higher Education (CHE) has recently published the *Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide* (CHE, 2011), popularising the term work integrated learning. It outlines the main curricular modalities for WIL programmes and calls for new models to align workplace experience (practical) and academic interests (theory). Mention is made in several legislative, policy and human resource development documents of the need for workplace experience as an aspect of skills development, with various other terms used to identify these such as workplace-based learning, simulation, work experience and work exposure among others (SA, 2011a; SA, 2011a; SA, 2011b; SA, 2013).

In 2009, the 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were placed under a newly-established Department of Higher Education and Training (Proclamation No 56 of 2009, 2009), consolidating the post-school education and training sector under one government ministry. National skills legislation provides tax and other incentives to industry for formal upskilling programmes provided to the unemployed, including students, who are South African citizens (Skills Development Act 1998, 1998; Skills Development Levies Act 1999, 1999; SA, 2011a). The post-school education and training sector has also been re-visioned with the promulgation of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (SA, 2013). An implication of this for higher education is that, as more students require various forms of work exposure and experience as a formal part of their qualifications, greater pressure is placed on WIL Coordinators to ensure placement opportunities for students. The need for formalising partnership arrangements with industry is thus not only on the increase but has become an imperative (Taylor & Govender, 2013).

### RESEARCH METHOD

The research approach involved a mixed method research design using a self-administered survey questionnaire to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. A 5-point Likert scale allowed participants to rate their experience as Highly Rewarding, Rewarding, Average, Disappointing and Highly Disappointing. Furthermore, a few structured questions gathered qualitative responses and reflections on participant workplace experience.

HRM Diploma students participated in the WIL pilot project to gain a minimum of 40 hours (1 week) working experience. Of the 98 students in the two class groups, 84 completed the questionnaire, with two questionnaires being excluded from the analysis as they were incomplete.

The questionnaire was divided into six sections: Section A (Biographic data); Section B (Workplace data); Section C (Preparing for your WIL experience); Section D (Your WIL experience); Section E (Preparing your WIL Portfolio of Evidence) and Section F (Evaluating the HRM WIL model).

Exploratory frequency statistics were used to report on responses to Sections A through E. Section F sought to determine the following: would student want to work in the company; would student recommend it for future WIL placements; strengths and weaknesses of company; and student slogan describing their experience. The frequency responses and common and profound themes are reported for this section.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The average age of the students was 22.3 years, with 30 students being male and 52 female. Section B revealed that 52 students found the workplace themselves, with 27 being assisted by the University of Johannesburg's WIL Coordinator and three finding a placement via peers. The average number of hours worked was 40.8. While students were required to work for 40 hours, some worked for more hours and in one case for up to 80 hours. In five instances students only worked 20 hours due to placement constraints.

Sections C to E required students to rate their experiences regarding the preparation for, the actual WIL experience and compilation of their Portfolio of Evidence (PoE). It is encouraging to see that 90% of students rated their experience as being between Highly Rewarding (30.1%) to Average (26.9%). Only 10% of students rated the preparation phase as being Disappointing (7.5%) or Highly Disappointing (2.5%). This good feedback is due to workplace preparation workshops held early in the year and to issuing WIL documentation to students to enable them to identify their own workplaces well in advance of the compulsory placement.

The findings from Section D dealing with the actual WIL experience similarly reflected a high satisfaction rating, with 94% of students rating their experience as being between Highly Rewarding (46.5%) to Average (16.1%). Only 6% of students rated the WIL phase as being Disappointing (2.7%) or Highly Disappointing (3.3%).

In Section E, insight surrounding the preparation for the Portfolio of Evidence was sought. Students had to submit their portfolio as part of the assessment requirements for one of the third year modules. For this section, 90% of students rated their experience as being between Highly Rewarding (30.1%) to Average (26.9%), with only 10% of students rating this phase as being Disappointing (7.6%) or Highly Disappointing (2.4%).

Questions 1 and 2 in Section F asked students if they would want to continue working for the company upon graduation and if they would recommend the company for future WIL students. Of the 81 students who responded to Question 1, only 8 indicated that they would not consider this; citing reasons such as being an international student who would be returning to the home country; distance from home to the company; the attitude of staff and the small size of the organisation as reasons. However, from the following comments one gets an appreciation for the learning the students have achieved in the short time and the value of the WIL programme: "An eye-opening experience to what I am studying and why I do all the modules"; "... I got employed after completing my WIL programme."; "The HR staff is very supportive and always willing to help."; "I have learned so much in a week."

Seventy-five of the 81 respondees who answered Question 2 indicated that they would recommend the company for future WIL placements. The six who would not cited reasons such as poor company culture; lack of manager support and the small size of the company for their response. Reasons offered as to why they would recommend the company for future placements are: "They are willing to support and show learners how they run their operations."; "They took us seriously and there are opportunities for final year students every year."; The organisation places its goals and employees first and encourages skills development."; The organisation is willing to help in any possible way for students to gain experience in the workplace."; "There is sufficient support from mentors and they understand the WIL.".

Questions 3 and 4 in Section F took the form of a form of a SWOT analysis with students requested to reflect on the strengths and opportunities (Question 3) and then the challenges and threats (Question 4) of their WIL experience. In analysing the responses, some recurring and profound themes emerged, presented in the table below.

TABLE 1. HRM Diploma Student SWOT Responses on WIL and the POE Experience

| Strengths   | Opportunities                              |
|---|--|
| Adapting to change  | Job opportunities opened up                |
| Building self-confidence                                  | Networking/relationship building           |
| Motivation  | Transferable skills acquired               |
| HR-relevant and communication skills                      | Relevant HR experience                     |
| Deeper understanding of classroom theory                  |  |
| Challenges  | Threats                                    |
| Finding a company/ dealing with rejection of applications | Fear of failure as the PoE replaced a test |
| Wide range and confidential nature of HR work             | Short duration of WIL experience           |
| Transport costs   | Pressure to deliver the PoE                |
| Unfriendly staff/ fitting in                              |  |
| PoE mismatch with work at company                         |  |

The last question in Section F requested students to write a slogan to describe their WIL experience. The slogan that best encapsulates the general reflections of this research group is expressed in the following response: "WIL: the path to better employment." Other slogans include: "Reality is so much better ☺"; "One step to my future career success!!!"; "Knowledge is power"; and "Beyond amazing.". Evidence that the WIL experience was not always easy is obtained via comments such as "Challenging, difficult but awesome" and "Fun educational, but challenging", made in five instances. 22% of the students mentioned that transport costs were a challenge. At the university, 66% of students study under the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, a student study loan facility.

Communication of the requirements of the WIL programme, including the need to dress appropriately and travel to the workplace, must be highlighted early in the academic year to enable students to plan appropriately.

This study found that student feedback regarding the model and their learning experiences in the workplace was largely positive. The strengths and opportunities expressed may be viewed as benefits of WIL to the student, university, industry and country. The positive national and international impact of these reflections are documented by several authors in other research studies as detailed by Dressler & Keeling (2011). The challenges and threats highlighted by the students will be taken into consideration during the Review Phase 5 of improving the WIL Partnership model.

According to the findings of the research study, the purpose of the model to build industry partnerships in order to ease the stress on students in securing WIL placements was achieved. However, it must be noted that encouraging students to secure their own workplaces promotes responsibility and capacity building as well as allows the institution to build its existing industry partnership base. It is recommended that communication to students regarding WIL POE and assessment requirements should be incorporated into the student Learning Guides. It is acknowledged that five days is a short time for a WIL programme. The duration of the placement should ideally be increased to at least 80 hours or 2 weeks, thereby addressing some of the threats raised by students.

## CONCLUSION

This paper reported on student reflections after implementation of the WIL Partnership model in the HRM Diploma at a university in SA. The study found that the piloted WIL Partnership model provided a highly rewarding experience for students contributing to employment initiatives, bridging the academic theory-practice gap and creating future-fit, work-ready graduates. The conclusion is that the WIL Partnership model does contribute to capacity building for enabling future graduates to enter the workplace confidently.

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# Work Integrated Learning – value to non-professional degrees and their students

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Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has long been recognised as a powerful learning tool within the Australian higher education context, particularly within professional based disciplines. But what of those disciplines not professionally mandated, those not requiring the completion of a practical component before the graduate enters the workplace? Is there a role for WIL within these disciplines and what is the value of WIL to students studying in non-professionally mandated industries? This research considers the experiences of students that have undertaken WIL as a compulsory component of their studies in Tourism at Flinders University. Students undertake WIL despite the fact that the tourism industry does not require students to complete a WIL activity prior to working in the industry. The research examines feedback from Tourism graduates that undertook a WIL topic/s to address the following question: Is WIL recognised by the student as an important component of a student's degree when not required by the tourism profession?

Keywords: Non-professionally mandated, tourism, students, impact, career

## INTRODUCTION

Much work has been undertaken within Australian universities to define Work Integrated Learning (WIL) to incorporate all of its guises and modes of implementation, from 'traditional' placements to on-campus 'virtual worlds'. WIL is recognised as a key educational priority by Flinders University, which aims to provide all undergraduates with the opportunity to access a WIL activity of some form during the course of their studies. WIL is defined by Flinders University as an "organised, supervised and assessed educational activity that integrates theoretical learning with its applications in the workplace" (Flinders University, 2010).

Whilst WIL can take a variety of forms in terms of its delivery, the nature of its inclusion in a degree course can vary considerably depending on whether there is a professional requirement. WIL can be a mandatory element of a degree in order for the student to meet professional accreditation requirements, or either a mandatory or elective element by virtue of an institutionally-approved course structure (Macleod, *et al.*, 2010). By far the most significant form of placement in terms of the numbers of students involved is in disciplines where the activity is mandated by the profession. Nursing, Midwifery, Education, Law and Social Work are just some of the many disciplines where the profession has a significant involvement in the design and delivery of placements and where students are required to complete a compulsory WIL component for their degree before they are able to enter the profession. In these cases, universities and the profession work collaboratively, often within clearly defined frameworks and agreements. In other disciplines, WIL is either still a relatively new concept and/or is delivered as an optional activity with students able to participate with varying input from the profession in terms of the nature and content of the WIL activity. A third form of WIL implementation occurs when WIL is a compulsory component of a student's degree without it being a specific requirement of the profession. The Tourism degree at Flinders University (the Bachelor of International Tourism) falls under this category and includes WIL in a variety of guises as a compulsory component of the degree. This paper examines student feedback on the importance to them of WIL activities in the undergraduate qualification.

## CONTEXT

Incorporating WIL as compulsory element by virtue of an institutionally-approved course structure without it being mandated by the profession is unusual at Flinders University. WIL placements have, however, been a compulsory component of the University's Tourism degree since its inception in 1997. Over time, the nature, scope and delivery of these activities has changed to reflect student and industry feedback, but has remained a consistently scaffolded part of the Tourism degree program.

Designing, organising, supervising and assessing the WIL activities undertaken by students is very time-consuming and relies heavily on the development of mutually beneficial partnerships between the university and the tourism industry. In undertaking a Tourism degree at Flinders, students are required to complete a 160-hour

industry placement that is undertaken on-site with an industry provider. Postgraduate students are able to do placements as an elective. Degree students are also required to complete an industry based research project (conducted in the student's final year) in addition to 'tourism projects'. Tourism projects can consist of a range of opportunities for students, for example assisting with Rundle Mall Visitor Information Centre (VIC), regional VICs, a range of university events (open days, graduation dinners and conferences) and industry based projects (anything from managing an event to developing a marketing plan).

These WIL experiences are unpaid, assessable components of, and link directly back to, the requirements and outcomes of the Tourism degree and provide a wide range of learning opportunities through hands-on, real-world experiences in the tourism industry (Van Gyn, Cut, Loken & Ricks, 1997). Industry placement providers range from major event organisations, local governments, heritage organisations and smaller tourism enterprises that are based in the city of Adelaide or the South Australian regions. Placement providers are also occasionally from interstate and overseas. Students are prepared for their placement through attendance at pre-placement seminars, undertaking online preparatory modules and by preparing and submitting paperwork in accordance with the University's WIL Policy.

The Flinders University Tourism program has long embraced the need to provide students with the opportunity to enter the tourism and events industry with relevant, appropriate knowledge and as, experienced, work-ready graduates. In providing such a wide variety of WIL opportunities, students are able to gain a true appreciation of the sector through meaningful and appropriate activities designed to reflect the nature of the industry. The changing demography of today's university students and the increasing call from Government and industry (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010; Patrick *et al.*, 2008) to provide work-ready graduates is a challenge that is faced by all WIL programs.

A pilot study of past students was undertaken to measure the importance that students placed on WIL as a component of their degree. The objectives of this survey were to determine:

- The value of WIL activities to students;
- Whether the inclusion of WIL activities represented a determining factor in students choosing to undertake the Flinders University Tourism degree;
- Whether the experiences gained by students upon completion of their WIL activities helped determine their profession;
- Which aspects of their WIL activities were most beneficial to them; and
- The ways in which the students believed their WIL activity had benefitted the host organisation.

The primary aim of this research was to determine whether WIL is considered by the students as an important and valued component of their degree when it is not a professional requirement of the industry. A second consideration is to determine whether the time committed in designing and delivering these programs is justified where WIL is not a mandatory requirement of the industry?

## APPROACH

The pilot study participants were Flinders University Tourism alumni who had remained in contact with the Tourism Department via social media. The study took place in early 2014 via a questionnaire and participants provided informed consent and no monetary incentive was offered. The questionnaire consisted of four closed questions requiring a yes/no response and six open ended questions that allowed participants to expand on their answers to provide opinions. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously via Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, with only one demographic-specific question (year of graduation) required. Descriptive data from the open-ended questions were manually coded into concepts as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The response rate for completion of the questionnaire was 64% (n=85). Whilst the sample size was small, each of the yes/no responses were more than 60% indicating a +/- 13.6 confidence variable (Veal, 2004).

This paper primarily considers the open questions that were asked. Respondents were asked to identify the key outcomes to them personally of the WIL activity and in a similar, but slightly varied question format, asked what aspects were most beneficial to them. Conversely respondents were asked how they believed the host organisation benefitted by the industry placement (Braunstein, Takei, Wang & Loken, 2011) 86% of respondents answered the open questions. The results of the open questions are configured under the Table heading relating to the respective question. The yes/no response questions evaluated in this paper included whether the opportunity to undertake a placement/project/research project (i.e. a WIL activity) influenced their choice of

degree or University and if the WIL activity had influenced the respondent's choice of career. The last question asked was what year the respondent graduated, this will allow for a longitudinal study to occur to identify possible trends. The open-ended questions were coded, and patterns were identified and grouped accordingly (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

## THE RESULTS

An analysis of each of the comments received for the open-ended questions generated categories of comments (response themes). Respondents' comments were not forced to fit into a particular category and, in a number of cases, a comment was allocated to more than one category. The most cited response themes are tabled below.

TABLE 1: Did the opportunity to undertake a placement/project/research project influence your choice of degree or University?

| If Yes, why?                              | Responses | Selected Comments  |
|---|-----------|--|
| Real world experience                     | 9         | It influenced me as I was interested to experience the "real world" application of the degree.   |
| Positively influenced my choice of degree | 3         | I undertook placements, a project as well as a research project whilst completing my degree. Having these options as part of the degree was definitely a big influence for choosing the Bachelor of International Tourism. |

35% of respondents were influenced by the opportunity to undertake a WIL activity when choosing their degree with the majority wanting to gain "real world experience" (Van Gyn *et al.*, 1997; Dressler & Keeling, 2011). Of the respondents who graduated in 2014, 55% were influenced by the opportunity to undertake a WIL activity. Anecdotal evidence from the 2014 first year Tourism student cohort returned a much higher percentage (75%).

TABLE 2: Did the placement or projects influence your choice of career?

| If Yes, in what way?           | Responses | Selected Comments   |
|--------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Confirmed my career choice     | 20        | Prior to my first placement I was undertaking the degree much more broadly. After my first placement I was pretty hooked on working in events. My second placement had me hooked on festivals and I've been working on festivals and events for the last 6 years now as a result. |
| Clarified future opportunities | 9         | Being actively involved in the nature-based tourism industry (during placement) allowed me to develop specific skills and understandings that gave me the confidence to apply for roles within the industry upon completion of uni.   |

More than two thirds (67%) of respondents were influenced in their choice of career by their placement opportunities. (Dressler & Keeling, 2011; Chen & Shen, 2012). While their WIL experiences helped confirm career choices, the experiences also identified for students where they did not want to work ("made me realise event management wasn't for me").

TABLE 3: What were the key outcomes of your placement/project?

| Outcomes  | Responses | Selected Comments  |
|---|-----------|--|
| Real world experience working in the tourism industry | 25        | From my placements I was able to learn a lot about Indigenous culture that I knew little about ... All of these placements and projects helped me to grow in many ways from communication through to working within and managing a team. |
| Networking opportunities                              | 18        | It also introduced me to the industry and people within it. I made a lot of contacts but also a lot of friends.  |
| Confirmed career/further study path                   | 15        | My placement was completely interstate so I learnt that I could live outside of my comfort zone, I also learnt that I didn't want to be stuck in the office all day and that I needed variety in my work.                                |

The outcomes in Table 3 identify that 'real-world' experiences are valued highly by respondents (43%). Alumni confirm that WIL extended them beyond their normal comfort zone and exposed them to a wider range of professions. The opportunity to network and expand their contacts was also a significant response (31%).

TABLE 4: What aspects of your placement/projects were the most beneficial to you?

| Beneficial aspects                          | Responses | Selected Comments   |
|---|-----------|---|
| Networking/contacts                         | 24        | Having the opportunity to talk about tourism with other people in the industry and gain insights on their opinions  |
| Hands on experience                         | 14        | Getting hands on experience and applying my knowledge to 'real life situations', making what I studied relevant. Which gave me a new perspective when doing assignments |
| Identifying future employment opportunities | 7         | It was also really beneficial in helping me hone exactly what I wanted to do post-graduation  |

Similarly to Table 3, respondents saw networking contacts and engaging with industry professionals as the predominant benefit of the WIL activity (53%). Alumni also identified employment experience and employment opportunities as a benefit but also that they had gained dispositional knowledge such as confidence in their skills and abilities (Billet, 2009).

TABLE 5: In what ways do you believe your industry placement benefitted your host organisation?

| Benefits to host                     | Responses | Selected Comments   |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| Extra assistance – ease the workload | 37        | My host organisations were able to get some really useful information collated and reported to them. Furthermore, I was able to create some social media pages that may not be able to afford a staff member to do this work. |
| Fresh ideas                          | 17        | They had access to a volunteer who had knowledge and suggestions to improve their organisation. They could learn from some of the ideas or experiences that students had been exposed to.                                     |
| Vetting future employees             | 5         | Fresh look at opportunities for the business from new recruits. One of my hosts also employed me for nearly two years after my placement with their organisation.   |

Respondents confirmed what other researchers have highlighted in relation to the benefits of WIL to host organisations. Having providers that value the knowledge, fresh ideas and approaches that students bring to placement is perceived by the respondents as important (see 'Fresh ideas' above). Students can also add value to the organisation, ease workload pressures and complete tasks that the organisation needs to do but has been unable to due to being time and resource poor (Harvey, 2001). The provision of extra assistance to host organisations is perceived as the most positive outcome (62%).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this pilot study of Tourism alumni provides insight into the benefits of work integrated learning to students and also the alumnus' perceptions of the benefits of WIL to the industry provider or host organisation. It is clear that WIL activities are of significant benefit to students by providing them with real world activities and by extending their university education outside of the classroom and, as a consequence, are highly valued by alumni for that reason. The findings related to Tourism alumni experiences concurs with other research undertaken in this area. (Fanning, 2010; Dressler & Keeling, 2011). For the respondents of this pilot study, WIL activities also enabled students (while still studying) to confirm their career choice, which is an essential step for educators endeavouring to create work ready graduates (Daniel & Daniel, 2013). The necessity to network and meet industry professionals to establish and further a career in the industry is discussed at length in the classroom, of course, but it is difficult to teach what 'networking' is until students are placed in an actual business setting and can experience it for themselves. The fact that alumni recognise this as a benefit needs further exploration. Is networking something that becomes identifiable as a benefit once students have graduated or were they aware of it while they were still a student?

Primarily respondents felt that the biggest benefit they provided to host organisations was in the easing the organisation's workload within a learning context, without feeling that they were being used as free labour. This finding is an extension of employer benefits noted by Braunstein *et al.* in 2011. It was important to alumni that they felt they were able to provide fresh ideas that were valued by the host organisation (Harvey, 2001). Further

research on the host organisation's perceptions of the benefits of WIL to them would confirm whether the alumni's perceptions are accurate.

Whether WIL activities are a determining factor in students choosing to undertake a specific degree, in this case tourism, needs further investigation beyond this pilot study. Whilst the results in this study show that WIL was not a determining factor (35%) for selecting their academic program, the results for the most recent graduates identified the opposite (55%) and anecdotally 75% of the 2014 first year tourism cohort chose their degree because they could do a placement. A longitudinal study, with cross tabulation of results would clarify if this shift identifies a new trend in perceptions and how other factors such as combined degrees, articulated pathways etc., which do not offer placements may have affected student choice of program.

Clearly WIL activities are desired by students and are seen as having a range of positive outcomes for both the student and the industry provider. More comprehensive research along the lines of this pilot study will provide more conclusive evidence that can be used by WIL coordinators, the industry and the university in maximising the benefits of WIL activities to all. WIL also has the potential to be a marketable commodity to distinguish between University programs.

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# Building capacity through ethical understanding and practice

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Fostering ethical understanding and practice in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) and other forms of experiential learning is integral to preparing students for engagement with society beyond university (Campbell, 2011; Campbell & Zegwaard, 2011a; Campbell & Zegwaard, 2011b). Ethical practice is a fundamental aspect of Macquarie University's Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) initiative, and our research and practice to date have examined how ethical understanding can be translated into ethical practice by students (Baker *et al.*, 2013). This paper details further developments in our endeavour to prepare students for ethical complexities and build their capacity to respond to them. It also discusses how efforts to foster and share consistent ethical understanding and practice, through an Ethical Practice Framework, have resulted in the establishment of a community of ethical practice. This building of capacity involves pushing pedagogical and institutional boundaries and stems from the realisation that developing curriculum can extend beyond a quality learning and teaching experience for PACE students, as well as clear benefits for: staff involved in PACE, the University, community-based partners, and others beyond. Qualitative data illustrates outcomes, while ongoing reflection upon ethical complexities highlights challenges and avenues for future research and development.

Keywords: Ethical practice, building capacity, professional and community engagement, curriculum development, institutional frameworks

## CONTEXT

In the early stages of implementing the Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) initiative at Macquarie University, a number of challenges and opportunities associated with ethical understanding and practice became evident. These arose partly due to the fundamental role played by ethical practice in PACE, including: working with partners who align with the University's ethical standards and values; PACE activities involving learning through participation (LTP)<sup>1</sup>, aimed at promoting the well-being of people and the planet; select activities involving low risk research; students who act as ethical ambassadors; and ethical approaches to documenting and communicating the PACE story.

Ethical understanding and practice in Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and other forms of LTP is integral to preparing students for engagement with society beyond university (Campbell, 2011; Campbell & Zegwaard, 2011a; Campbell & Zegwaard, 2011b). There is also increased advocacy for undergraduate students to engage with purposeful research experience (Brew, 2010; Healey & Jenkins, 2009; Boyd & Wesemann, 2009), as this could prepare students for higher degree study as well as help develop capacities needed for the workforce and civil society (Hunter *et al.*, 2007; Lang & Buzwell, 2010; Freudenberg *et al.*, 2011). Teaching ethical practice in LTP, however, is complex and not well understood yet (Crabtree, 2008; Tryon *et al.*, 2008, Baker *et al.*, 2013). Further, while research-based activities should require management of ethical considerations, there are inconsistencies in approaches to undergraduate research (Kallgren & Tauber, 1996, Robinson *et al.*, 2007; White *et al.*, 2013).

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<sup>1</sup> Following Winchester-Seeto and Mackaway's (2011) terminology, this paper uses the term 'learning through participation' (LTP) to cover all models of participation, including, but not limited to, work-integrate learning (WIL), work-based learning, co-operative education, service-learning, etc.

This context necessitated the enhancement of institutional capacity<sup>2</sup> and it continues to challenge existing ethics and PACE frameworks. Importantly, PACE is itself about institutional capacity and represents an interesting case study that touches upon all areas of the University. Using data collected from stakeholders, both internal and external to the University, this paper details the work of the PACE Ethics Protocol Working Party<sup>3</sup> in responding to this context.

## BUILDING CAPACITIES THROUGH ETHICS

In December 2010 an Ethics Working Party was formed with the task of discussing broader aspects of PACE and ethics. Evolving out of this and as part of developing learning and teaching resources, the 'PACE Ethics Protocol Working Party' was established in October 2011. The endeavour of the latter was to prepare and build the capacity of students and unit convenors to respond to PACE-related ethical complexities and resulted in the development of the following core resources: 1) the PACE Ethical Practice Module – a flexible learning and teaching resource, used in a number of PACE units and; 2) the PACE Ethics Protocol – a streamlined, centrally administered ethics framework approved by Macquarie's Human Research Ethics Committee for low-risk human research in select PACE units.

Student reflections point to the positive impact these resources have in developing ethically-minded citizens:

I went home that day, and reflected upon the work that we do and how positive it is. On the Monday, I called [my supervisor]...and asked how the [animal] was doing after...surgery, and I was told that [the animal] had died due to an allergic reaction to one of the drugs that was administered during the surgery (my heart sunk a little bit).

We did not ask for the [animal]'s permission to perform the surgery, we just went ahead and did it, not knowing about allergies. If we had left the [animal] to heal on its own, it may have lived. I also questioned the ethics of the boat that [the animal], who did not even stop. They definitely would have known that they hit something, but continued on their path anyway, and it was lucky that there were bystanders who witnessed the event (Undergraduate student, 2013).

While students and convenors were the initial priority, it became clear that a wide range of PACE stakeholders, including the institution itself, could benefit from an approach to ethical practice that extended beyond learning and teaching. As proposed by Domakin (2013) there is value in engaging with communities more broadly and several Australian institutions have expanded their community engagement to form successful collaborative educational networks (Pharo *et al.*, 2014). Notwithstanding the success of collaborative projects it remains clear that a topic or matter, which draws the communities into a common area of understanding, is required to consolidate and make the most of community engagements.

Ethics thus became a channel through which capacity in communities could be built by creating commonality and consolidation, especially where disciplines or frameworks might not otherwise cohere (Pharo *et al.*, 2014) - whether that is within the university or branching out to extra-institutional communities. For the purposes of this

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<sup>2</sup> Institutional capacity in this paper represents the ability for the institution to provide sufficient support to its students, staff, and partners as it relates to ethical practice and the PACE initiative. This may include an examination of, for example, institutional ethics frameworks, governance, and ethics committee workloads.

<sup>3</sup> The PACE Ethics Protocol Working Party consists of: Dr Anne-Louise Semple (Academic Director of PACE, Science and Chief Investigator of the PACE Ethics Protocol), Dr Michaela Baker (Academic Director of PACE, Arts and PACE representative on Macquarie's Human Research Ethics Committee (Humanities and Social Sciences)), Dr Karolyn White (Director, Research Ethics and Integrity), Dr Kate Lloyd (Senior Lecturer, Academic Development, PACE); Dr Kath McLachlan (Academic Director of PACE, Human Sciences), Laura Hammersley (PhD candidate) and Erin Corderoy (MRes candidate). We also acknowledge the contributions of two former members, Sian Paine and Alison Beale.

paper we have identified three main areas in which capacity has been built through our work: individual (student, staff), institutional (university), and community (partner-based and scholarly). The following details each of these.

#### *Individual capacity*

Building individual capacity in this context refers to the ongoing development of Macquarie University students, as well as academic and professional staff who learn about, engage with, and reflect upon the ethical complexities associated with LTP. This capacity building acknowledges the specific needs of PACE activities and the individuals involved in their delivery, which form the basis for a community of ethical practice, as illustrated by one student's reflection:

I had always just thought of ethics as something we just do in situations, never as a guide to our actions ... going through all the resources ... about ethics really prepare[d] me as now I know ... I should be mindful regarding how my presence may affect others, what is an unethical situation and how I can respond to it. I believe that in our PACE activities ... the most important lesson we will get out at the end of the activity is learning more deeply about ourselves (Undergraduate student, 2013).

Staff have also gained from the resources, evidenced by a PACE unit convenor:

I like the [ethical theory] video ... I watched it again and I actually enjoyed it ... I made my own notes and I started relating the themes...and I presented to the students in the classroom ... it was good, if we could get the theory into an actual situation and see that ethics lecture in an actual case ... if we could relate specifically to our placements, the students actually can relate. I was proud of my own little try because it was my own learning process and students really enjoyed it (PACE Unit Convenor, 2013).

#### *Institutional capacity*

In order to foster consistent ethical understanding and practice across the university an Ethical Practice Framework (Figure 1) was established. This Framework enables the university to work towards its aim of developing graduates who are 'engaged and ethical local and global citizens' (Macquarie University, 2014).

For each stakeholder Figure 1 documents examples of developed resources or procedural mechanisms. It also indicates complexities including the range of stakeholders involved, the importance of collaboration, and the necessity of ensuring institutional credibility by engaging with and reporting to high-level stakeholders, such as the Human Research Ethics Committee and the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee. This engagement embeds a knowledge base and leadership, as well as resources that, as the former head of the Faculty of Science Ethics committee commented:

... mark Macquarie's PACE program as distinctive. It adds value to an already distinctive program and brings coherence across faculties, units and programs in a way that is impressively consistent with the university's aim of integrating ethical maturity and responsibility to the characteristics of our graduates ... (Richie Howitt, 2013).

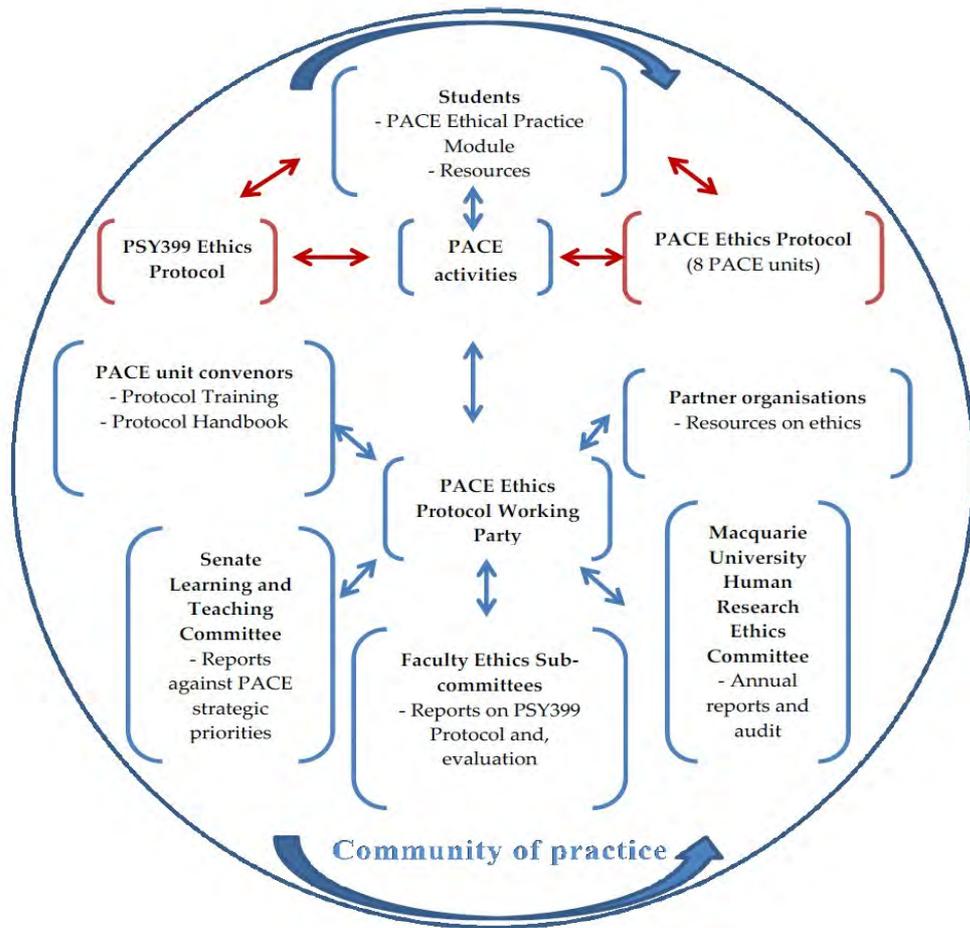


FIGURE 1. Ethical Practice Framework

*Community capacity*

The vision of PACE is to foster mutually beneficial learning and engagement. Attempts to foster ethical understanding and practice within PACE have impacts that extend beyond the university to the partner organisations involved in PACE, and the scholarly and practitioner-based community more broadly. Providing students with a conceptual framework through which to understand mutuality, as well as empirical examples upon which to draw in practice, helps to ensure the engagement experience is more likely to be positive for them, the partner organisation, its staff, and all those who interact as part of the PACE activity. As one partner commented:

... the provision of ethics training help[s] raise students' awareness to the complexity of ethical issues they will face when they begin to work in their chosen profession (PACE partner, 2013).

Similarly, partner organisations and their staff can benefit from tailored PACE-related resources. Certain partner organisations, such as Australian Volunteers International, have requested training, which has enhanced their capacity to identify projects that constitute research, and therefore require ethics approval. Documenting and communicating this work, in a bid to foster a culture of ethical practice within LTP and WIL, has also fostered awareness and interest within the higher education community. As expressed by the former editor of ACEN conference proceedings:

Ethics education contextualised within workplace and participatory experiences is incredibly valuable in enhancing the future ethical and professional practices of graduates. However, it has largely been an ignored

area of interest and investment. The work undertaken by the PACE Ethics Protocol Working Party is leading the national and international agenda in this area (Matthew Campbell, 2013).

Furthermore, enquiries from other institutions have been aimed at understanding how best to prepare their own students for ethical practice and how to make existing ethics frameworks more efficient:

I was at the [Australian Ethics Network] AEN Conference in Fremantle and saw a presentation on the PACE Ethics Protocol ... I found our conversation of great value and being given permission to access your proprietary material is a real privilege ... I look forward to ongoing conversations with you so you can be informed about the outworking of the assistance you have provided the ACT (Graeme Chatfield, Associate Dean, Australian College of Theology, 2014)

By bringing together the often-separate discussions of ethics education and LTP we have begun the important steps of formulating an integrated curriculum and evaluation of stakeholder experiences with a view of shared understanding and practice across individuals, the institution, and communities.

## REFLECTION

Building institutional capacity through a Framework of Ethical Practice at Macquarie University has resulted in the development of a diverse and collaborative community of practice – one that makes possible the translation of ethical understanding into ethical practice. The consistent approach to identifying and meeting the needs and expectations of stakeholders has been a key factor to success. The complexity and sensitivity of ethical practice has also demanded a commitment to critical authenticity based on the integrity of process, the collaboration of researchers and practitioners, as well as institutional support and leadership.

While ethical practice at Macquarie University is well on its way to being thoroughly embedded in pedagogical and institutional structures, it is acknowledged that pushing the boundaries raises new concerns, challenges, and complexities and these will require ongoing research and development (e.g. avoiding ethics fatigue, adequate time and resources, and the unpredictability of ethical dilemmas), by the PACE Ethics Protocol Working Party.

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# Unintended outcomes? Building organisational capacity with PACE

## International partners

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PACE International is a component of Professional and Community Engagement (PACE), a Macquarie University-wide initiative that provides opportunities for students and staff to contribute to more just, inclusive and sustainable societies by engaging in activities with partner organisations in Australia and internationally. Underpinning PACE is a commitment to mutually beneficial learning and engagement. To align with this commitment, PACE-related research engages partner perspectives and those of students and academics. The dearth of scholarly research on partner perspectives of community engagement (Bringle, Clayton & Price, 2009) underscores this imperative. Drawing on interviews and focus groups with community partner representatives from Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, India, and Peru, this paper examines some of the apparently unexpected benefits of engagement with PACE that community partners report have contributed to their improved organisational capacity. We conclude by speculating that what can be perceived by universities as unexpected and unplanned by-products of student engagement, may actually be intended and strategically planned outcomes of community partners. The paper highlights the need for universities to develop a deeper understanding of the organisational objectives of community partners and their broader motivations for developing institutional relationships in order to ensure the nurturing and facilitation of such highly-valued outcomes through student engagement programs.

Keywords: Capacity building, community partners, mutually beneficial learning, international service-learning

### INTRODUCTION

There is little empirical research examining the objectives, motivations, and impacts of service-learning on community partners (Baker-Boosamra et al, 2006; Birdshall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Bringle, Clayton and Price, 2009; Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tonkin, 2011) or the “after-lives” of tangible products produced through such engagements (Oldfield, 2008). In response to this gap, this paper presents empirical data about international community partner perspectives of campus-community partnerships, focusing on partner motivations and outcomes at a level beyond project outputs and direct student engagement.

In the literature on service-learning, including international service-learning (ISL), there is in general an assumption of mutual benefit and ethical engagement. Oldfield (2008, p.270) states that much “[community-based] research proceeds with the assumption that projects can be mutually beneficial, but without an empirical or conceptual analysis of how this mutuality is constituted” (See also Butin, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Similarly, Dostilio et al (2012, p.17-18) call for a “deliberate examination” of the meanings behind the concept of reciprocity, arguing that “unexamined or unintentionally differing conceptualisations of reciprocity can lead to confusion in practice and can hinder research”. Their conceptual review offers three orientations to reciprocity that assists scholars and practitioners to clearly identify, organise, and articulate various forms of reciprocity within their own research and practice.

Furthermore, Hammersely (2013, p.177) argues, there is “a lack of research to support claims that programs result in mutually beneficial learning and engagement” and that this “can be attributed to the under-representation of community partner perspectives within academic research”. Similarly, Baker (2012) demonstrates that while the literature on partnerships acknowledges the need for ethical engagement with community partners, it does so by “focusing on ethical interactions between institutions and their partner organizations” from the institutions’ perspectives, rather than directly examining partners’ perspectives (see also Weston *et al.*, 2009; Flicker *et al.*, 2007), and does so largely in a theoretical or anecdotal way. Even less attention, however, has been given to international community partner perspectives (notable exceptions being Baker-Boosamra, Guevara & Balfour, 2006; Camacho,

2004; Crabtree, 2013; Porter & Monard, 2001). This underrepresentation has been variously attributed to a lack of clarity around the definition of “community” (Sandy & Holland, 2006); issues of methodology (Cruz & Giles, 2000); lack of institutional and financial support; and practical and logistical constraints that may prevent academics from being able to engage community partners in prolonged collaborative research, especially in international contexts (Crabtree, 2013; d’Arlach, Sánchez & Feuer, 2009).

Where there is a focus on partnerships, as in Jacoby and associates (2003) it is either largely theoretical, examining the principles of effective collaboration, or descriptive or anecdotal, focusing on program design and logistics (for example, Jones, 2003). The emerging empirical research primarily examines the impacts of ISL programs from either a faculty or student perspective (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones, 2011; Crabtree, 2013). An exception is Leiderman *et al.* (2003) who aim to “bring community perspectives into clearer focus” via empirical research on the “perspectives, experiences and voices of experienced community partners” (p.2). However, their research does not examine the international context. This paper responds to these gaps by presenting evidence of community partner benefits reported by international partners of Macquarie University’s Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program.

## CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

PACE is a University-wide initiative designed to provide undergraduate students with a distinctive educational experience involving community-based experiential learning opportunities with a range of local, regional and international partners. Through PACE, students work on jointly conceived projects that both meet the partner’s organisational goals and enable students to develop key graduate capabilities and learn through the process of engagement. The broader goal of PACE is to contribute to positive social change locally, regionally and internationally (see Macquarie University, 2008; Macquarie University, 2012). PACE International, an integral part of the PACE Initiative, is jointly managed by Macquarie University and Australian Volunteers International (AVI). PACE International in-country projects are currently operational with community-based partners in Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Philippines, India and Peru. On-campus projects connecting students remotely with partners in Lebanon, India and the Philippines have also been conducted. Over 400 students have participated in the PACE International program to date.

A central strategic aim of PACE is to develop ‘a continuously improving [program] that is reflective and converts lessons learnt into practice’ (PACE Strategic Plan 2009-2012). This involves a commitment to research and evaluation informed by ‘knowledge-flow theory’ (Weerts and Sandmann, 2008, p.77). This theory posits a paradigm of two-way knowledge exchange where learning occurs within the context in which knowledge is applied and is embedded in a group of learners (the community and the university), who are equal participants in the process. The PACE model of ‘interactive engagement’ (Roper and Hirth, 2005, p.3) is underpinned by a commitment to ‘mutually beneficial learning and engagement’ (Macquarie University, 2013). Clearly, to be true to this commitment, PACE-related research and evaluation must by definition engage partner perspectives as well as those of students and university staff. The dearth of scholarly research on partner perspectives of community engagement discussed above strengthens this imperative.

## METHODS

To gather partner perspectives on PACE International, the research team, members of which have been involved in the design and ongoing development of the PACE program, conducted interviews and focus groups with nine international partners. These took place at a workshop in Bangkok in April 2013 and during partner visits to the university campus during 2013 and 2014. Data in the focus groups was collected using participatory methods and focused on the extent to which the PACE International program was currently meeting partner needs and how it could be improved to better assist partners to achieve their community-based and organisational objectives. The guiding principles informing this research are molded methodologically around an ethics of reciprocity and the project has Macquarie University Ethics committee approval. Qualitative data analysis was undertaken using NVIVO 10 which assisted in the identification and analysis of key themes as discussed below.

## BENEFITS TO PARTNERS

Text boxes 1 and 2 in Figure 1 summarise the benefits of engagement that flow to partners as reported by PACE International community-based partners. These benefits are categorised as either 'expected' or 'unexpected', as viewed from the research team's perspective. Expected benefits are defined as those that were intentional outcomes of PACE program design and either previously reported in the literature and/or by Australian partners of the program. Reported benefits that did not satisfy both these conditions are categorised in Text box 2 as 'unexpected'.

| Text box 1: Expected Benefits  | Text box 2: Unexpected Benefits   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quality outputs of the student projects</li><li>• Partner needs foregrounded in project design</li><li>• Well supported and prepared participants enable them to make contribution more quickly</li><li>• Building relationships</li><li>• Cultural exchange</li><li>• Establishing social networks and having fun together (e.g. playing sports, street theatre, dancing and sharing meals)</li><li>• Knowledge exchange</li><li>• Personal development</li><li>• Building institutional relationships</li><li>• Motivational boost</li><li>• Peer to peer exchange between students and partner's youthful workforce and their clients</li><li>• Students skills, knowledge and attributes</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improved organizational management systems*</li><li>• Predictable revenue stream *</li><li>• Predictable timing, numbers and quality of participants enables longer term planning*</li><li>• Building confidence of community and staff in interacting with foreigners *</li><li>• Network of advocates/international awareness raising*</li><li>• Validation of community, organizational and local knowledge *</li><li>• Positive outcomes for students</li><li>• International students bring intercultural competence</li></ul> |

FIGURE 1. Summary of partner benefits

\* These unexpected partner benefits are discussed below.

The following section will explore unexpected partner benefits highlighted in Text box 1 under three themes. These were identified for more detailed discussion because most partners noted the importance of these benefits to their organisation.

### *Theme 1: Improved organisational management systems*

'Organisational management systems' are the policies and procedures associated with financial, risk and volunteer management introduced or enhanced at the partner organisation as a direct result of engaging with the PACE International program. Each of these elements is encountered by partner organisations at a project level, but their impact extends well beyond that of individual projects. For example, one partner reported that the experience gained by working with PACE:

... flows through too, so a lot of the systems and things that we've put in place to manage this program [PACE] now flow out across the other volunteers that we work with. It improves the way we manage them and the risks that we're able to mitigate as a result.

Another partner specifically requested a briefing about the volunteer recruitment cycle used by Macquarie University and AVI to recruit students to the PACE International program so as to make use of the principles and procedures involved to recruit staff and other volunteers to the organisation.

### *Theme 2: Predictability of revenue stream and participant quality enabling long-term planning*

Another set of benefits identified by partners of the PACE International program relates to the stability, predictability and assurance of quality that the long-term nature of the partnership provides them. There are a number of dimensions to this, particularly the value partners place on having a reliable supply of quality volunteers, as the following quote attests:

... we do get a lot of applications [from] people that want to come and volunteer with us but they're *ad hoc* - some are good, some are bad. It's difficult to manage .... The benefit of [the PACE International] program is that we get [a] reliable, predictable, stream of volunteers that are screened and processed for us ... It's much easier to incorporate that into our organisational planning and to make it translate into real benefits.

A related benefit mentioned by many partners was the certainty provided by the predictable revenue stream that the PACE International program provides. These human and financial dimensions of program predictability enabled partners to plan for the longer term, giving them the capability and confidence to make commitments, rather than just promises, to the communities in which they worked.

### *Theme 3: Organisational recognition and advocacy*

The final set of benefits relate to the increased reputation of partners (both at home and abroad), and a greater sense of organisational confidence in communicating their objectives and achievements to diverse audiences. Greater international exposure of partners, for example, occurs as a growing network of student advocates return home, share their experiences with family and friends through social and conventional media networks. As one partner noted, "it's the positive PR that comes from it. They spread it, they talk about it, and that really helps us." Another attested:

... there are more people now who are aware of what's happening with children in the Philippines, and that gives us more ... influence or more possibility to react when something really bad happens.

Increased international exposure can also increase the organisation's potential influence in-country. For example, partnering with an international university has enhanced the organisational credibility of some PACE partners with their local and national governments:

It sometimes goes a long way in the Philippines, particularly when you work with government organisations and [you] say this is [a] partnership with Macquarie University, and all of a sudden you get taken a bit more notice of.

In addition to greater external recognition, an Indigenous rights-based organisation expressed the benefits of student engagement as increasing the self-confidence of its staff to communicate organisational initiatives to the communities in which they work, to government, international institutions, and non-government organisations locally and internationally:

... they [staff] mention that they are not afraid of interacting with people...it's a big asset because if you want to negotiate, if you want to say something, present an idea to any[body], for instance if you are fighting for your land rights...you need to have that confidence.

Engaging with "outsiders" in particular was perceived by partners as enhancing lobbying efforts and raising the profile of their cause.

## CONCLUSION

This paper examined some of the apparently unexpected benefits of student engagement that international community partners report. These fall under three themes: 1) improved organisational management systems; 2) predictability of revenue stream and participant quality enabling long-term planning; and 3) organisational recognition and advocacy. While the research team has defined these benefits as 'unexpected', it may be that this nomenclature is more reflective of the definitional frame of reference of Western academics, than it is of international partners. What is perceived by universities as unexpected and unplanned by-products of student engagement may

actually be intended and strategically-planned outcomes for community partners. Anecdotal evidence from ongoing dialogue with PACE partners and preliminary research data collected around partner motivations for engagement suggests that this is the case. Further investigation is required, however, as it could be that partners' actual experience of the program is driving their *post hoc* attribution of motivations for engaging with it. Irrespective of this, the proposition points to the need for ongoing dialogue with community partners as their motivations for involvement may shift over time, for example in response to evolving organisational objectives. The research team is also aware that the finding reported here are context dependent and may not be generalisable to all international community partners, nor their participation in all forms of student engagement, at all times. This further highlights the importance of obtaining partner perspectives on desired (and actual) outcomes in the initial design and ongoing review and development of ISL programs. We thus argue that universities need to develop a deeper understanding of the organisational objectives of community partners and their broader motivations for developing institutional relationships in order to ensure the nurturing and facilitation of such highly-valued outcomes.

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# Developing platform skills for the workplace: Weaving reflective practice experiments into everyday life

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Generalist skills - organising, innovating, reflecting, negotiating, etc. - make a large contribution to successful professional practice. Learning to experiment with one's practice is a metaskill that strengthens students' capacity to develop these platform skills. Helping students learn to approach their practice in an exploratory, experimental way is therefore good preparation for work integrated learning experiences, and for subsequent professional practice. To explore this possibility in practice, students in a postgraduate environmental class chose some platform skills and experimented with their approach to them in actual situations. Schön's differentiations - exploratory practice, move-testing and/or hypothesis-testing - defined "experiment", and we asked them specifically to heed their evolving 'feel' for their practice and situation, as they experimented, as a felt sense of what is occurring is inherently holistic and open, and has been demonstrated to be helpful in problem solving and creative thinking. Student evaluations and qualitative analysis of their practice research reports demonstrate that most students found this approach illuminating. These reflective practice experiments gave students an experience of consciously taking responsibility for and managing the development of their own practice. This built their capacity to engage reflectively and astutely in the work integrated learning experiences that follow in their program.

Keywords: Professional practice, reflective practice, work-integrated learning, capacity building, reflective practice experiments, felt sense

## INTRODUCTION

Generalist skills - organising, innovating, reflecting, negotiating, etc. - make a large contribution to successful professional practice (Robbins, 1994; cf. Gunderson *et al.*, 2007). One way to think about these generalist skills - adopting a metaphor from information technology - is as a platform on which many application skills depend. To take the environmental professions as an example, environmental impact assessment, environmental auditing, policy design, project management, and many other practices depend on skills in organising and negotiation, and each benefits from skills in innovation (most obviously when current practice is unsatisfactory or circumstances are novel - arguably the typical case, given the difficulties we have maintaining ecosystem services and conserving biodiversity).

These platform skills are an obvious place to focus educational effort, particularly when one is (as we are at Macquarie University) teaching students for diverse environmental professions - environmental planning, environmental management and environmental science, etc. - who, in professional life will need to develop a wide variety of specific skills, depending on the professional roles that come their way.

To prepare students for formal work integrated learning experiences (in our case, a consultancy with an actual client), and for future professional life in general, we have experimented with an approach to reflective practice: encouraging students to experiment, reflectively, with their practice in their everyday lives (at university, in households, in workplaces), paying close attention to their evolving 'feel' (Schön 1987 p.24,30), or "felt sense" (Gendlin, 1981, 1997; Walkerden, 2005), for what may be helpful.

Familiar examples from everyday life of a heeding a *felt* sense or *felt* knowing are (1) having something one has forgotten 'on the tip of one's tongue' (which 'rejects' the suggestion "camera" and 'confirms' the suggestion "wallet" if it is one's wallet that one has forgotten), or (2) editing a text and pausing what is written sits uncomfortably (a correction may come quickly, or one may have to sit with the sense of 'needing something different' for some time). Gendlin and colleagues have demonstrated that systematically heeding one's 'feel' for what is at stake in a situation - a kind of 'listening to oneself' - enhances problem solving in psychotherapy (Hendricks, 2001). Walkerden (2009) has identified parallel discoveries of this process in a wide variety of practice traditions, including advertising, architecture, education, management, theatre and scientific research.

This paper reports on our efforts to help students become more sensitive to their 'feel' for how their practice is going, and to leverage this as they experiment with ways of improving their practice of a variety of professionally relevant platform skills.

## METHOD

We asked students to experiment with one or more of six practices that play central roles in environmental decision making: systems analysis, stakeholder analysis, management system analysis and design, negotiation, creative thinking and reflective practice. They were invited to experiment with them in any setting in their lives outside the classroom – another university class, home, workplace, etc. The experiment(s) themselves were to be gentle and safe: the goal was simply to demonstrate, through a project report, that they had sensitively explored ways that they could vary their practice, looking for better approaches.

To scaffold their exploration of their practice we provided two reference points, one nested in the other. The overarching frame was Donald Schön's (1987) description of reflective practice experiments, which are part of how he unpacks the notion of 'reflection-in-action'. Schön's differentiations, with examples we provided students, are:

- *exploratory practice*, (e.g. noticing you are uneasy and slowing down and checking that out - the 'unease' needs to be 'listened to')
- *move testing*, (e.g. noticing that you are inclined to respond critically too often to some others' ideas and trying on a different hat - in De Bono's terms), and/or
- *hypothesis testing*, (e.g. trying out a shift from positional bargaining to interest based negotiation in some low key settings (e.g. when you and a friend want to different things on a Saturday night)).

Nested within this was a requirement that they use their 'feel' for their practice to guide them as they experimented. By 'feel' we meant, in the first instance, "uneases, discomforts, ... intuitions, hunches, ...; your 'feel' for what may occur, for what may be helpful ...". Schön (1987 p.24,30) mentions the centrality of heeding one's 'feel' for one's practice to reflection-in-action, and many others advert to it (Walkerden, 2009). Few have explored these micropractices in depth (though cf. Alexander, 1979; Gendlin, 1981, 1997; Johansson and Kroksmark, 2004; Pettimengin-Peugeot, 1999). We used Gendlin's (1981, 1997) and Walkerden's (2005, 2009) work to explicate what 'having a feel for one's practice and heeding it' means for students.

The practice research project was introduced in the second week of class, and the practice research report, was due in the last week. To scaffold the project, we ran diverse workshop sessions in class, held FAQ sessions, and provided diverse resources online.

The students' essays were analysed to identify which practices they had experimented with, in what settings, in what ways, and what they had learned. Over the two years of this study 96 students participated in the class, and 53 (55%) volunteered their assignments for analysis. Other data points which throw light on the effectiveness of the teaching were also used: the students' grades, which are a measure of how skilfully they experimented with their practice; and a formal student evaluation of the class in 2013.

## RESULTS

The students' grades demonstrate that most carried out reflective practice experiments successfully: 95% passed the assignment, and 85% were awarded Credit grades or above. In 2013 in a formal assessment, 78% of students identified the assessment tasks as useful learning exercises.

Analyses of the essays demonstrates significant learning (from the students' perspectives), in diverse professional skills. What occurred is best conveyed with examples (Table 1). The students' reflections support four key findings (Table 1).

1. Undertaking reflective practice experiments quite often leads to surprising insights: i.e. they can catalyse significant, valuable learning. [See the observations tagged (1) in Table 1.]
2. The extent to which students find it easy to refer directly, self-consciously, to their felt sense, within reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, varies considerably. [See the observations tagged (2) in some examples, and the lack of articulation of this aspect of reflecting in others.]

3. Heightened sensitivity to one's own felt sense about a social situation can deepen insight into others' experience, and improve social skills. In other words, intrapersonal (somatic) sensitivity is at one and the same time interpersonal sensitivity. (3)
4. Reflective practice in general, and heeding felt understanding specifically, can support innovation and creativity. (4)

Together these demonstrate that reflective practice experiments undertaken by the students in their everyday lives can make a substantial contribution to their development of platform skills.

TABLE 1. Reports from exemplary reflective practice experiments

| Setting & Research focus   | Student Reflections  | Observations   |
|--|--|--|
| Household; using felt understanding, in reflective practice, in stakeholder analysis                 | "When using felt-knowledge and reflective practice for a stakeholders analysis, it became easier for me to identify positions and separate them from interests. For instance, the first time we all agreed on trying to keep the house tidy something felt like missing. After letting grow that feeling, I realized it was more a position than a true interest. Later I understood our interest by analyzing move testing actions and hypothesis testing with the three of us:"  | (2) heeding felt sense self-consciously<br>(1) unexpected insight<br>(3) improving social skills |
| Household; using felt understanding, in reflective practice, in negotiation and stakeholder analysis | "It was very easier for me to identify the interests and separate it from the position when I used felt knowing and reflective practice. When I thought about my position of getting the full amount of the rental bond reimbursed, I felt like something was not right. When I gave more thought to this uncomfortable feeling and let it grow. I came to realize that my approach is focused solely on the position not the interest. I started acknowledging the interest of my land lord using stakeholder analysis. The following are some of the interest of my landlord I noticed: [...] the most important interest of the landlord was to avoid financial loss when the flat remains vacant for few months. From the reflective practice processes [... I found] I could focus on the multiple interests of my landlord rather than positional bargaining. In addition, using stakeholder analysis, I identified some other stakeholders who might be helpful for my negotiation [and in fact were]." | (2) heeding felt sense self-consciously<br>(1) unexpected insight<br>(3) improving social skills |
| Non-environmental workplace; using reflective practice, in negotiations                              | "I was surprised by the effectiveness of reflective practice when applied intentionally. Previously I thought of it as something that was done at an unconscious level. I enjoyed the self-analysis and the improvement in the negotiations was almost immediate in some cases, [...] The benefits extended to future negotiations and made the negotiations not only more effective but more pleasant and provided secondary benefits by creating a workplace where professional negotiations are an alternative to negotiating from a position of power or control."   | (1) unexpected insight<br>(3) improving social skills  |
| Non-environmental workplace; using felt understanding, in reflective practice                        | "I also acquired another important result by felt knowing practice. [...] Another example is, during their dance, I used this method to notice how I should enhance their dance and harmonization. Then I waited to notice if anything comes through my conscious and when it came, I just welcomed it. Using this method, I remembered many dance movements and styles and taught them one by one.  | (2) heeding felt sense self-consciously<br>(1) unexpected insight                                |

| Setting & Research focus  | Student Reflections  | Observations                                 |
|---|--|--|
|   | Trying this method several times, allowed me to be more aware of my senses and feelings. Many ideas were rushing through my mind, but I was choosing the ones which felt right or pleasant to me. The outcome was rewarding. I earned enough money by teaching and I am a well-known dancer right now."  | (4) innovation                               |
| Environmental workplace: using reflective practice, in stakeholder analysis | "After these framing experiments I was able to move on to move testing to complete the stakeholder analysis. [...] I began with the more familiar stakeholders [...], but also myself. It was a very interesting experience considering myself as a stakeholder, trying to determine how the project would impact me and my role. This was a new and interesting experience for me and I gained some useful insight into my motivations for the project. I believe in this process my moves were affirmed as [I] was able to get a very clear perspective on what each group stood to gain from the project and clarify what their positions and interests were. [...] As a result of completing these experiments I was able to begin to brainstorming ideas for moving forward with the projects, which was for me a very useful outcome. I had much more confidence and understanding creating capacity to move forward." | (1) unexpected insight<br><br>(4) innovation |

## DISCUSSION

From the perspective of Work Integrated Learning, the most important characteristic of this approach is that it develops students' capacities to take responsibility for their own learning, and specifically their learning of the relatively 'soft' skills that underpin effective professional practice in many roles. It introduces students to the possibility of explicitly reframing difficulties they encounter as opportunities to experiment with variations to their practice, and it equips them with a highly general model for doing so: reflective practice experiments (forming and testing hypotheses, trying out moves, and/or exploring without defined expectations) in which their felt sense of their practice, which is inherently holistic in a way that beliefs about what we are doing are not (Gendlin, 1981, 1997; Walkerden, 2005), provides an evolving orientation. As the surprises the students report in the excerpts quoted above demonstrate, this approach to practicing reflectively is capable of producing 'step changes' in know-how.

In postgraduate environmental programs, many students anticipate that it is the specialist skills that they can learn that are the key to professional success. In some roles they are critical, in many roles they make an important contribution, however strong technical skills are rarely sufficient for professional competence, and in many roles the platform skills are far more important to competence and excellence. Because ecosystems integrate diverse influences, environmental professionals commonly have to interface with other experts and other stakeholders (within and outside their organisations), so social skills, like negotiation, make a central contribution. Because many aspects of environmental practice are inadequate if our benchmark is sustainability, innovation is often appropriate. Platform skills have a pervasive impact on performance in most roles.

The educational process outlined here has echoes of placement programs: it leverages the situations students are already embedded in, and platform skills that matter in these situations and in professional environmental practice. It is not a substitute for WIL of course, but it is a good preparation for it, and for professional practice generally.

The model we are using has significant limitations, and is evolving. Most notably, with the class sizes we are working with (ranging from 40 to 60 students) it is not possible to address individuals' difficulties with learning how to heed, directly and self-consciously, their felt sense of their practice

situations, except briefly. Gendlin and colleagues have demonstrated that with more intensive training skills in heeding felt understanding can be taught in ways that are very empowering for personal problem solving (Gendlin, 1996; Hendricks, 2001). We are currently exploring ways to provide more intensive scaffolding in this area.

## CONCLUSION

Taking an experimental, reflective approach to practice is a metaskill in which students can be trained. The students' reflective practice experiments gave them an experience of consciously taking responsibility for and managing the development of their own practice. By experimenting with their use of platform skills in their everyday lives – in their homes, workplaces and other classes – they built their capacity to engage reflectively and astutely in the work-integrated learning experiences that follow in their program, and in future professional life generally. Reflective practice experiments in which students heed their *felt* sense of 'what is at stake and what might be helpful' can foster 'step changes' in know-how.

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# Cultural and Professional Growth through a Team Based Internship

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In 2012, 26 students from Deakin University Australian were provided with the opportunity to undertake a two-week placement with businesses in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. In teams of four or five, the students immersed themselves in their organisations to solve a business problem. The program was conducted again in 2013 and plans are underway to conduct the program in 2014. This paper will describe the program and the way it operates. It will provide the learnings from the two iterations it has been conducted and detail what factors contribute to a successful experience. The paper will describe the outcomes and provide evidence of the program's success from both a student and business perspective.

Keywords: Teamwork, internship, cultural, placement, work integrated learning

## INTRODUCTION

The Faculty of Business and Law at Deakin University offers a growing number of work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for its students. Undergraduate WIL units are offered across the faculty (and are also available to students from other faculties) through five different models:

- Community Based Volunteering
- Work Based Learning
- Business Internship Program
- Team Based Learning
- Industry Based Learning

Course-specific units are also offered for students undertaking degrees in Law or Sports Management. The above units are all similar in aims, but differ in terms of: focus; host organisation; duration and therefore attributed credit points; learning outcomes and whether it is an unpaid or paid work placement/project. The WIL units are designed to give students experience in an environment where they will develop work-ready attributes, contributing to their overall skill development in the application of academic learning. Each experience is designed to add value to the students' qualification and increase their employability. Employability means that students acquire the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that make them "more likely to secure employment and be successful in their chosen occupations to the benefits of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy (Yorke as cited in Oliver 2013). It also provides the student with a genuine experience to include on their resume as well as the opportunity to identify future referees and to commence creating their professional networks.

All of the units include opportunities for students to undertake their placements in an overseas location. One such opportunity revolves around a team-based business internship conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Participating students are enrolled in the Team Based Learning unit, which contributes one credit point towards their degree (a typical degree consists of 24 credit points). The program operates during the inter-trimester break in July. Utilising the services of a local agent in Kuala Lumpur, opportunities are sourced for students to work with a local business for a period of two weeks where they will complete a project or solve a business problem as a team. The aims of the program are for students to undertake an authentic business placement, as a member of a team, which will contribute to their personal development. The program helps students to develop the Deakin University Graduate Learning Outcomes of communication, self-management and teamwork skills.

## THE PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Once the Malaysian program is advertised, second or third year students are able to submit an expression of interest and a written application (CV and a one pager on why they want to undertake a group internship overseas). Short-listed students are then invited for an interview and those who are

successful are required to undertake individual preparation for the trip; obtain a suitable passport, visa, finances, insurance and flights. Four weeks out from departure the selected students attend a compulsory pre-departure briefing. This is conducted in a business environment in central Melbourne and students attend in business attire.

The pre-departure briefing centres on the expectations and demands of undertaking the program. Cultural awareness, culture shock, health and safety issues are described and discussed. Students are then assigned into their teams and each has a team leader appointed by the academic staff in the program. The team leader's role is to keep their team on track, ensure there is good communication between the members, consider the team morale but at the same time avoid 'being too dominant'. Feedback from previous Hosts indicate that they value the teams being multi-disciplinary in nature. The team composition is therefore based around the building of diverse teams (age, gender, ethnicity and skill set) and the staff's knowledge of the project to which they will be assigned. Students are then given an opportunity to get to know each other and a number of team-building activities take place.

Apart from the Team leader there are three other roles which students elect to undertake for the team: sEcretariat, logistical Arranger, and Media organiser. Suggested responsibilities for each role are provided which have evolved through feedback and suggestions from previous participants of the program. However the team can choose to alter these to suit their needs. The role of the sEcretariat has included ensuring notes are kept of team meetings, confirming the project description accurately reflects the needs of the host, is clearly documented and understood by all. The Logistical Arranger coordinates activities such as that the team travels as a unit to and from the host's premises. They consider the team's needs regarding technology, office supplies, local sim card, and a kitty for team costs such as taxis. The role of the Media person has incorporated getting all members of the team enrolled in the program's Facebook page, coordinating at least one a blog article as well as a photographic record (20 photos) which best capture the team's activities.

Assessment comprises the Team's graded project (50%) and three graded individual tasks (50%). Reddan (2013) suggests that there are benefits for students if assessment items, which are valid, reliable and appropriate, are graded. A student's motivation, their sense of achievement and even their enjoyment will increase as they are likely to contribute greater effort than if the course was simply marked as either 'satisfactory' or 'un-satisfactory'. Williams and Bateman (2003) however warn that grading adds to the 'complexity of assessment'.

The first individual task revolves around research into teamwork, undertaking an analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses, and goal setting. During their time in Malaysia students keep an individual reflective learning diary to which minimal marks are assigned. Edgar, Francis-Coad and Connaughton (2013) suggest that it is challenging for educators to include "reflective practice skills into curricula that provide context, are assessable and assist students to develop the graduate attribute of reflective practice". Boud and Walker (1998) caution that asking students to submit their reflections is not without serious problems. While students are encouraged to make time at the end of each day to critically reflect about their experience of the Malaysian workplace they are asked to write about just one issue or item in their 'hand-in journal'. In this way we attempt to 'contain' the shared reflections to ones that students are comfortable submitting, be they of an emotional nature or otherwise. It is possible that students may experience culture shock, and this may emerge in these reflections, which gives the staff member an opportunity to help students deal with it.

The final individual piece is a post-placement report, which enables students to gather appropriate and contextualised practical examples of professional competencies that reflect their input and output of the experience. Students will also be able to draw upon their previous reflections and incorporate them into the report. The timing of these assessment items align with the pre, during and post strategy suggested by Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010).

## THE IN-COUNTRY INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

The academic staff member arrives in KL a few days before the students. This enables them to go and visit all of the host businesses, meet with the supervising staff member(s) and discuss the project and expectations.

Students travel independently from Australia though after the pre-departure briefing numerous students make connections and travel together. This gives students flexibility to choose the dates and fares that suit their circumstances. All students must be at the hotel by the Saturday evening prior to the two-week internship. Students are allocated to a twin share room with another student who is not in their team. A full day of orientation takes place on the Sunday. The morning orientation includes an entire group briefing on health and safety, the expectations and responsibilities of the students, networking and a reminder they are guests in another country. Individual team briefings then occur. A local lunch is followed by a great race around Kuala Lumpur, to enable students to orient themselves and see a little of the city, a welcome dinner concludes the day.

For the next two weeks teams make their own way to and from the host premises. They work on an authentic task or problem, and get real world practice in a foreign business environment. In the evening the staff member works with different students. Some nights it is entire teams, other nights it is all the members undertaking a particular role such as the team leaders or media people. An entire group meeting takes place on the first Friday evening where each team presents to the group their experiences of the first week and any issues they have encountered with their project. This enables other students to contribute suggestions or alternative ideas for those teams who need help to overcome their difficulties. On the middle Saturday students may be required to continue working if it is a normal working day for their host, may be invited to some staff activity or may have a rest day. Sunday is set aside for rest, reflection and recovery for all.

An alumni event has also been held one evening in the fortnight, which students attend. This gives the students an opportunity to network with business people working in Malaysia but who have attended the university students are currently studying at. This event is highly valued by the students as it enables them to get more insights into working in Malaysia. Students, in the past, have also had the opportunity to attend the Malaysian Australian Business Council networking function at the Australian High Commission. In the words from one student, "it was an invaluable experience being able to meet industry experts and Australian expats".

Towards the end of the second week students present their work to the host business and academic through a formal oral presentation and a written report in a format appropriate for the project task. The staff member then has an individual debriefing session with the business regarding their experience of the program.

The Internship experience concludes with a debriefing on the Friday evening for the entire group of students. By this time students have completed 80- 90 hours of work on average with their host organisation.

## THE OUTCOME

Some indicators of the positive student and host business experience are as follows:

- Students were asked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being unsatisfactory and 10 being awesome, to rate the overall Malaysian internship experience. The average rating was 8.3 from the 46 students who have participated over the two years.
- Almost every host organisation with whom students have worked have asked to be involved again.

Indicative comments from students:

Undertaking an internship in Australia is a wonderful, challenging and knowledgeable experience in itself, but being able to undertake an internship in a foreign country opens one up to a magnitude of different experiences and learning curves.

As a group I believe we would all recommend undertaking an internship in Malaysia, as you get to actually use the skills you learn from uni and apply it to the work you do, it is a great opportunity to make new friends, experience a different cultures and aspects of the Malaysian working life and it will not only be beneficial to your learning but to your future.

It is easy for teachers and textbooks to tell us the differences exist, but to see the differences put all of this into perspective. Although it was often challenging, it was an amazing trip and one we would highly recommend to students looking to gain that little bit extra, interesting experience to add to their resume.

Regarding the teamwork aspect:

Having to work with 3 people that you knew very little about was difficult at first, but we were able to grow from the experience and all come together by the end, not only as good friends, but as a solid work group who had worked tirelessly to produce incredible work for our assigned company.

And from a mature age student:

The internship opportunity was a completely unexpected opportunity. As a single Mum of two teenagers, I thought it would be them who would be off travelling the world, not me. The experience of the Malaysia Internship far exceeds any classroom learning. It's exhilarating, exhausting and challenging all at the same time.

#### WHAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE PROGRAMS SUCCESS?

- Employing a local agent to organise the hosts and make all the local arrangements
- The academic visiting the host organisations prior to the student's arrival and clarifying details and expectations.
- The academic working with the students in the evening, rather than during business hours.
- Teams of four students exactly, and five teams make up the entire groupie 20 students in total.
- Students arranging their own flights/travel to and from Kuala Lumpur.
- All students staying at the same group hotel (no exceptions even those with local accommodation).
- Providing a detailed pre-departure program and a debriefing session after the placements conclude.
- Guided learning through assessment tasks.
- Providing suggested responsibilities for each role that needs to be undertaken in the team and allowing teams to modify as needed.
- Accommodation of students in twin share rooms with another student who is not in their team.

There are numerous opportunities under consideration to expand the program in the future including using alternative locations such as Penang or Singapore, or conducting a second offering of the program in another inter-trimester break.

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# Capacity Building for Clinical Supervision in Allied Health in Vietnam

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Since Vietnam's first speech therapists (ST) graduated in September 2012 they have been involved in a capacity building program to become skilled clinical supervisors (CS) by (1) acting as co-supervisors of current ST students with visiting Australian supervisors and receiving on-the-job role mentoring from them; (2) participating in a Supervisor Development Program (SDP). The SDP consisted of six 3 hour sessions covering planning for placements, teaching and feedback techniques, peer learning, reflection, evaluation of placement outcomes, development of self-as-clinical supervisor. Translation of program notes and in-class interpreting between English and Vietnamese was provided by experienced translators/interpreters. The program was highly interactive and the presenters role-modelled techniques throughout. With the participants' Informed Consent, their reactions to the content and techniques, and suggestions for modification were digitally recorded during the sessions, and in dedicated focus group times. Transcripts were analysed to identify participants' perceptions of content and techniques that are and are not culturally and pedagogically appropriate for teaching allied health students in Vietnam. Their suggestions for modification of the program will be incorporated in a revised program and delivered with their involvement for future allied health graduates. Lessons from this two-stage approach to supervisor development are applicable to the Australian context.

Keywords: Capacity building, clinical supervision, allied health, speech therapy, indigenisation

## INTRODUCTION

Western models of education and training (WMET) in health and social care services have been imposed on or adopted by many developing countries (such as in Africa and Asia) in the past without always showing consideration for local contextual factors such as culture, values and belief systems. Several authors have questioned the transferability of WMET to developing countries because of the failure of such models to accommodate local factors such as poverty, local religious practices and beliefs and the ways in which people learn and work (Lan *et al.*, 2010). Further, consideration needs to be given to differences in communication style, ways of giving and receiving positive or negative feedback and power differences between staff and students. Kreitzer *et al.* (2009) examined past influences of colonialism, modernisation and globalisation and described the impact those factors had on the social work education and curriculum development in Ghana. Indigenisation is a term used in social work education to describe the process of adaptation of the Western values, knowledge and skills to a non-Western context using an appropriate cultural lens. Yan (2013) argues that different components of social work (knowledge, skills and values) can be separately imported and adapted using the indigenisation process so that the models of social care are relevant for the local contexts. There is a need for the customisation of the WMET for health professions and supervisor training to enable culturally-appropriate education and training approaches appropriate for non-western countries. This paper describes an action research approach where Vietnamese CS act as co-researchers and agents of change with Australian CS/researchers to participate in a SDP, reflect on learnings and activities, and gather feedback on their experiences of the program. Findings will inform adaptation of an Australian SDP to the needs and contexts of allied health professionals in Vietnam.

## METHODS

Participants were 10 graduates who completed Vietnam's first ST program in September 2012, a 2 year post-graduate program at Pham Ngoc Thach University (PNTU) in Ho Chi Minh City (McAllister *et al.*, 2013). Graduates were already practising in government hospitals as doctors, nurses and physiotherapists when they undertook the ST course. On graduation they returned to their hospitals to establish and deliver ST services. They have been involved since 2013 as co-supervisors of the current

ST students at PNTU, being mentored by visiting Australian speech pathology CSs. Presenters of the SDP (authors 1 and 2) are experienced CS in Australia and in Vietnam, and have extensive experience as academics developing, delivering and evaluating SDPs to CS in Australia. They were well known to the course participants having lectured and supervised them on placement several times during their PNTU ST course.

The SDP is a two stage program: Stage 1 was delivered to the group over 6 three-hour sessions in January 2014. At the conclusion of the program, each participant set personal and peer group learning goals for follow up reflection and discussion in Stage 2, to be run later in 2014. In Stage 1, each session consisted of a mix of presentation of basic knowledge and skills overview, skills demonstration and practice, reflection and discussion, and group feedback on the cultural appropriateness and relevance of the content, skills and strategies, and challenges to implementation.

The program covered planning for placements, teaching and feedback techniques, peer learning, reflection, evaluation of placement outcomes and development of self-as-clinical supervisor. Program notes for each session were prepared in English by the presenters and translated into Vietnamese by a translator experienced in translation of course materials for the ST course and hence familiar with terminology. Students received these notes in advance of each session. Content in the sessions was delivered by the presenters in English with sequential interpretation from an interpreter who works for the ST course. A digital recorder ran for much of the teaching sessions and all of the research focus groups and notes were kept by both presenters. Where participants were talking simultaneously or over each other, as in discussions among students during skills practice sessions and role-plays in small groups, key content was summarised into English by the interpreter. Whole of class discussions, question/answer sessions between the participants and presenters, as well as the research focus groups were sequentially interpreted and then summarised by the interpreter for the digital audio-recorder.

Two data collection methods were planned: focus groups in each of the six SDP sessions, and the taking of summary notes of points raised during teaching sessions by participants. Summary points were made by a session facilitator on the whiteboard to guide students, and the other presenter not facilitating the session kept handwritten field notes as a backup in case of recorder problems as well as photographing the whiteboard summary.

The presenters/researchers listened to all digital recordings made during focus groups and in-class discussions and decided which were clear enough<sup>1</sup> for full transcription by experienced English-Vietnamese translators. Additionally, relevant, audible dialog was transcribed verbatim by the researchers. Photographs of all whiteboard summaries and field notes were analysed and triangulated with digital recording transcripts/notes to ensure key points and data categories were noted.

## RESULTS

Several recurring key points were identified in the data and then clustered into content categories, consistent with approaches outlined by Weber (1990). Due to word length constraints, this paper presents two key categories:

- (1) East/West differences;
  - (2) Being novice CSs in a new profession
- and the interaction between these two themes.

A more comprehensive description of the findings will be presented in subsequent publications.

### *East / West (Or Vietnamese / Australian) Differences*

Participants were asked to discuss the differences they perceived between Western and Vietnamese CS in the context of ST clinical placements and additional comments were noted during sessions.

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<sup>1</sup> A noisy classroom environment and exuberant learners speaking simultaneously made full transcription of all recordings impossible.

A number of comments related to trust, with Australian supervisors being seen as trusted to have knowledge, skill and the capacity to motivate. One participant said:

... students trust the Australian CSs; students know they are instructors and accept that the CS may not know all the answers. Whereas in Vietnam, students expect their CS to know everything; this puts pressure on the CSs; if a Vietnamese CS doesn't know an answer, Vietnamese students lose trust ... Students know the Vietnamese CS is a new speech therapist.

In this context questioning by the Australian CS was seen as a way to facilitate the student's learning "and make the student more independent"; whereas participants felt that if a Vietnamese supervisor asked a question it could be interpreted as the supervisor "not wanting to answer" or not knowing the answer, and therefore not gaining, or indeed losing, trust of the student.

How to give feedback and what to give feedback on was a frequent topic of discussion in the focus groups. It was stated that without correction the student will not change ("feedback must be accurate so the student can fix it") and correction needed to be made in a way "not to cause offence". Participants acknowledged that working with 'lazy' students was difficult but felt "no one will say that directly" to the student. "If that's the case, they will talk to him" but not be direct. Comment was also made that "the temperament of the student" may dictate whether feedback was direct or indirect. Much discussion took place relating to the possible emotional response of the student to CS feedback. The desire "to not offend" was mentioned, and concern was expressed that people receiving "negative feedback could become aggressive". It was also noted that if feedback is too straightforward it can lead to defensiveness and "feeling that the teacher hates them".

#### *Being Novice CSs In A New Profession*

Some participants described themselves as experienced CSs in their original profession. They commented that they were comfortable to provide modelling and feedback in that field, particularly regarding skills. One participant, an experienced physiotherapist before training to be a ST, went on to say that in his experience it was different in physiotherapy, "because the CSs are established clinicians and know more".

Participants felt that as ST CSs, they lacked the experience to provide modelling, feedback and teaching to student STs. In the context of physiotherapy supervision, one participant commented that the CS is responsible to "do training tasks well to increase the skill, knowledge and interest of students". As new STs, this was seen as difficult to achieve effectively. Another participant commented that "supervisors should model" but because the Vietnamese CSs are recently graduated, students don't expect so much of them. One participant said "it's really difficult because the CSs are learning themselves still".

There appeared to be some acceptance that skills or performance were easier, and perhaps more appropriate to comment on and modify, whereas commenting on knowledge base was less commonly addressed. "Students are very concerned about evidence-based practice (EBP) [a foundation of the ST curriculum] and so CSs need to make sure they are referring to current evidence". Participants repeatedly commented that the evidence-base in ST is limited globally, but especially in Vietnam. The profession is in its infancy in Vietnam and "there is no evidence in Vietnam yet". The literature is not available so "we cannot tell people to look it up".

## DISCUSSION

Fear of having their precarious/limited knowledge base exposed is a common concern for novice CSs. New graduates in Australia when interviewed as novice CSs have also articulated their "fear of students' knowledge" (McAllister *et al.*, 2008). Most of the participants in this SDP had been mentored into their CS roles by visiting Australian CSs, working alongside them to supervise Vietnamese ST students and learn from role modelling and participation in the discussions with the students. Clearly this support needs to continue, to build both clinical knowledge and supervisory knowledge and skill.

Based on our previous teaching and supervision experiences in Vietnam, we had expected the issue of 'saving face' to arise in the discussions with the participants. It did so but indirectly, related to the issues of trust, not wanting to give direct negative feedback to students, but more importantly not wanting to have their own lack of knowledge and evidence-base exposed through interactions with students.

Gaining and keeping students' trust was of great concern. It seemed that the concept of 'trust' was seen as central to the effectiveness of CSs. This is an issue which merits further attention in subsequent studies and it will be important the interpretation of 'trust' into English is fully understood. This shared understanding would assist students as well as CSs both from Vietnam and Australia. In particular, for the CSs from Australia, it would be useful to make us more aware of risks around being seen as the source of knowledge and therefore not able to be replaced by locals.

It appeared that the issue of the newness of the profession in Vietnam closely interacted with the comments regarding the lack of EBP regarding ST in Vietnam. Participants expressed a need for experience as well as needing a relevant knowledge base for the Vietnamese setting. Clearly the development of indigenised, culturally relevant and scientifically valid approaches are necessary to empower the Vietnamese STs to be the instructors of future Vietnamese STs. At the same time, development of confidence in CS processes should enhance the indigenisation of the ongoing development of allied health in Vietnam.

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# Integrating learning and work: Using a critical reflective approach to enhance learning and teaching capacity

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The integration of learning and work presents many possibilities and challenges for educators in higher education. Core to these challenges is how to foster preparation for professional practice and particularly how to capture and assess the degree to which the WIL experience prepares students for their future lives and work. With the demand for work ready graduates increasing, the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in the process of continuous learning is vital to equipping students for futures unknown. This paper seeks to contribute to knowledge of how fostering reflective practice enables the integration of learning and work. This paper presents a case study of a Work Integrated Learning curriculum intervention within the discipline of Project Management. The authors examine how an industry mentoring approach to WIL was developed and implemented, and focus on critically exploring students' reflections and learning outcomes. In doing so, the authors explore WIL from the teacher and student perspective, and seek to contribute to knowledge of how to foster WIL through reflective practice to support the development of Graduate Attributes which equip students for an ever changing workforce.

Keywords: work integrated learning, reflective practice, project management, graduate outcomes, work readiness

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, increasing attention has been given to fostering Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in higher education. As Smith (2012) identifies, the increasing value placed on WIL reflects the widely accepted view that education as lifelong, is inextricably linked to preparation for professional practice. Smith (2012) identifies that 'Work integrated learning' is relatively new jargon that focuses attention on the integration of discipline learning and workplace practice or application (p. 248). This increased focus on the relationship between higher education and employment outcomes reflects the industry and government commitment to an outcomes focused approach to higher education. It is within this context that universities are challenged to not only create authentic links between learning and work, but to assess how outcomes can, as Boud & Falchikov (2006) advocate, "lay the foundation for a life time of learning" (p.400).

Implicit in the WIL experience is the expectation that universities will create learning experiences and foster learning outcomes which, as transferable, will prepare students for futures unknown (Bowden & Marton, 1998; Stephenson & Yorke, 1998) and the assumption that gaps between "the increasing diversity of universities as learning sites, and the divergence and multiplication of knowledges and disciplines within universities can be bridged" (Barrie & Prosser, 2004, p.3). As transcendent of the discipline domain, graduate attributes are assumed to be applicable to diverse contexts and settings (Barrie & Prosser, 2004; Boud, 2000), and, as defined through university mission statements, commonly encompass critical thinking, problem solving, communication skills, ethical practice and logical and independent thought (Bath, Smith, Stein & Swann, 2004). As the literature also identifies, students also have the expectation that universities will prepare them for employment, ensuring clear linkage between students study and their future aspirations (Peach & Gamble, 2011).

Conceptions of WIL draw on a number of learning theories and pedagogies, including experiential-based learning, immersive learning and transformative learning (Andresen, Boud, & Cohen, 1995; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1997). As Smith (2012) identifies, WIL importantly creates the opportunity for universities to design, refine and teach curriculum that: is responsive to current and future needs, equips students with the knowledge and capability that goes beyond the acquisition of discipline knowledge, engages students actively with industry and community partners and enhances work readiness. As Merzirow (2006) notes, providing students with opportunities to examine and reflect on their beliefs fosters lifelong learning by enabling students to view themselves as active participants in their learning; as future agents for change within their profession. As Dewey's (1938) model of reflective learning defines, reflection enables the construction of knowledge through active reflection on past and present experiences.

This paper seeks to contribute to knowledge of how fostering reflective practice enables the integration of learning and work. In particular, it explores how introducing industry mentors and fostering students' critical self-reflection was found to foster students' understandings of the Project Management profession, and their relationship to it. The authors present and analyse findings from a qualitative study which investigated the introduction of industry mentors and assessed self-reflection to enhance the integration of learning and work. This paper focuses on the initial 2012 pilot phase in which the course was introduced. Findings from the second pilot in 2013 will be reported and analysed in a future publication. This work-based learning course was taught to twenty eight third year Project Management undergraduates. The course design was a collaboration between the two authors. The first author works as an academic developer within the discipline of Project Management and the second author co-developed and taught the course in 2012.

## REFLECTIVE PRACTICE APPROACH

The Project Management course was designed as WIL to enable students to make explicit links between the world of work and the discipline of Project Management, and to critically reflect on their learning. The curriculum design, assessment and teaching approach recognised and valued the use of life experiences for both students and industry mentors, and continued reflection on learning. Reflection has been identified as contributing to a range of learning outcomes which include enhanced learning and meta cognition (Smith, 2011). From the teacher's perspective, the reflective practice approach enhanced learner engagement and the quality of learning outcomes. As Harvey, Baker, Boasnquet, Coulson, Semple & Warren (2012) argue, reflective practice plays a key role in the development of WIL. Importantly, the process of reflection fosters the integration of theory and practice and offers a mechanism through which an experience can be understood to in turn inform future practice. As Schon (1983) articulates, this meaning making relates to the process of doing, during reflection and after, reflection on action.

The authors acknowledge the transformative power of assessment. As the literature describes, assessment defines the very core of the curriculum (Ramsden, 1992) which includes defining what students regard as important and how they come to see themselves as both learner and graduate. The course and assessment design and teaching approach was intended to support students to reflect on learning and to integrate and apply this knowledge to inform their critical understandings of the Project Management profession. Engaging in reflective practice can importantly support students to utilise tacit knowledge and as Bringle & Hatcher (1999) note "confront ambiguity and critically examine existing beliefs" (p. 85). As the literature identifies, reflection contributes to learning through actual experience (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Ryan & Ryan, 2012).

The pedagogical approach adopted in this course sought to support students to develop a critical awareness of their own assumptions and of the values, principles and belief systems which underpin their chosen profession by engaging students in a critical dialogue with industry about their profession. This entailed students' direct engagement with industry mentors, paralleled by a teacher-guided structured and supported approach to self-reflection. As Lave & Wegner (1991) identify, students need to be immersed in learning where they can observe, interact and respond to that particular context. The course design and teaching approach created learning experiences whereby students were exposed to diverse professional practice contexts, and in doing so, could observe and interact with, respond to, and ultimately reflect on, the different professional practice Project Management contexts each industry mentor represented. As Peach & Gamble (2011) note, "reflecting on how one's values and beliefs intersect with those which define a profession provides a powerful learning experience and the opportunity whereby truly transformative learning can occur" (p. 179). The course design sought to enable students' engagement through what Merzirow (1997) defines as "recognising frames of reference and using their imaginations to redefine problems from a different perspective" (p.10). The assessment design and delivery was supported by the detailing of explicit assessment criteria through rubrics.

The course design introduced a semi-structured approach to support reflective practice. Students' reflections were scaffolded as they were supported to make links between theory and professional practice. The approach focused on professional and personal identity, with students viewed as co-creators of knowledge. Students' critical reflections relate to discursive contexts, the professional practice contexts provided through discussions led by the industry mentors.

Constructivism, as defined by Biggs, (1996) underpinned the course design. First, students were supported to construct meaning through the process of engaging with industry mentors and reflection. Secondly, the intended learning outcomes were developed to encompass the development of students' knowledge and skills and create learning experiences whereby students could apply their developed knowledge and skills to practise. The learning activities and assessment tasks were explicitly aligned with the intended learning outcomes, supported by formative assessment. The authors present and analyse students' reflections on professional practice and their perceptions about their profession and the degree to which they deepened their critical understandings of the practice of Project Management. The following Course Learning Outcomes were fostered and assessed:

- Identify how the nature of an industry sector determines the approach required for effective project management
- Critically reflect on and examine project management practice across diverse industry sectors

## METHODS

Students were encouraged to choose an industry in which they were interested, with a view to possible employment upon graduation. Industry mentors who participated in the pilot represented a range of industries including construction, consulting, health, infrastructure/building, international development, mining, museums, rail, telecommunications and banking. Students were allocated an industry mentor and also attended nine lectures whereby industry-based practitioners gave an overview of their industry and the project management methods practiced in that industry. Following each lecture, students were required to reflect on their learning and the profession. Students were provided with prompts to guide these reflections, and support reflective practice rather than description. Criterion reference assessment was used through rubrics. The established criteria were (1) Demonstrated understanding of lecture content, and its application to professional practice; (2) Clear expression and articulation of thoughts and ideas. Ideas and perspectives are logically organised; and (3) Reflection on your own thoughts, beliefs and assumptions and how these can impact on your professional practice. Reflections were in written format and were submitted online.

The following results focus on the tenth and final reflection whereby students reflected on their learning over the entire semester. Students were encouraged to review their previous reflections in the development of their final reflection. Two questions provided by the teacher were considered by students: (1) What was the one key piece of information that has had the biggest impact on you?; and (2) How did the information presented to you during the semester alter your perception of project management?. Responses from 22 students were captured and analysed using thematic analysis.

## RESULTS

The table below lists the themes which were identified through analysis of the students' journals. Ten themes were identified through thematic analysis, and are summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Key piece of information from the course which had the biggest impact on students

| <i>Theme</i>  | <i>Frequency</i> |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Applicability of project management skills and knowledge to multiple industries  | 7 (32%)          |
| 2. Raised awareness of other industries in which project management is practised has created new career aspirations and possibilities | 4 (18%)          |
| 3. The importance of having a mentor as a means of ongoing professional development   | 4 (18%)          |
| 4. Anything is achievable through hard work   | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 5. Requirement of organisations' to continually adapt to remain competitive   | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 6. Commonality of project based challenges across industries  | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 7. Requirement of project managers to have a degree in project management   | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 8. Incorporating ethics into professional practice  | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 9. Project manager must be proficient in contract management  | 1 (4.5%)         |
| 10. Content knowledge and expertise in the industry in which the project manager is practising  | 1 (4.5%)         |

Students reflected on how their industry mentor-led sessions altered their perception of project management. Some students raised more than one theme therefore the total frequency equals more than 100. Seven themes were identified through thematic analysis, and are outlined in Table 2.

TABLE 2. Altered perception of Project Management

| <i>Theme</i>  | <i>Frequency</i> |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Raised awareness of other industries in which project management is practised has created new career aspirations and possibilities               | 14 (64%)         |
| 2. Applicability of project management skills and knowledge to multiple industries  | 10 (45%)         |
| 3. Expanded understanding and clarity of the practice and role of a project manager   | 7 (32%)          |
| 4. While project management skills are generic, there are nuances between industries and this is demonstrated in specific skill sets and knowledge. | 3 (14%)          |
| 5. Application of project management skills to life   | 1 (4%)           |
| 6. Reassurance that the program is relevant to industry and will lead to graduate positions   | 1 (4%)           |
| 7. Requirement of project managers to have excellent communications skills  | 1 (4%)           |

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Project Management course was designed to enable students to engage actively with new ideas and knowledge shared by their industry mentors. Students were supported through their reflective journals to make sense of these new ideas according to what they already know or have experienced, and to theorise about this knowledge in relation to their own experiences and perspectives. Students analysed new concepts in relation to broader social, cultural and historical contexts. The teacher played a pivotal role in developing learning that included reflective practice. This evidences that students were successful in reflecting on professional practice and it is this process which supports the integration of learning and work.

The role of mentors was vital to ensuring student engagement with real life practice, which could be integrated with the disciplinary body of knowledge. Understanding and being exposed to the industry perspective of expectations and ethical standards supports work readiness. As Aggert & Busby (2011) identify, it is also important that students develop a clear understanding of careers, roles and professional settings and standards.

As the literature makes explicit, reflective practice creates the opportunity for students to integrate theory and practice, and to importantly make sense of their experiences (Higgins, 2011; Peach & Gamble, 2011; Smith, 2011). In this way, reflective practice enables students to think more critically and deeply about the skills and knowledge they have acquired by fostering students' sense of professional identity. Critical reflection encourages students to be willing and able to question, explore and critique ways of behaving and thinking as they engage in workplace experiences (Higgins, 2011) and into the future. Consequently, the student is better able to understand and gain insights into his/her skills, competencies and knowledge. The use of critical reflection in cooperative education increases the chances of the learning being relevant and meaningful to the student.

Students' engagement in reflection assisted them to make sense of themselves, their learning experience and supported preparation for future practice. Analysis of students' perceptions:

- Evidence a developing professional identity
- Emphasise the importance of linkages between theory and practice, and of providing authentic learning experiences
- Illustrate that students conceptualised the profession of Project Management and the discipline in its broader industry context
- Affirm that students deepened their critical understandings of the complex nature of the profession and professional practice
- Contributes to transfer of learning from university to the workplace
- Fosters students' career aspirations and goal setting
- Enhance employability and marketability

- Enhance understanding of what work in industry entails and the industry context- the nature of professional practice, industry needs and drivers, external market forces and impact

From the teacher perspective, the curriculum intervention resulted in enhanced student engagement as evidenced through student formal and informal feedback, including Course Experience Survey (CES) data. The CES is administered to support academic and teaching staff to obtain feedback about their courses and contribute to the improvement of student learning. Students were actively engaged in the process of reviewing and reflecting on their learning, and critical and reflective insights and perspectives were identified through the student journals. Students' grades evidenced enhanced quality learning. Sixty-five percent of students received a credit grade or higher. This evidences that students were successful in reflecting on professional practice and it is this process which supports the integration of learning and work. The journals evidenced for the teacher, deepened understandings of students' developmental learning, and the ways in which students integrated their learning and future professional practice.

Our findings will inform the future pilot of this WIL course, and have implications for teaching within the wider discipline of Project Management and the wider context of undergraduate education. Findings indicate that enhancing students' capacity for self-reflection supported work readiness, as students engaged critically with the profession of Project Management through interactions with mentors. In doing so, the quality of learning and teaching was also enriched. Findings from the study reinforce the importance of reflective practice in preparing students for their future work.

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# Beyond the hospital walls: Developing partnerships and building capacity with community services

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Work integrated learning opportunities in hospitals for undergraduate nursing students are in demand and shortfalls are common. Given that healthcare systems are reorientating toward the World Health Organisations goal of 'Health for All' with the focus on primary health care (Mitshali, 2005), it is vital that healthcare professionals are adequately trained and prepared to work in environments that are vastly different to hospital-based settings.

A significant capacity building exercise involved organising community organisations to provide placements for 472 first year nursing students. This paper reports on this capacity building process and the survey data from students, tutors and community host organisations about their learning, experiences and reflections from these placements.

Forty organisations (85%) provided feedback with over 90% agreeing students developed their communication skills, 80% saw development in conversation skills and 97% agreed that students learnt about community services and how they helped people to live well within the community. Over 55% of student respondents agreed they developed their observation skills, communication skills (64%) and increased their understanding of the role of community services (68%).

Significant learning about capacity building with non-traditional placement partners is now integrated into pre-placement information to support and sustain these new valuable community partnerships.

Keywords: Capacity building, work integrated learning, non-traditional placements, nursing, community partnerships, communication skills, graduate qualities, primary health care

## INTRODUCTION

Work integrated learning opportunities in hospitals for undergraduate nursing students are in demand and shortfalls are common in Australia. There has been increasing nursing student enrolments which has resulted in the need to find suitable work integrated learning (WIL), or professional experience placement (PEP) opportunities and to broaden the scope of these placements (Barnett *et al.* 2008, Peters, Halcomb and McInnes 2013). Given that healthcare systems are re-orientating toward the World Health Organisations goal of 'Health for All' with the focus on primary health care, it is vital that healthcare professionals are adequately trained and prepared to work in environments that are vastly different to hospital based settings (Mitshali, 2005). This has been recognised internationally, where there has been a shift from acute care settings to community placement settings (Dietrich Leurer *et al.* 2011, Gurling 2011, Kirkman, Harwood & Hofwegen 2005.).

In Australia, nursing student placements have turned towards rural settings for more WIL/PEP (Barnett *et al.* 2008, Smith, Emmett & Woods 2008, Kent-Wilkinson *et al.* 2010). However, there are still major shortfalls in WIL/PEP opportunities and more lateral thinking has been required, particularly around non-traditional community-based settings. A significant capacity building exercise involving the sourcing and development of new relationships with community organisations to provide placements for 472 first year nursing students was undertaken. This paper reports on this process and survey data from students, tutors and community host organisations about their learning, experiences and reflections from these placements.

## BACKGROUND/LITERATURE

In acute hospital settings undergraduate nursing students are competing for WIL placements with other disciplines such as medicine, midwifery, allied health and non-tertiary nursing courses (enrolled nurses, nurse assistants and personal carers) to develop their skills and practice. This in turn affects the quality of undergraduate student learning that results from large numbers of health professional students, a lack of physical space, fewer mentors and increased staff workloads which can impact on morale and acceptance of students on placements (Betony, 2012, Murray & Williamson 2008). Additionally, graduate nurses often struggle with or feel unprepared for working in community settings given their limited exposure to the wide range of situations that occur and which are vastly different to the acute clinical setting (Walsh 2008, Kendall-Rayner

2010). With healthcare being provided more in community settings there is a high priority to provide a diverse range of placements outside the acute hospital sector (Cummins *et al.* 2010). As nurses are being employed more in community settings it is important that undergraduate nursing students gain a better understanding of healthcare from a more holistic perspective. Healthcare is more than looking after people who are unwell and can occur anywhere, not just in traditional hospital or acute settings (Anderson 2009). Community healthcare placements can broaden nursing students' skills and knowledge as well as develop their understanding of health and health care concepts (Kenyon & Peckover, 2009).

Non-traditional community-based WIL/PEP opportunities for nursing students have been explored in the United Kingdom and Canada who have similar undergraduate nursing education and placement concerns as Australia (Baglin & Rugg, 2010, Betony, 2012, Dietrich Leurer *et al.* 2011). Undergraduate nursing curricula are turning more attention to these types of WIL/PEPs to help address the shortfall in availability of acute care placements and reduce the pressure on acute care placement capacity.

Nevertheless, there is some debate in the literature on appropriate community WIL/PEPs. It has been contended that some community placement staff may be inadequately prepared for student placements which impacts on the students' learning (Kenyon & Peckover, 2009). Conversely, other placements, for example those which have a one-on-one relationship between the learner and the experienced provider, can provide valuable learning for the student (Kenyon & Peckover, 2009). Further benefits cited in the literature regarding community WIL/PEPs identify that nurses show more empathy to their patients, have enhanced motivation, develop their professional identities, develop more confidence and competence, give students a broader perspective on healthcare contexts and are provided with opportunities for inter-professional team work (Anderson 2009, Baglin & Rugg, 2010, Kendall-Rayner 2010). Also, students learn to establish a rapport with health consumers and staff quickly and develop the necessary skills for effective communication and conflict resolution (Baglin & Rugg, 2010). To achieve these types of benefits, good quality community WIL/PEPs are required to develop competent and confident nurses (Murphy, *et al.* 2012).

There is little published information on community WIL/PEPs in the nursing curriculum, particularly in Australia (Anderson 2009, Cummins *et al.* 2010, Peters, Halcomb & McInnes 2013, Murphy *et al.* 2012). Hence, with the introduction of non-traditional WIL/PEP in the nursing curricula to address placement shortages, it is timely to investigate student and facilitator experiences to identify benefits and challenges associated with the different placement settings. This paper specifically aims to provide insights which may assist other providers of undergraduate nursing WIL/PEP curricula.

## METHODOLOGY

The School of Nursing and Midwifery at Flinders University commenced a new Bachelor of Nursing (BN) in 2013 and added the use of non-traditional community placements to the work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities for the commencing first year, first semester students. Given some community organisations do not employ registered nurses and did not understand the learning opportunities for students of nursing a significant capacity building exercise was planned. A broad range of personnel from the university involved in WIL/PEPs, community relationships and external stakeholder interactions from across the University were interviewed about "What factors they thought would be most important for the development of successful community placements for our students".

All first year students, topic tutors and staff from the community organisations were emailed a link to an online questionnaire about their learning experiences on the community placements. A sample of convenience was also used to select students' comments from online blogs, discussion forums and placement reflections as further sources of data about the community placements. Simple quantitative data analysis was conducted on the closed ended questions and thematic analysis was undertaken on the open-ended questionnaire responses and the students' online blogs, discussion forums and placement reflections.

## FINDINGS

The most important factors identified for the success of this capacity building process was to recognise what's in it for the community organisation, be clear about any potential issues for the community organisation, develop a personal relationship with key personnel in each organisation, meet staff at the community organisation and

maintain regular phone and email contact in the lead-up to the placements. In light of the extensive work involved in sourcing, developing and maintaining these new WIL/PEP relationships, it was important to explore and analyse the issues associated with the community placements from the perspectives of the students, tutors and community organisations.

There were 45 different community organisations emailed a link to the online questionnaire with 40 completed from placement hosts, some of whom may have been different individuals at the same community organisation. Key findings included:

- 90% said the placement provided students with an opportunity to develop their communication skills.
- 97% agreed that students learnt about community services and how they helped people to live well within the community.
- 80% agreed that the placements assisted students to develop their conversation skills.
- 67% believed that the placements improved the students' ability to work collaboratively.

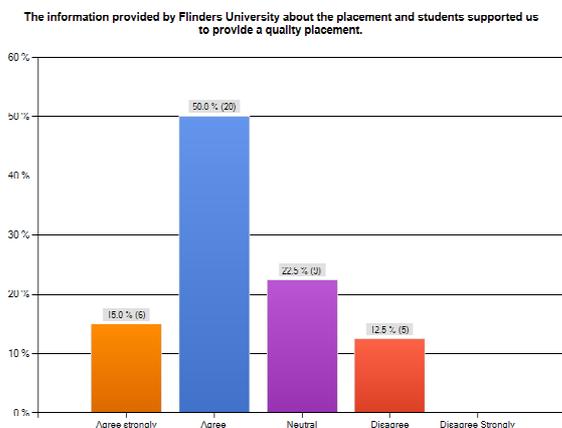
Interestingly, while 45% of community respondents agreed that students added to their workload, 60% agreed that the students also contributed to the work to be done:

I have only positive memories of the work done by the students and the feelings displayed towards them by our groups. An excellent program!

However, as is common among large student cohorts, not all students present in the same manner as identified by this community partner:

Each of the 3 students was very different in their engagement and interest with their placement. Also their pre-knowledge was quite varied.

An important piece of feedback for the development of the new community partnerships was the positive feedback about the information and support provided by Flinders University to the community organisation around the placements.



An unexpected outcome from the placements was that 7 students have continued their relationship with the community organisation as a volunteer. This outcome provides an ongoing benefit for the host organisations and offers ongoing learning opportunities for the student.

The entire first year cohort of students (472) were emailed a link to the online survey and there were 78 (16.5%) responses. The key findings were:

- 68% of the student respondents said that the community placements helped them understand the role of community services.
- 55% of the student respondents said the placements helped them develop their observation skills.
- 64% of student respondents agreed that the placements helped them develop their communication skills.

One open ended response from a student that encapsulated her learning was:

I observed on several occasions today body language, communication skills, physical appearances and communication skills from both the children and also teenagers. I then also realised that these observations are a critical part of being a student studying a nursing degree.

A male student provided a perspective provided by one of the people using the community organisation:

She asked me about my progress in my studies and said something to me that I will remember throughout my nursing career. "Always remember, when you are with a patient for however long it may be, give them your time because many patients including myself are lonely and just want someone to talk to. Even if you are not interested, pretend you are because that's all we want".

One of the seven students to become an ongoing volunteer at the community organisation stated in their open-ended responses "... going by my experiences, the placement was great. I am now a volunteer."

Further acknowledgment of the cross-generational experiences and learning for the students was a nomination in conjunction with one community organisation for a local intergenerational award. The School of Nursing and Midwifery in conjunction with the community organisation received a certificate or merit for the WIL community placements.

The topic teaching team were also sent the online questionnaire. All eight tutors (100%) responded to the online survey with positive responses about their confidence to support students on community placements despite 3 (37.5%) saying they did not receive sufficient information about the placements and did not think the students were well prepared for the community placement. Tutors were split about the community placement providing opportunities for the students to learn to work collaboratively despite all tutors saying they have worked in community or primary health care settings. It is clear that more direct involvement with the casual tutors about the community placements and the variety of placements needs to be built in to the topic organisation.

## CONCLUSIONS

The survey presented in this paper is based upon an Australian experience of non-traditional community setting placements which may be applicable to other settings in Australia and internationally. Having such placements available for undergraduate nursing students is necessary to further their education and prepare them adequately for a variety of graduate roles on completion of the Bachelor of nursing degree.

Significant learnings from this study include the acknowledgement of the needs of the community partner, regular communication from the University and recognition of agreed mutual benefits. This study has identified the importance of detailed preparation for tutors and students in the teaching and preparation for community placements as well as improved organisation and communication with industry partners.

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# Student Satisfaction and WIL: A case study of a marketing capstone unit

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There is now a belief that universities need to think about their role in relation to student satisfaction in order to survive (Finney & Finney, 2010). Universities are beginning to recognise that higher education is a service industry (DeShields, Kara & Kaynak, 2005). Accordingly, it is critical for universities to constantly improve the quality of educational programs and strive for high standards in course content. The student satisfaction approach is now said to be analogous to the development of a culture of continuous quality improvement (Harvey, 1995). We consider a number of variables that contribute to student satisfaction when undertaking a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) program in a marketing degree. The main objective of the study is to compare different formats of WIL to identify the preferred option for improving students' satisfaction at university. Graduate capabilities, the impact of learning activities and knowledge of professional behaviour for their future careers are considered in this light. Students prefer an off-campus experience where they self-select the organisation and the project. The favourable elements including; established industry partnerships, professional engagement, diversity and equality, may be realised through a combination of both formats where industry partners come to campus to inform and students can then go off site to identify potential projects with companies in alignment with their interests and strengths. Students will not only benefit from this diversity but also have higher levels of satisfaction through the engagement of personally relevant material enhancing graduate capabilities increasing employability, the increased satisfaction aligned to the PACE learning activities and knowledge of professional behaviour that informs students for their future careers.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, higher education, student satisfaction and marketing education

## INTRODUCTION

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) has recently been a concept receiving increased attention in Australian universities, with most Australian universities strengthening their commitment to WIL (McLennan & Keating, 2008). This interest is sparked by Government and industry concern for increasing workplace participation and productivity and intensifying international competition (McLennan & Keating, 2008). WIL has long been used as a pathway for work-readiness in professional education and is increasingly positioned as a key opportunity for improving employability skills of all graduates (ACNielsen, 2000; Precision Consultancy, 2007). Previous research has indicated the value of WIL may not be appreciated by business schools even though it is significant in assisting universities with reputation and enrolments (Weible, 2010).

Nevertheless Macquarie University has initiated a Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program, which provides an academic framework through which students engage with the community and industry, undertake work integrated learning activities that require up to 100 hours of community engagement, develop their capabilities and build on the skills that employers value. PACE activities can include traditional internships, field trips, research projects or mentoring. Most undergraduate students are currently required to undertake one of these PACE units, and indeed it is currently compulsory for all marketing students, and these units progressively become an integral part of the Macquarie curriculum. The success of WIL programs occurs when there is a strong relationship between industry partners and the university and involvement in curriculum leading to improved student satisfaction and retention (Choy & Delahaye, 2011). This study focuses on the marketing major in a commerce program.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There has been a shift in universities towards a greater emphasis on meeting expectations and the needs of the student. It is critical for universities to constantly improve the quality of educational programs because of the importance of retaining students (Crosling, Heagney & Thomas, 2009; Finney & Finney, 2010). Students switching universities is of great concern to higher education institutions, and consequently satisfaction in the context of higher education has progressively become a significant area of study (Barnett, 2010).

The concept of student satisfaction has been the subject of much academic discourse (Banwet & Datta, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 1998; DeShields *et al.*, 2005; Elliot & Shin, 2002; Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto, Coulson & Harvey, 2011). Gibson's (2010) study of student satisfaction with business courses identified three significant variables: academic teaching staff, classes and learning activities, and graduate skills in preparation for future employment. Other studies support these variables (Delaney, 2001; Keaveney & Young, 1997; Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007). WIL programs are now viewed as the vehicle for merging theory learned at university with skill development, coupled with the acquisition of soft skills that may indeed lead to student satisfaction (Franz, 2007).

There are many different formats in which WIL and associated PACE units can be operationalised, including traditional internships, field trips, research projects or mentoring, however there is little research to guide which activities are more satisfying to students and does this vary between disciplines (Buys & Bursnall, 2007; Woodley *et al.*, 2011; Franz, 2007; Pearce, 1999; van Hoek *et al.*, 2011). In order to gain deeper insight into students' satisfaction with their major in the marketing discipline, a marketing capstone unit is considered that includes a WIL component. Two formats are compared and an in-depth analysis of the outcomes are considered relating to student satisfaction; particularly graduate capabilities (Mackaway *et al.*, 2001; Woodley *et al.*, 2011; Franz, 2007), the impact of learning activities (Browne *et al.*, 1998; Gibson, 2010; ) and the knowledge of professional behaviour and future careers (Gibson, 2010; Browne *et al.*, 1998; Kara & DeShields, 2004; DeShields *et al.*, 2005).

The following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: What aspects of the capstone subject enhance student satisfaction in regards to the marketing major?

RQ2: Were off campus research projects preferred to on campus community engagement delivery?

## METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study collected personal narratives from students to examine the area of student satisfaction. Interviews were conducted in 2012 with 12 students from the 2011 MKTG304 course and 11 students from the 2012 MKTG304 course. Samples were chosen purposively based on their ability to provide in-depth insights into experiences rather than generalising data to a population (Sandelowski, 1986). These 15 to 20 minute interviews were conducted until it was felt that the theoretical saturation had been reached (Mason, 2002).

The two cohorts that were interviewed came from two different modes of delivery. The students in the 2011 cohort undertook a project for an organisation in the field. They identified and secured their own industry partner, and as a result all students had a different topic and different industry partners. The students in the 2012 cohort were all required to work on the same project for the same industry partner on campus. All students worked on the same problem, developing distinctive marketing solutions (Pearce, 1999; van Hoek *et al.*, 2011).

In order to preserve contextuality and obtain deeper meanings, open-ended questions were used during face-to-face interviews (Yin, 2009). Examples of the questions in the semi-structured interview guide are included in Appendix 1. Transcript files were imported into NVivo, which was used to store, index and retrieve data. A preliminary coding scheme based on the literature review was then applied to the analysis of the transcripts (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The dimensions identified in the literature were found to be adequate for analysis and the classification of items.

## FINDINGS

Findings consider the relationships between the WIL experience and student satisfaction with the course. The key themes from this study are: comparison of different approaches to industry engagement in light of graduate capabilities, the impact of learning activities and knowledge of professional behaviour and future career.

### *Graduate capabilities*

Regardless of cohort, more than 70% of students agreed that key "soft" skills including time management, teamwork and communication skills were important, as supported by recent research (Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto, Coulson, & Harvey, 2011; Woodley, *et al.*, 2011; Jackson, 2013). Students in the 2011 cohort more commonly commented on the use of analytical skills. This is illustrated by the following quote:

Taught me to look at the big picture with marketing...had to look at every possible aspect because we all had the facts. Most case studies we get given don't have this. (Respondent 5, 2011 cohort).

Students in the 2012 cohort more regularly commented on the need for teamwork as evidenced in the following quote:

Left to our own devices... I found you had to pull on the strengths of other group members....couldn't rely on the text book. (Respondent 19, 2012 cohort).

This highlights that the unconventional nature of the tasks necessitated that students develop key skills – like teamwork and analysis of real world problems – representing enhancement of graduate capabilities.

#### *Impact and strengths of PACE learning activities*

Previous studies demonstrate that learning activities influence satisfaction with a unit of study (Delaney, 2001; Gibson, 2010 ). Students make judgements about their ability and willingness to apply effort to certain tasks, which ultimately impacts on their satisfaction (Hmelo-Silver, 2004).

Several key components of the WIL unit, such as presentations, group work, on-line forums and the final project were all mentioned as worthwhile and fulfilling by the students interviewed. Units which are focused on developing an understanding of the content, improving or developing skills, and which have personal relevance to the students have higher levels of satisfaction (Browne *et al.*, 1998; Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007; Gibson, 2010). There was however, a leading difference between the two cohorts, which revolved around the lecture structure for the unit. Students in the 2011 cohort were strongly of the belief that the lectures and tutorials to support the project were more useful than the students in the 2012 cohort. This is reflected in the following quotes:

Getting all the content ... in first 7 weeks ... allowed you to execute the main assignment once you know everything. Lectures and tutorials ... helped you set out what you really needed to do for the report and what was required ... liked learning from other people's presentations in tutorials. (Respondent 16, 2011 cohort)

The lectures and tutorials could have been used more efficiently (except for industry partner presentations) ... only did group work in tutorials so don't need to be there. (Respondent 13, 2012 cohort)

Students in the 2011 cohort were able to apply the theories in a more flexible manner to their chosen partners and problems as they selected their own organisation and marketing problem to solve. Additionally, as the groups had different problems on which to work, the tutorials were more interesting and engaging. These students are more likely to be more satisfied. The students in the 2011 cohort appear to be more satisfied with the learning activity as they undertook a self-selected project for an organisation that suited their preferences. The lecturers, delivery and content remained constant between the cohorts (Horstmanshof & Zimitat, 2007).

#### *Knowledge of professional behaviour and future career*

Regardless of the mode of delivery, this unit assisted them with knowledge about professional behaviour required in their future careers as they witnessed and practised professional behaviour and communication skills when dealing with executives and managers, as well as the way in which they conducted their research projects. However, there were some distinct differences in the strength of the evidence of professional behaviour learned within the unit when comparing the two modes of delivery. This can be summarised by the following quotes:

[You learnt] more personable skills and interactions for what was required for professional behaviour (Respondent 2, 2011 cohort)

You don't get a chance [to understand professional behaviour] because it doesn't really make an impact because it's just like an everyday lectures. The information they [industry partners] provided was not thorough [enough]. (Respondent 15, 2012 cohort)

There were some dissatisfied students in the 2012 cohort who felt that the engagement with partners was too similar to a typical lecture by academics. It was considered by two students in the 2012 cohort to be less helpful than a traditional lecture-tutorial format. Nevertheless, the professional interaction was a key factor for students.

## DISCUSSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

There is evidence to suggest a relationship exists between the classes, student's experiences and their resulting student satisfaction regardless of the mode of delivery. Both cohorts provided evidence that they were satisfied with most elements of the unit, although the preferred mode was where students self-selected the organisation providing variety of experiences to the cohort (Browne, *et al.*, 1998; DeShields, *et al.*, 2005; Keaveney & Young, 1997). The emergent themes of this study related to graduate capabilities, the impact of various PACE learning activities and professional interaction. The interaction with industry partners and live research in solving real world problems, resulting in the promotion of graduate capabilities and professional behaviours were the emphasis of students within this study and thus key elements for a WIL unit.

The practicality of this unit is endorsed by 95% of respondents. More than 50% spontaneously labelled this unit as the "most interesting" unit they had ever undertaken, providing evidence that they were satisfied with the unit.

In relation to the two different modes of delivery both formats were well received by both cohorts. The structure of the on-campus guest lecturers appeared to provide stronger and clearer goals than when students sought out their own industry partnerships. However, the 2011 model had a diversity of partners which delivered substantial benefits to all students with a wider breadth of industry examples and exposure to industry partners and contemporary issues. Therefore, this mode of delivery is the preferred model despite some criticisms of inequity of access to industry partners.

Consequently, it may be that in order to gain the benefits from both models, a hybrid model is developed for future use. The favourable elements including; established industry partnerships, professional engagement, diversity and equality, can all be realised through a modified version of the 2012 model. By purely growing the number of industry partnerships within the marketing capstone unit and delivering multiple case studies, students can not only benefit from this diversity but also have higher levels of satisfaction through the engagement of personally relevant material enhancing graduate capabilities increasing employability, the increased satisfaction aligned to the PACE learning activities and knowledge of professional behaviour that informs students for their future careers.

Future research may consider a quantitative study to identify the importance of variables that are antecedents to student satisfaction in a WIL context. These studies can also investigate the strength of these associations in order to determine certain elements that may be of higher importance.

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## APPENDIX 1

### EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Did this unit help to develop skills that are important for your future? If so, how?

Did this unit help provide you with insight of the types of tasks you might do in your field of work and in first year of professional work?

What were your expectations of this unit? Were they met? Why/why not?

Would you recommend this unit to other students? (Why/why not)

What were the best and worst aspects of the unit?

What is your overall satisfaction of learning in this unit?

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# Recognising student leadership outside formal learning settings: An alternative approach to WIL and service learning.

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Traditional work integrated learning (WIL) programs have expended a lot of energy on the development and implementation of placement and supervisory models that facilitate the interaction between students, host organisations and higher education institutions. However, this placement-focussed model of WIL doesn't acknowledge the experience of students who are already engaged in meaningful work and service activity. Recognising the gaps in our understanding of students' engagement in paid and voluntary work and the acknowledged conflict between students' work, social and academic commitments, this paper briefly explores the pilot of a 'free range' model of WIL at the University of Tasmania, in which students are not placed in a work context but instead examine their independent work activities through scholarly frameworks. Preliminary feedback from staff and students suggests that there is both a demand and a justification for widening our approaches to encompass more diverse forms of WIL experiences and supporting curricula.

Keywords: Student leadership, student employment, service learning, curriculum development, non-traditional placements

## INTRODUCTION

For a number of years, students (both in Australia and internationally) have reported a significant disconnect between their work, social/familial lives and their experiences in tertiary education (Mannan, 2007; James, Krause, Jennings, 2010). Simultaneously, students express a desire for greater integration between, and recognition for, these different activities (Coates, 2010a, Mitchell & Kay, 2013). Most frequently, the interaction between students' independent work participation and their academic engagement enters discussion as an explanation for student attendance, attrition, and performance (Adams, Banks, Davis & Dickson, 2010); rarely does it inform discussion of curriculum and the role that work integrated learning (WIL<sup>1</sup>) educators can play in bridging the gap between work, life and study.

It is widely accepted that participation in work and service activity contributes to the development of students' tacit knowledge and a range of employable skills and attributes outside scholarly learning/frameworks (Abeysekera, 2006). Indeed, this is one of the primary motivations for providing resource-intense WIL programs (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick & Cragolini, 2004; Orrell, 2004; Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Fletcher & Pretto 2008; Trede, 2012). The desire to expose students to authentic work environments has resulted in many higher education institutions across Australia offering students (largely) institution-facilitated, placement-based WIL experiences.

Models of facilitation, placement and partnership inhabit a significant proportion of WIL literature, given their established importance in providing equitable opportunities for students, satisfying legal and ethical challenges, ensuring appropriate learning activities and outcomes are being met, and maintaining productive relationships with host organisations (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010). The assumptions that students require the intervention of an institution-facilitated WIL program to place them in an appropriate work environment (Coll & Eames, 2000; Patrick *et al.*, 2008), and that students lack the work-readiness skills that WIL programs aim to develop (Universities Australia, 2008) are rarely questioned in WIL literature. However, in Australia, we know that a majority – around two thirds - of students are already in some form of paid employment (Coates, 2011b).

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<sup>1</sup> The term *WIL* used throughout to encompass the broad range of activities and strategies recognised under this descriptor (as discussed by Rowe, Winchester-Seeto & Mackaway, 2012)

With 36% of the Australian population engaging in some volunteering in the past year (Volunteering Australia, 2010) it is not unlikely that some percentage of students are also involved in independent service work<sup>2</sup>. The institution-facilitated, placement-focussed WIL model doesn't acknowledge the reality of those students already engaged in meaningful work and service experiences; students who may already be benefitting from exposure to workplace norms, skills and networks without the intervention of the educational institution. For some of these students, traditional WIL curricula may duplicate, or even interfere with, their existing experiences, offering little in the way of the integration of, and recognition for, extracurricular activity that many students desire.

Some institutions have made recent attempts at addressing this disconnect between students' work and study. For example, the *Students as Staff* initiative at Victoria University specifically sought to leverage the benefits of on-campus student employment within a WIL framework, finding that participating students reported the attainment of a range of graduate capabilities and learning and outcomes (Mitchell & Kay, 2012). Others, such as Salisbury, Pascarella, Padgett & Blaich (2012), report that students' off-campus employment is largely neglected as a site of enquiry into the development of students' capabilities, despite finding that off-campus employment has a significant impact on the development of students' development and capacity for desirable graduate outcomes such as leadership. Salisbury *et al.* (2012, p.319) note that this evidence confirms the student demand for institutions to more effectively integrate students' off-campus employment and study as an emerging WIL curriculum imperative.

#### A 'FREE RANGE' APPROACH TO WIL

The University of Tasmania (UTAS) is trialling an alternative WIL approach that subverts the traditional WIL placement focus by specifically targeting students already engaged in independent service activities. This approach takes form as a 'free-range' WIL model that seeks to capture, rather than create or manage, authentic WIL experiences by inviting the students' existing service and leadership work into the classroom as a springboard to academic inquiry and continued skill development. This model is being implemented alongside traditional WIL approaches; there is no intention to replace placement-based WIL offerings, but to complement these with diverse opportunities that engage students' existing experiences.

Sitting within a newly-developed multidisciplinary leadership and service degree stream, a suite of WIL units are available exclusively to undergraduate students who are engaged in an on- or off-campus service role. This role may be paid or voluntary, as either are considered valid forms of work activity in the WIL context (Lester & Costley, 2010), and include a leadership component, whether positional, or transformative/relationship-oriented (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007). Of these units, *XCA300 Communication for Effective Leadership* will be briefly examined.

This unit differs from traditional applications of the WIL approach in several small but significant ways:

- *Students must already be engaged in service work to be eligible for enrolment in the unit.*

Where a typical institution-facilitated WIL program aims to place students in an appropriate work context, this approach takes the inverse premise that enrolled students will already be participating in such activity, and asks students to instead place their work context in a scholarly environment.

- *UTAS has no formal relationship with employer.*

In this context, the need for active partnership is largely negated by the fact that students are not placed in the work environment by the University: students' participation in the unit doesn't necessarily disrupt 'business as

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed understanding of students' participation in voluntary service activity remains largely obscured. Where AUSSE does examine this work, ambiguous categories like "community service" and "leadership position" are grouped under "work experience," along with institution-facilitated experiences such as practicums and industry placements (Coates, 2011b), implying a facilitation component to students' service activities across the board where in fact none may be present. Outside (assumed) institution-facilitated work experiences, AUSSE reported only on paid work, when some service/community activity is likely to be voluntary.

usual'. While the activities of the unit are firmly grounded in each student's workplace experiences, they are designed in such a way that students can apply them directly to their role if they choose, or they can be approached from a planning and development perspective, depending on the student's learning goals and context.

- *Targets students who are already engaged in leadership activities*

These students don't require the creation of opportunities to engage in leadership roles, but rather recognition for activity, and an experiential framework (Boud, Cohen & Walker 1993) to support them as they analyse and develop their raw experiences and goals through sense-making and scholarly analysis.

- *Aims to recognise skills already developing through students' work experiences*

Students are acknowledged as already engaged in a work environment; the aim therefore is not to develop employability, but to recognise and value the skills and experiences that their role affords them. The unit employs a flexible, co-constructed curriculum in which students are invited to identify goals situated in their work context that are then explored through ongoing peer feedback and support frameworks, which shapes the development of support material and approaches to activities uniquely for each cohort.

#### PRELIMINARY EVALUATION AND FINDINGS

At the time of writing, student and staff feedback, obtained both through informal discussion and through response to reflective tasks, was being reviewed through an ongoing action research approach. More thorough data collection (focus groups and online questionnaire) and detailed review will be undertaken as the student cohort grows in subsequent iterations of the unit.

##### *Preliminary response from students*

Students enrolled in the first iteration of XCA300 came in roughly equal numbers from groups targeted for recruitment (eg. participants in on-campus service programs), and from the wider student body, most of whom found the unit independently after searching for study options that supported their off-campus service work activity. The fact that students independently sought entry into the pilot unit – which was not advertised or promoted beyond the targeted group – indicates that this approach meets a demand not otherwise served by traditional curricula.

Both the recruited and non-targeted groups of students reported that the opportunity to use their current roles and experiences as the basis for the unit was very attractive. One student reported that the unit allowed her to maintain the enrolment requirement of her senior role in student representation; the integrated and flexible nature of the curriculum was cited as the primary reason she chose this unit as the best complement to her time-intensive and responsibility-heavy role.

Students' early learning goals for the unit tended to focus on instrumental skills and tasks (eg. the production of resources, management of team members). By the end of the unit however, students indicated that they felt the most impact from the opportunity to engage in peer networks, critically reflective frameworks, and the interrogation of their leadership role from a values perspective, suggesting that the unit's basis in students' current work activity was an effective entry point to deeper inquiry, achieving both the physical and cognitive authenticity that effective situated learning requires (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Herrington & Herrington 2006).

##### *Response from staff*

The ability to focus on students' learning needs in an authentic environment, without the time and labour-intensive responsibility for managing host relationships, was cited as particularly beneficial by teaching staff. While the flexible approach to a co-constructed curriculum presents its own challenges in terms of the intensive adaptation of resources and activities, it also allowed staff and students to interact in an open and collegial way, with staff reporting that the exposure to students' 'real lives' was enlightening, and encouraged them to approach the curriculum in more creative ways.

Another interesting response came from educators in other disciplines who had been invited to attend student presentations. These staff reported that the exposure to students' service and leadership activities was valuable and thought-provoking – and something they had not experienced before. The immediate and cumulative impact on teachers and institutions after engaging with the diverse experiences and skills of students is an interesting topic ripe for further inquiry.

## DISCUSSION

WIL is broadly understood as activities “that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (Patrick *et al.*, 2008). This ‘free range’ model of WIL sits comfortably within this understanding, albeit with an inverted approach to the mechanics by which the integration of work and learning takes place. It also draws together elements of service learning – where a student works to meet the needs of the community while addressing academic requirements (Cashman, Sarena & Seifer, 2008 in Ross, 2012) – in the same way. Beginning not with the question of “what do our students lack?”, but with “what are students already doing?” this approach shares some parallels with the concept of the “life-wide curriculum” (Jackson, 2010) which aims to address similar concerns over the course of a student's engagement in higher education.

This model goes beyond the approach of Victoria University, where despite 78% of participating students reported that their work activity related to their discipline, only 20% gained any credit in their studies (Mitchell & Kay, 2012 p. 188). In this model, all participating students are rewarded for their extracurricular activity, both in terms of development and recognition, and in the leveraging of their activity to form the basis of a scholarly unit that contributes to a recognised degree program. Like VU, and Salisbury *et al.* (2012), preliminary findings for this approach indicate that engaging with students' existing service experiences within wider scholarly frameworks supports the development and recognition of the tacit knowledge and capabilities that WIL programs aim to achieve.

## FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

While it wasn't an impetus for development, this approach may have implications for the sustainability of traditional facilitated WIL programs. Placement fatigue and host burnout is a real risk in WIL, especially as participation grows. Including this model among the institutions' offerings opens potential for UTAS to increase our capacity for more students to participate in WIL, and to participate in more diverse ways, without overburdening host-institution relationships. To this end, further development of the curriculum for greater scalability is being investigated.

Subject to (in-progress) deeper examination, early evaluation shows that this approach could be considered a useful complement to traditional WIL. By directly acknowledging and engaging with the independent experiences and capacities of students, this approach opens new curriculum opportunities and makes some way towards reconciling the disconnect many students feel between their academic and professional lives. Part of a wider strategic approach to multidisciplinary curricula and the engagement of high-achieving students at UTAS, this model shows the potential to meet the needs of a subset not well-recognised by traditional approaches to WIL.

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# Clinical educator's priorities for their development: Introducing the ClinTeach Website and Conference.

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*Purpose.* This project aimed to address development priorities, defined by clinical educators, with a national website and conference, ClinTeach. ClinTeach supports both disciplinary expertise and pedagogical knowledge for clinical educators in work-integrated contexts.

*Methods.* A naturalistic mixed methodology was adopted to address the aim of the project (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993). A needs analysis survey explored educators' view of their development priorities in scholarship, leadership, professional development, and discipline content. ClinTeach website and conference was designed to align to reported priorities for educator development. Educators in three professional fields, across two universities and two faculties evaluated ClinTeach. An evaluation survey evaluated ClinTeach as meeting those priorities. Quantitative: survey reliability was tested by Cronbach's Split Half reliability analysis, 0.79. Data was entered into SPSS™ for analysis ( $p < 0.05$  statistically significant). A Wilcoxon signed rank test was performed on matched pair responses from clinical educators about themselves and about faculty priorities. Analytics was used to determine website use. Qualitative: NVivo™ for coding and narrative organisation; iterative theme analysis was completed by three independent assessors.

*Results.* Qualitative evaluation of the conference was simply excellent. WIL educators' priorities in scholarship, professional development and discipline content were met by the conference and website. Website maintenance and engagement emerged as an issue.

*Conclusion.* ClinTeach is an effective model for the enhancement of clinical education by the development of clinical educators, well addressing priorities for educator teaching.

Keywords: Professional development, clinical educators, website, conference

## INTRODUCTION

Clinical education functions to develop the next generation of health practitioners. Parsell and Bligh (2001) approached the issue of clinical teaching in medicine from the view of five questions that are important for any clinical educator:

*What do I need to know to be an effective clinical teacher?*

*What role(s) will I need to adopt?*

*What attributes do I need to possess?*

*What teaching strategies do I need to apply, and in what circumstances?*

*How do I know that my clinical teaching is effective?*

Any development program for clinical educators prudently seeks to support the answers to each of these questions. In so doing, clinical educators work toward mastering a range of teaching skills that effectively engage students.

The perceptions of students about that teaching, and those teaching skills, are key factors shaping teacher development objectives. Henzi *et al.* (2006) reviewed students' perspectives about their clinical education responses from 23 of the 65 dental schools in North America and found that students' strongest perception of their clinical education was their relationships with faculty staff, but also reported that the dental clinic was often an efficient learning environment. Students associated clinical teaching excellence with positive patient interaction and knowledgeable supervising staff but found insufficient numbers of teaching staff; insufficient, inconsistent or belittling feedback; heavy workload in administrative tasks and stress in meeting procedural requirements were strong concerns in their clinical education.

McLean *et al.* 2008 describe forces driving the introduction of staff development initiatives as either *internal* (of benefit to the individual / Faculty, for example orientating new faculty members; supporting individuals to improve; encouraging career progression) or *external* (conforming with University expectations; and accountability requirements). Whilst the external drivers may be the strongest, having potential penalties

attached for non-compliance, it is important to ensure that clinical educators see the benefit to themselves of taking part or uptake will be low.

Steinert *et al.* (2006) conducted a systematic review of faculty development initiatives and identified a number of features of effective interventions based on their analysis of 53 published papers reporting faculty development programs. Whilst in medical education, this review holds value for dental education. Interesting key findings were that educators who participated in development reported increased knowledge of educational principles and gains in teaching skills. In addition, where formal tests of knowledge were used, significant gains were shown and changes in teaching behaviour were consistently reported by participants and were also detected by students. Key features of effective faculty development included those programs that utilised experiential learning, provided feedback, facilitated effective peer and colleague relationships, incorporated well-designed interventions following principles of teaching and learning, and used a diversity of educational methods within single interventions.

These key publications, together with the invaluable input by current clinical educators participating in the survey, have guided the design of the theoretical basis for a development program for clinical educators shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Theoretical basis for clinical educator development program

- 
- Apply educational principles in the design and development.
  - Provide understanding of teachers' educational practices reflecting the real learning environment.
  - Acknowledge the importance of cultural context, characteristics of educators and intuitive teaching ability.
  - Develop more programs that extend over time, to allow for cumulative learning, practice and growth.
  - Develop programs that stimulate reflection and learning among participants, raising their awareness of themselves as clinical educators.
  - Include ongoing self-directed development with 'educator-directed' interventions.
  - Align the question of voluntary participation to local needs. Participation is expected and required.
  - Evaluation using Kirkpatrick's model of evaluating educational outcomes describing four levels of outcome: participant reaction, participant learning, change in participant behaviour and impact of changed behaviour on students and on patients/clients.
  - Develop program variations that support clinical educators to move in and out of academia enhancing their clinical careers.
- 

In the "academic" health area, clinical educators (that is, teachers, supervisors, tutors, mentors etc.) face competing challenges in the intensive learning environment of the clinic or hospital that is also a patient care setting. Additional stressors of patient outcome, student confidence/competence and facility service goals co-exist. Nevertheless, preparing health practitioners for their teaching roles as clinical educators by faculty development programs is regarded as essential to enhancing teaching effectiveness. Whilst the higher education sector places a premium on student achievement, increasing recognition of the importance of educator development is emerging. Increasing focus on professional orientation for the new teacher in academia, teaching renewal and development, curriculum development and development of skills in educational teaching scholarship characterises university teaching.

The alignment of programs to *standards* for clinical educator teaching is not a widely held practice, taken up with high variability amongst health professional groups. Bullock and Firmstone (2008), for example, prepared guidelines for dental educators in terms of developing standards, although the standards are not well utilised in faculty development.

Clinical educators all possess a qualification to practice a health profession in that state or country. If in active professional practice, that practice may be or may have been (if retired), located in private practices or public sector hospital clinics. Other additional qualifications include specialisation, research-based degrees and degrees in other disciplines. A small minority of educators have additional qualifications such as in business, other health fields, education or law. If this community of clinical educators is considered to be constituted of "health clinicians" who also teach in their profession, their choice to contribute to university teaching tends to reflect a stage in their career:

- Early career clinical educators are those transitioning from student to a part time teaching role, possibly pre-academic or possibly pre-specialisation.
- Mid-career clinical educators are those clinicians with and without ongoing clinical practice activity and with and without aspiration for a university academic career.
- End career clinical educators are those transitioning from full time practice to a part time teaching role, pre-retirement and active/post- university academic career.

Clinical educators are employed by a University faculty full-time, part-time, or sessionally; they provide education to students in undergraduate, graduate, speciality and continuing education programs. Teaching may be based at patient care sites located at metropolitan/ rural/regional or a combination of these sites; it may or may not provide additional educational services like assessment of written work, lectures, tutorials; it may or may not be provided office amenities for its use in the faculty teaching sites and may or may not be employed by the faculty in times of the year when students are not in clinical practice.

Most clinical educators report receiving some preparatory advice for their clinical teaching usually provided by discipline leaders. Existing educational opportunities for clinical educators in university faculties and schools generally include formal and informal education, usually discipline-based and facilitated by academic staff with an interest in faculty development. Subject matter is almost exclusively clinical practice updates or aspects of teaching/hospital content and policy. *Ad hoc* hands-on sessions are infrequently held in new clinically-relevant techniques or instrumentation, usually held following request by clinical educators. Interest in and uptake of these staff-presented sessions is usually good. However, there appears to be minimal consultation with educators or students on needs, no multidisciplinary content, no on-line offerings, little formal evaluation and no follow-up. Lately, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points are being issued for some sessions. Training opportunities provided on the main university campus are poorly attended by faculty staff; anecdotally, reasons include geographical difficulties of attending off-site training, related both to travel time and need to be on-site in case of clinical emergencies; perceptions that generic training did not adequately address specific needs of dental teachers; and poor communication between the main University and the faculty.

In order to most effectively produce a development program for clinical supervisors, a situational and needs analysis of what clinical supervisors would prioritise for their own development was a sound start. The current study focussed on dentistry and oral health as an example of clinical educators representative of health profession clinical educators. This article presents findings of such an analysis from the case of the Faculty of Dentistry at the University of Sydney as convenient example of a community of clinical educators. The development of the ClinTeach initiative was the product directly designed to meet the findings of the needs analysis.

## METHODS

### *1.Needs Analysis.*

The priorities clinical educators perceive for their professional development in teaching was explored using a naturalistic mixed methodological approach based on stages suggested by LeCompte and Preissle (1993) . A convenient cohort of dental and oral health clinical educators was selected. This approach was chosen to provide a context-rich study that would carry deep meaning for the clinical educators as a result of their engagement in project processes beyond being invited as participants. An added objective was to tap into the tacit and intuitive understanding considered to be possessed by clinical educators. An online survey, Priorities for Professional Development, was designed. The survey had three elements. The first was focused on areas of relevance in development of clinical educators in dentistry and oral health in a quantitative preference construct. The elements of clinical teaching that were used were:

- Aspects of Clinical Teaching
- Scholarship of Teaching
- Leadership in Teaching
- Clinical Educator Development Activities
- Topics for Clinical Educator Development
- Topics for Discipline-specific Content
- Clinical Educator Development Session Preferences.

The second element had a qualitative construct, with open-ended questions to allow participants to report their social reality of clinical teaching and, in analysis, capture a collective narrative of their experience. These questions were:

- How many years have you been teaching in clinical dentistry or oral health?
- What are your qualifications, and where and when did you receive these qualifications?
- Where and with what group of students do you currently teach clinical dentistry or oral health?
- In which discipline, program and/or cluster and/or theme are you currently classified in your clinical teaching?
- What prompted you to consider teaching as a clinical educator and how does this teaching benefit you?
- What do you think students most value about your teaching as a clinical educator?
- What are your personal goals in the next few years in taking a role as a clinical educator in Dentistry and Oral Health?

A final element in the investigation was the correlative study exploring interplay between an authentic reflexive assessment by the clinical educators of their own capability as educators against the judgement of these educators of faculty priorities for clinical educator development. This online "Priorities for Professional Development Survey" was developed to examine the current position and research the needs of the target audience in Dentistry and Oral Health: all clinical educators in the Faculty. The survey aimed to identify perceived training needs for the clinical teachers' educational roles, attitudes to training, preferences for delivery of training and barriers to training within the teaching environment.

The 60-item online survey instrument was developed and reviewed by a professional panel for content validity. Minor language changes were subsequently made. After the design of the first draft, the survey was trialed with volunteers who were asked to attempt the survey and comment on its design and content to ensure readability and content relevance. It was piloted amongst a group of educators and non-educators which improved construct validity by providing valuable modifications. Questionnaires were further tested for reliability using Cronbach's Split Half reliability analysis (0.79). Data was entered into SPSS version 15.0 for descriptive analysis and examined for frequency distribution. Cross tabulations were performed using Fisher's Exact Test (as several cell counts were <5) to identify associations between groups of data collected. A Wilcoxon signed rank test was performed on matched pair responses from responses from clinical educators about themselves and about faculty priorities. The level of significance was set at  $p < 0.001$ .

### *2. ClinTeach Website design.*

The development and design of the ClinTeach website and the ClinTeach conference was to directly address the findings from the Priorities for Professional Development survey. The ClinTeach website was designed by a professional webdesigner and developer in consultation with the study project team constituted of research academics, a faculty educational curriculum design officer, and a faculty information technology officer. The website team met regularly to progress the website design.

### *3. ClinTeach Conference.*

The ClinTeach 2013 conference was held in Canberra Australian Capital Territory, Australia on Saturday 25th May, 2013 in the Hyatt Hotel Canberra, within the parliamentary triangle. This location was selected to equitably allow both rural and metropolitan clinical educators to attend. Clinical Educators from both Charles Sturt University School of Dentistry and Health Sciences and Sydney Faculty of Dentistry and Faculty of Health Sciences, Medical Radiography, were invited to participate and the final list of attendees comprised delegates from all these groups. The conference agenda included the following presentations designed to be of direct disciplinary and educational importance to all the conference delegates: Update in Pain Mechanisms; Standards-How Do They Relate To Clinical Assessment?: Cone Beam Computed Tomography and Work-Integrated Learning: Implications for Clinical Teachers. The conference included the Launch of the ClinTeach Website.

## RESULTS

### *Needs Analysis*

The largest group of respondents possessed only a primary professional degree in Dentistry or Oral Health (45%). A further 24% also had a specialist dental degree and 4% also had formal educational degrees. The

remainder of respondents also possessed fellowships, non-health degrees or other qualifications. The survey identified a number of educational areas where educators felt training would be valuable, and also indicated that their preference for delivery was via short workshops or a blended approach incorporating a mix of face-to-face delivery and self-directed study. In regard to the three elements of the survey, the following were found.

*Clinical educator perceptions: HIGH priority for development programs*

In specific findings, respondents considered the following aspects of clinical teaching were a high priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- assessing learner needs
- providing reliable and valid assessment
- communicating constructive assessment to learners
- identifying learners who are at risk of failing
- identifying learner need for more guidance
- incorporating active learning strategies
- assessing changes in learner competence
- teaching dental techniques and fine skills
- teaching patient care

In regard to the scholarship of teaching, the following aspects were a high priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- understanding expectations of a teacher
- developing myself as an educator
- exposure to teaching and learning theory
- preventing burnout in teaching skills

In regard to leadership in teaching, the following aspects were a high priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- being “on board” with faculty vision for teaching
- collaborating in group processing of teaching skills
- understanding mentoring of junior clinical educators
- skills in managing conflict during teaching
- being a source of advice for junior clinical educators

Respondents were generally interested in a diverse range of possible clinical development activities, but they expressed interest in the following:

- peer-to-peer exchange of ideas
- in-clinical observation of my teaching with feedback and consultation with professional educators
- student/teacher combined discussion sessions
- short course run in collaboration with other Health faculties

*Clinical educator perceptions: LOW priority for development programs*

In specific findings, respondents considered the following aspects of clinical teaching were a low priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- Promoting experiential learning
- Recognising learners’ readiness for independence

In regard to the scholarship of teaching, the following aspects were a low priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- Attending teaching development forums
- Understanding expectations of teacher to improve their teaching skills
- Contributing to developing educationally-based research
- Preventing burnout in teaching skills
- Availing oneself of opportunities for peer review of my teaching

In regard to leadership in teaching, the following aspects were a low priority in Clinical Educator Development:

- Having emotional intelligence skills

- Managing relationships between clinical educators
- Understanding budgetary planning in regard to teaching
- Collaborating in group processing of teaching skills
- Managing time in regard to teaching

*Barriers that prevent good practice in clinical teaching*

In general, the respondents provided rich comment about the barriers to good practice in clinical teaching. Focus was on weak support in the faculty culture, lack of teaching orientation and mentoring and poor communication between general and specialist educators. An illustrative comment was:

There is a lack of acknowledgement that effective clinical teaching requires more than knowledge of the assessment grades and knowledge of the curriculum (ie which procedures/materials applicable to particular circumstances). There is a perception that the clinical tutors may not be interested in developing their own teaching practice.

There was a strong preference for association of the development sessions with Continuing Professional Development requirements and those that were conducted by both Faculty of Dentistry teachers and University educators. Preference for Clinical Educator Development sessions for which the respondents were prepared to attend were:

- during the day, on a weekend, once a semester
- include an assessment component
- be associated with a certificate
- be located at any of the teaching site

*Clinical educator perception of their own ASPECTS OF CLINICAL TEACHING*

In this section, respondents were asked to reflect on their own teaching skills and most respondents reported mastery of teaching (which was defined as being able to teach others) in the areas of teaching patient care, acting as a clinical role model and recognising patient diversity. Interestingly, and somewhat ironically, the majority of respondents felt these were also a priority for development by the faculty in a development program. Respondents felt they needed development in their teaching skills in the areas of using assessment schemas, incorporating active learning strategies and understanding learner's learning styles.

*Clinical educator perception of the SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING*

In this section, respondents were asked to prioritise the importance of aspects of scholarship. Respondents on the whole did not feel they had mastery in any of the alternatives presented and reported that they needed development in:

- contributing to scholarly discussion about teaching
- attending teaching development forums
- contributing to developing educationally-based research
- availing oneself of opportunities for peer review of my teaching
- exposure to teaching and learning theory

*Clinical educator perception of the LEADERSHIP IN TEACHING*

In this section, most respondents reported mastery of teaching (which was defined as being able to teach others) in the areas of being a source of advice for junior clinical educators, having emotional intelligence skills, managing teaching in stressful circumstances and managing time in regard to teaching. Respondents felt they needed development in understanding budgetary planning in regard to teaching, being "on board" with Faculty vision for teaching and collaborating in group processing of teaching skills

*Needs Analysis Open comments*

In the data analysis process, the holistic approach was adopted to organise data (in this case respondents answers to the survey questions) using NVivo around each question. Project team members independently reviewed each set of responses to each question and identified codes by using the phases of organising,

connecting and corroborating or legitimating after Crabtree and Miller (1999). In regard to each of the needs analysis questions, the predominant perception from the respondents following qualitative analysis are epitomised with the quotes given below:

What prompted you to consider teaching as a clinical educator and how does this teaching benefit you?

“Contribution to the community is my main purpose of teaching since I have 30 years of clinical experience. It gives me the benefits of understanding how students learn and apply and so I know how I can teach them to assist their progress.”

What do you think students most value about your teaching as a clinical educator?

“Students most value me in giving them valuable opinion and feedback for their clinical practice, guiding them through cases and questioning their knowledge and understanding.”

What are your personal goals in regard to your role as a clinical educator in Dentistry and Oral Health?

“To help graduate students who are knowledgeable, skilful and who have a caring, gentle and altruistic thought pattern. Also trying to impart organisation and stress management.”

What do you think prevents Clinical Educators from teaching at their best?

“Largely, clinical teachers have expertise in their professional/technical field, but often do not base their teaching practice on contemporary concepts of learning. Also, dentists are largely not skilled in establishing and developing a therapeutic relationship with students, since the pervading nature of dental practice is procedural rather than counselling/consultative, and hence need to learn these skills as well.”

What do you think best supports Clinical Educators to teach at their best?

“Ongoing education and communication within the discipline with feedback and discussion of situations that arise in different sessions and how they are dealt with.”

“Beginning with the end in mind”, what would an ideal Clinical Educator Development program essentially include in your opinion?

“In order to be practical, interactive, workshop style sessions are essential, with online modules to complete before, and in between the face to face sessions. ‘Core’ and ‘extension’ reading materials could help to engage participants with different levels of interest.”

#### *Evaluation of Website.*

The ClinTeach website was launched at the ClinTeach Conference held in Canberra, NSW Australia on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2013. Limited further advertising about the website was carried out. Website usage was determined using the web statistics analysis program, Urchin v6.602 ©2009 Urchin Software Corporation. (by Google). This program analysed web server log file content and traffic information on that website based upon the log data over the period from May 2013 to May 2014. Greatest usage of the website occurred in the first three months after the website launch, usage after that has fallen. Most popular content were the sections Academic Expectations, Standards-Based Learning and Teaching and Interprofessional Practice and users viewed up to 11 pages of the site. These sections were also the top entrances and exit sites. Length of visits were generally up to 3 minutes per page on average with Thursday being the most popular day for entering the site and the day most failed connections to the site occurred. All video and slides from the ClinTeach conference presentations were posted on the ClinTeach website and all of these were the most requested downloads with the presentation on “Standards-Based Assessment” being the most popular followed by the “Pain Update and Mechanisms”. No posts to the website were recorded over the project period and there were periods of relatively high broken links. The majority of university users were from those using the University of Sydney and La Trobe domain using Internet Explorer and Googlebot browsers. Academic staff voiced concerns about the intellectual property issues in regard to posting of their material on the site, so little of these materials have been posted.

#### *Evaluation of Conference.*

Evaluation of the conference by delegates to the conference was determined by voluntary questionnaire provided at the end of the conference. The conference delegates were a generous but small group and clearly valued an opportunity to meet together:

“Well done on organising a content-rich and relevant conference. It was a great launch of the program to educate us on. The program and tools, so we can advocate ClinTeach to our peers and students. Workshop demonstrated that clinical supervisor feedback HAS BEEN incorporated and taken seriously”

And further

“I felt this was one beginning of a more complicated conversation. I felt this was just a beginning or an introduction to the field of pedagogy.”

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The project demonstrated good methodological congruence to addressing the educational development needs of clinical educators. Their needs were explored and identified and used to frame an educational strategy that might best support delivery of their development. The purposiveness of the project was to authentically place the educators as the focus of the project and using qualitative methodology to directly harvest clinical educator reaction and outcome to shape future development. A situational needs analysis provided the basis for the website and conference. Evaluation of both was carried out. Enhanced access and engagement of supervisors to previously unavailable support from the university sector in clinical training, curriculum resources and supervision techniques was achieved. The project also provided contribution to the elaboration and facilitation of interprofessional practice by clinical supervisors in the new collaboration between the faculties of Dentistry and Health Sciences. The conference served to increase connectivity of clinical supervisors to each other across regional and rural clinical centres, due to the availability of access to elearning modules, and the constructive use of social media, on line forums and teleconferencing. Feedback from Clinical Educators to the conference, was almost universally enthusiastic, that the project was a strong achievement with good impact amongst them in terms of enhancing their capacity and competency and connectivity in an interprofessional way. Lessons learned included the challenge of website administration

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# Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: A qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam

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This paper explores the role of intern work supervisors in Vietnam. Bates (2005) stated that effective internship placements are contingent upon collaborations between the student, academic supervisor and work supervisor. In offshore education, in order for the university to establish this collaboration, it must understand the work supervisor's perception of their role, as internships may differ between the university's home setting and the offshore environment. In Vietnam, although many local universities incorporate internships as a degree component, usually the contact between the university academic and the intern's workplace is minimal or non-existent. Therefore, the authors, from a foreign university in Vietnam that delivers a 12-week internship elective for business undergraduates, conducted 21 interviews with intern work supervisors in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Two themes of inquiry developed from the interview results indicated that work supervisors valued the contact with the university, were supportive of the interns' goals, and comfortable in their role as intern assessors. Supervisors also wanted information about the intern before the intern started, and suggested that the university prepare the intern to set goals at the start of the internship.

Keywords: Work integrated learning(WIL); transnational education, cross-cultural collaboration, intern work supervisors, industry collaboration, industry partnerships

## INTRODUCTION

Although many universities incorporate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) components into degree programs, there is little research on how WIL elements can be effectively and appropriately integrated into degree delivery in offshore markets (transnational education). This paper focuses on collaboration with work supervisors of business undergraduate interns in a transnational WIL context - a foreign university in Vietnam (FUV).

Links between higher education and internship organisations are weak and undeveloped in Vietnam (World Bank 2008; Tran 2010; British Council 2012; Tran 2012; Tran 2014; Valley & Wilkinson 2008). In phase one of an ethics-approved research project, we analysed work supervisor ratings given to interns after their 12-week placement. This paper forms part of the second phase of the project: a qualitative inquiry into work supervisors' internship experiences. The paper examines interview feedback from 21 intern work supervisors in two collaboration-related areas: support of intern learning, and perceptions of academic visits to the workplace.

## IMPORTANCE OF WIL STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

To ensure that degree programs delivered in offshore markets provide graduates with WIL experiences that are equivalent to those provided to students on the host domestic campus but also relevant to local industry, universities need to understand local industry orientations towards work integrated learning.

Figure 1 (adapted from Patrick, C., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008) illustrates the optimal stakeholder relationship environment for WIL, and frames the critical importance of collaborative relationship systems that underpin effective WIL activities.

A transnational education provider must investigate and understand all elements of the stakeholder environment (Healey 2014). Effective work integrated learning must involve partnership between all stakeholder groups (Bates 2005). However, the disconnect between higher education institutions and industry in Vietnam (Ashwill 2010) undermines the foundations of capacity building and collaboration between universities and employers that, as illustrated by Figure 1, are requisite for effective WIL internships. Work supervisors are positioned at the critical, intersected point (represented as Work Integrated Learning in Figure 1). As front-line Employer stakeholder participants, they directly interact with the Student interns at the workplace, as well as with the University stakeholders – academic supervisors. Therefore, their perceptions warrant exploration. The next section summarises relevant research into the importance of the work supervisor.

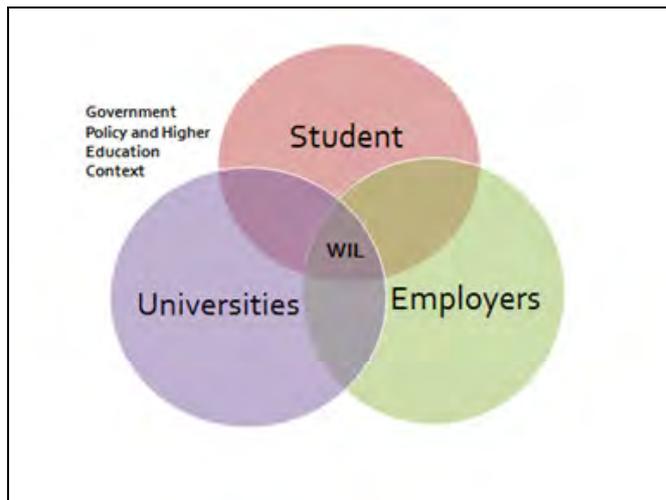


FIGURE 1. Adapted from Patrick, C., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Preto, G. (2008).

*The internship work supervisor – their role in transnational WIL*

Various researchers allude to both the critical role of the work supervisor, possibly the first an intern has ever had, and to the importance of collaboration between the university and the employer (Billett 2009; Bates 2005; Harvey 2005; Henschke 2013). Jackson’s proposed model of graduate skill transfer (2014) identifies workplace characteristics, integrated with program characteristics, as important for skill transfer and personal development. Accordingly, Smith and Smith (2010) state the need to understand industry stakeholders as crucial co-contributors to a work-as-learning culture.

However, collaboration in WIL programs can be problematic for work supervisors if they lack clear understanding of their role with respect to academic elements of WIL, such as assessments, reflections, etc. (Rowe, Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2012). Smith, Mackay, Challis and Holt (2005) claim that academics cannot assume that work supervisors do have this understanding. As collaboration between work supervisors and universities is rare in the Vietnamese higher education environment, this paper explores two possible influential differences in Vietnamese work supervisors’ WIL-related perceptions.

*Two themes of inquiry into work supervisors’ perceptions of WIL collaboration*

Tran (2014) maintained that higher education in Vietnam is a scapegoat for the low level of employability skills evidenced by Vietnamese university graduates; a dilemma deeply rooted in the historically disconnected stakeholder environment. If work supervisors share this perception, we would not be surprised if they lacked motivation to collaborate with the university. Therefore, one theme of inquiry dealt with work supervisors’ perceptions about collaborating to support intern learning.

In the UK Hejmadi, Bullock, Gould and Lock (2012) found agreement amongst academic supervisors that workplace visits form part of a university’s effective communications strategy. In Vietnam, direct communication between academics and workplace supervisors is rare; workplace visits, rarer still. Effective capacity building requires effective communication; therefore our second theme of inquiry addressed work supervisors’ perceptions of academic visits to the workplace. If supervisors didn’t perceive visits as beneficial, the university could consider crafting a locally-appropriate WIL communications strategy.

**METHODOLOGY**

The authors conducted ethics-approved, semi-structured 30-minute interviews with a convenience sample of 21 work supervisors responsible for the FUV interns in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as part of a wider project on WIL implementation by the FUV in Vietnam. To address this paper’s two themes of interest, an inductive approach consistent with exploratory research was taken due to a lack of available research in the Vietnamese context. However, inevitably the authors were influenced both by extant literature and by their experience as

academic intern supervisors at the FUV. Therefore, NVivo 10 selective coding (as opposed to purely inductive in vivo coding) was initially used to code interview comments into this paper’s two themes of interest.

Question item topics that generated the largest volume of coded responses relevant to positive work supervisor perceptions of collaboration in intern learning and work place visits appear in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Question item topics with highest volume of selectively-coded references

| Question item Topic               | # Sources coded<br>(total 21 sources) | #References to perception of<br>role in intern learning | #References to perception<br>of work visit |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Coaching/ mentoring               | 20                                    | 111   | 0  |
| Overall experience with FUV       | 19                                    | 60  | 2  |
| Suggestions for improvement       | 18                                    | 49  | 4  |
| Goal setting                      | 17                                    | 45  | 0  |
| Perception-academic work<br>visit | 20                                    | 4   | 47   |

## DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

### *Perception of the intern – temporary tea maker, free labour, or learner participant?*

Weber reported US employer perceptions that college internships could not prepare graduates sufficiently because the interns did “grunt work” and little more (2014); articles in the Vietnamese popular media reflect similar observations (Lam, 2013; VietnamNetBridge 2013). Given the unstructured nature of business university internships in Vietnam, we wanted to know whether work supervisors perceived that interns were there to learn, not just to make tea, copies and do other routine tasks. The interview responses showed commitment to coaching and mentoring – activities were explicitly outlined in many cases as reflected in the large number of coded references in Table 1.

Two responses indicated that interns with customer interface responsibility were not just free labour, but carried out critical duties and therefore needed to be provided with the best learning environment, not only for their own benefit but to ensure satisfactory business and client outcomes.

### *Perception of role – is it my job to support interns and help maximise their learning?*

It was encouraging to find that although supervising interns was not usually part of the work supervisors’ job description they were enthusiastic about giving feedback and mentoring students.

During their work on the project we guide and mentor them and teach them how to solve the problem, this is our common practice to work with the internship, especially the internship with FUV. .... I appreciate that and I enjoy my role. ....

A quote representing some work supervisors’ opinion that although it is not part of their official job description, coaching interns forms part of their own personal and professional development and is therefore seen as a worthwhile endeavour:

It’s extremely comfortable because I can see the coaching and training is a main task of a leader of a team. I myself need to improve my leadership skills and training and coaching skill is a part of the leadership.

### *Perception of academic workplace visits*

Although commonplace in Western higher education, visits by academics to intern workplaces in Vietnam are rare; therefore, it was important for us to find out whether work supervisors felt burdened, annoyed, threatened or simply confused about the purpose of the visits. However all respondents showed support for the visits. Many respondents perceived that the work visits demonstrated professionalism, showed that the university cared for the students, reflected the seriousness of the internship placement, opened lines of communication and opportunities to discuss questions and issues.

For me it feels intern come from a professional school, a good school because the academic supervisor they do really care.

I think the meeting with employer like this is good because that also helps the employer to take serious about the internship or the interns from the university and be more aware that the internship is not only about the employer gaining from the interns but also contributing and supporting the interns to get more skills, to learn more so it's not like one way but should be two ways.

However, one comment indicates initial discomfort with the way the visit was arranged:

... someone, I don't remember who, said there will be someone from FUV coming here to inspect how we can arrange the internship. My feeling is not good, I say 'why FUV is inspecting us?' we are very helpful and very willing to share experience with intern.

This comment shows the need to consider a lack of familiarity with workplace visits, and to anticipate possible cultural differences in interpreting the visit's purpose. A foreign university could be perceived as insensitive, patronising or lacking in trust if basic principles of cross-cultural communication aren't given appropriate attention, especially in initial interactions with the internship organisation.

#### *Suggestions for improvement*

Most responses were concerned with improving collaboration aimed at helping supervisors to give more valuable support to interns. Several respondents requested more information on the students' backgrounds before the internship started, as outlined in the quotes below:

I think before the internship you should give us a checklist what they did and so we can know what we have to train and how we support them.

So if you make a visit, if you have a plan clear like this, we can work easier. We can dig out all the objectives in the plan and we can provide the feedback easily.

Supervisors suggested that interns share goals with the work supervisor at the start of the internship placement, thus enabling the supervisor to provide more personalised and valuable support:

For example, before going to the internship, you should have a self-assessment. After the self-assessment of that student, they know what skills they should improve and come to (organisation), after I assign you with this or with that and you can share with her/his mentor.

An encouraging finding was that many supervisors requested additional communication in order to improve collaborative action to improve internships:

So I suggest that when employee finish their internship do we have a review with university.

## CONCLUSIONS

In Vietnam, workplace supervisors supported the FUV's internships activities. Work supervisors perceived that visits showed care to students, and reflected the serious approach of the internship program and professionalism of the university. Work supervisors showed interest in guiding interns' progress and in supporting their academic internship assessments, although this was rarely part of their official job description. They requested more detailed information about intern backgrounds and goals prior to the internship placement that would enable supervisors to provide interns with a better learning experience.

Interview responses, including suggestions for improvement, indicated positive orientations towards collaboration, and an interest in building future capacity. Universities offering WIL transnationally could provide guidelines such as those provided in the Innovative Research Universities' Guidelines for WIL publication (2012) to their offshore WIL industry partners— adapted to maximise relevance to the local business and cultural context and establish clear guidelines for work supervisors.

Finally, in an offshore environment that is unfamiliar with WIL internships, we recommend that transnational universities introduce internship activities - particularly the role of workplace visits as a method of developing

collaboration for mutual benefit - carefully, in order to avoid misinterpretation due to cultural and experiential differences.

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# Conceptualising and measuring 'employability' – lessons from a National OLT Project

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The notion that employability should be an explicit outcome of higher education degrees is gaining traction in Australia, the U.K. and elsewhere. It is especially relevant to generalist and semi-professional degrees where the pathway to employment may be less clear than it is for some professional degrees. To be able to promote employability as a worthwhile and sensible outcome of higher education, it is necessary to be able to determine what cluster of abilities should be taken to constitute employability. This paper reports on the results of a national project "*Measuring the impact of WIL on student work-readiness*", and focuses on a confirmatory factor analysis of 6 dimensions of ability adopted by the study. It explores the provenance and utility of these measures for future employability research. The dimensions explored are: lifelong learning; professional practices and standards; integration of knowledge/theory and practice; informed decision-making (applied information literacy); commencement readiness; and collaboration.

Keywords: Employability; work-integrated learning; graduate attributes; measurement; higher education

## INTRODUCTION – CONTEXT AND MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Employability can be understood in different ways but at its heart is the idea that an employable graduate is one who can be effective as a professional employee on the very first day of employment. In some fields there is explicit articulation and regular review of the capabilities that are required for this to be true (e.g. medicine, engineering). In more generalist fields (e.g. arts, sciences, and many semi-professional areas such as planning, finance or commerce) tradition articulating these capabilities is not as evident.

In disciplines where graduates move into clearly defined professional or semi-professional work roles, it is a more obvious way to think of the outcomes. Engineering, law, medicine, archaeology, allied-health, or more recently nursing, program teams have at the forefront of their minds the notion that graduates ought to be able to be effective to "an entry-level standard" from day one of their first job. There will be some local details of the specific workplace to be learned, but in terms of the main learning outcomes of the degree and the professional requirements of practice this is a reasonable expectation. Other fields lack a clear definition of capabilities, which has created an opportunity for debate about the quality, and usefulness of graduates entering employment. During the past 20 years this idea of capabilities for employability has been evolving in Australia, the U.K., and elsewhere.

In the past, higher education outcomes were more likely to be tacit and focused on the development of individual intellectual abilities and character; the student body was a small social elite, and education was as much a rite-of-passage as disciplinary training or preparation for employment. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in Australia, shifts in government policy "massified" the higher education sector. Along with this an emerging discourse focused on the notion of "return on investment", brought the three key stakeholders into a common fold – government, as part-sponsor of the sector, the students, who since 1989 were paying a co-contribution to their education, and employers, who saw themselves as key "consumers" of the "products" of the system (the graduates). This period saw the emergence of the generic graduate attributes agenda in Australia in the early 1990s, and an increasing politicisation of the higher education sector, with the government, employer groups (such as the Business Council of Australia) and the tri-partite Business, Industry and Higher Education Cooperation Council commissioning reviews (DEST, ACCI, & BCA, 2002; Precision Consultancy & Commonwealth of Australia, 2007). The idea of generic graduate attributes has been slowly transformed by these consultations and reviews.

Through consultation with business and industry groups, a new agenda emerged based on the premise that graduates lack certain fundamental *skills* that would make them more operationally relevant in an enterprise context.

The transformation has been from a set of *attributes or qualities* of the individual, personally transformed by education, into a set of *abilities or competencies*, and thence into a set of skills to be applied in work contexts. In parallel with this, the professions have responded by developing their graduate attributes agendas, sometimes in similar directions. Examples include:

- the review of Engineering Education by Engineers Australia which developed a list of “soft skills” which would be appropriate outcomes along with various sub-discipline-specific knowledge (Accreditation Board Engineers Australia, 2010);
- the development of increasingly detailed and comprehensive assessment tools such as the Assessment of Physiotherapy Practice instrument (Dalton, Davidson, & Keating, 2011); and
- refinements in the OSCEs used in medicine and the assessment of “competence” (Clarke, Rainey, & Traynor, 2011; Epstein & Hundert, 2014; Weiss & Shanteau, 2003).

The result of this evolution in the tertiary sector in Australia is the Core Skills Framework, an approach funded and endorsed by government and based heavily on consultation with industry (DIISRTE & DEEWR, 2013).

Those in the higher education sector also have been pondering this issue, their role in it, and the approach to be taken in addressing these issues. There have been high-level philosophical contributions raising questions of the validity of the question itself (Barnett, Parry, & Coate, 2001; Barnett, 1990, 2013), broad system-wide reviews of the graduate attribute agenda and its uptake (Barrie, Hughes, & Smith, 2009), and projects focused on curriculum change system-wide for graduate attributes (Oliver, 2011). In parallel we have seen the emergence of the ideas of employability (Harvey & Umbach, 2005; Little & Harvey, 2006) and of career development learning (CDL) and the interplay between CDL, employability and work-integrated learning (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; M. Smith et al., 2009). There have been some critical voices too, raising concerns of the “technicisation” of higher education outcomes (C. D. Smith & Clarke, 2009; Su, 2008), and others raising sceptical doubts about the very enterprise of developing employability from a cluster-of-skills perspective (Holmes, 2001).

One of the problems with the emerging debates on employability, however, is that it continues to evolve, and to grow, by *accretion*, with no underpinning or overarching theoretical framework to guide it. Instead, the various and vested interests of those involved in commissioning or participating in reviews add this or that skill, ability or attitude each time a review is conducted. The result is that an enormous array of capabilities is available to “constitute” the construct of employability, with little or no underlying science or agreement about the more fundamental questions regarding the appropriate scope of these skills or the purposes of a higher education degree. Illustrative of this point is the fact that in her comprehensive review, Jackson (Jackson, 2010, see also 2013) identified 41 specific skill areas vying for inclusion in the definition of employability.

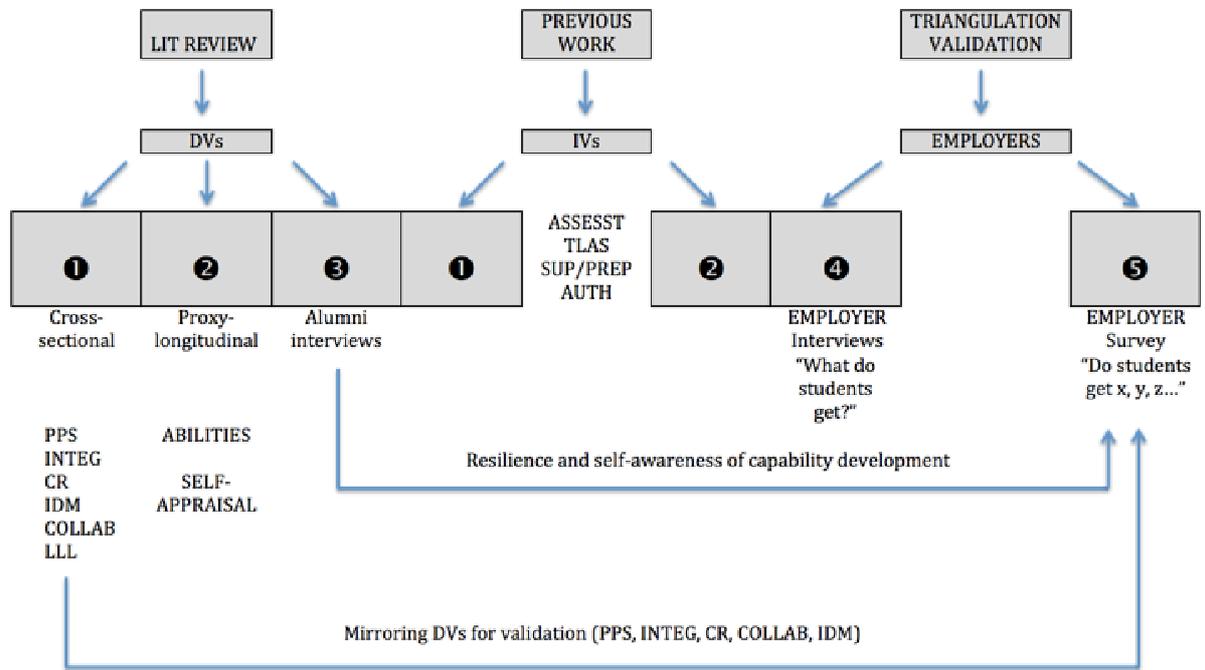
TABLE 1. Forty-one skills identified by Jackson (2010)

| Task requirements                              | Threshold competencies            | Distinguishing competencies              |   |
|--|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>1. graduate level</b>                       | <i>Ethics and responsibility</i>  | <i>Oral Communication</i>                | <i>Adaptability &amp; change management</i> |
| <i>Application and use of technology</i>       | <i>Written communication</i>      | <i>Team-working</i>                      | <i>Emotional intelligence</i>               |
| <i>Problem solving</i>                         | <i>Information management</i>     | <i>Organisational skills</i>             | <i>Political skill</i>                      |
| <i>Decision management</i>                     | <i>Operating globally</i>         | <i>Interpersonal skills</i>              | <i>Self-efficacy</i>                        |
| <i>Operating in organisational environment</i> | <i>Intellectual ability</i>       | <i>Continuous improvement management</i> | <i>Reliability</i>                          |
| <i>Multi-tasking</i>                           | <i>Lifelong learning</i>          | <i>Meta-cognition</i>                    | <i>Stress tolerance</i>                     |
|  | <i>Disciplinary expertise</i>     | <i>Cultural and diversity management</i> | <i>Attention to detail</i>                  |
|  | <i>Business acumen</i>            | <i>Autonomy</i>                          | <i>Entrepreneurship</i>                     |
| <b>2. higher level</b>                         | <i>Work experience</i>            | <i>Critical thinking</i>                 | <i>Creativity</i>                           |
| <i>Project management</i>                      | <i>Numeracy</i>                   | <i>Leadership skills</i>                 |   |
| <i>Meeting management</i>                      | <i>Professionalism/work ethic</i> | <i>Initiative</i>                        |   |
| <i>Coaching</i>                                | <i>Accountability</i>             |  |   |
|  | <i>Life experience</i>            |  |   |

## METHOD, MATERIALS AND SAMPLE

In 2011 a team of researchers was commissioned by the then Australian Council for Learning and teaching (ALTC) (now Office for Learning and Teaching – OLT) to conduct an inquiry into the effect of work integrated learning on the work-readiness of graduates (C. D. Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2014). This project by necessity has addressed the issue of conceptualising and measuring employability. This paper reports on the results of the measurement phase of one of 5 studies conducted by this project.

The relationships between the 5 studies are outlined in the figure below. As can be seen, although the study is numbered “1” it was not the first to be conducted, and enjoyed the benefit of the team’s reflections on the results of previous studies (namely Study 2, in which a short set of measures was used in a retrospective study and change in employability over time, and Study 3 which was based on interviews with alumni about the impact on their employability from work integrated learning).



PPS=Professional practice and standards; INTEG= Integration; CR=Commencement-readiness; IDM=informed decision-making in context; COLLAB=Collaboration; LLL=Lifelong learning; ASSESS=Assessment focused on integrative learning; TLAs=Teaching and learning activities in situ focused on integrative learning; SUP/PREP=Induction, supervision, and debrief; AUTH=Authenticity.

FIGURE 1. Five studies conducted in the OLT-funded national study (Ferns, Smith, & Russell, 2014 p. 9)

The five studies conducted are listed below:

1. Student cross-sectional survey (3323 – in thirteen universities)
2. Student proxy-longitudinal survey (1499 in 9 universities)
3. Alumni interviews (13 alumni)
4. Employer interviews (13 from 7 disciplines)
5. Employer survey (163 – from 31 different industries)

We report here, then, the results of the measurement stage of Study 1.

Students in 13 universities were invited to participate in a voluntary and confidential survey dealing with the impact of work-integrated learning on employability. The research had ethical approval from Griffith University (GIH/01/12/HREC Title: “ALTC/OLT Impact of WIL on Employability”) which was cascaded to the other participating universities through their ethics committees. An incentive (a chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift voucher) was offered for completion of the survey. Over three thousand students participated. The instrument was designed in three broad sections – some personal demographic questions; questions relating to work integrated learning experiences, based on previous work by the CI, (C. D. Smith & Worsfold, 2013; C. D. Smith, 2012) and 45 questions to measure employability outcomes.

The 45 items for measuring employability outcomes were derived after a rigorous set of procedures including:

- A literature review to identify candidate measures and sub-constructs;
- Nominal group technique discussions with participating university expert project-partners to create a shortlist
- Consultation with a reference group of international experts
- Final deliberations of the leadership team (Griffith, RMIT and Curtin)
- Ratification of final decisions by project partners.

The 45 items are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2. 45 employability items

| Item | Item stems: "Please rate your ability to do each of the following:" (1-43) and                                      |
|------|---|
| 1    | effectively seek work relevant to my studies.   |
| 2    | present myself effectively in selection interviews and processes.   |
| 3    | evaluate how well my skills and preferences "fit" different employment opportunities I might consider in the future |
| 4    | identify the expectations employers have of new graduates   |
| 5    | appraise the quality of information I obtain e.g. from the web, from books or from other people.                    |
| 6    | use information and my professional or workplace knowledge to come to reasonable decisions and then act on these.   |
| 7    | weigh up risks, evaluate alternatives, make predictions from data and apply evaluation criteria to options.         |
| 8    | collect, analyse and organise information.  |
| 9    | work towards a compromise between opposing views when is it the best thing for the enterprise / organisation.       |
| 10   | make sure everyone feels heard in group discussions.  |
| 11   | interact appropriately with people from different levels of management / leadership / seniority in a workplace.     |
| 12   | recognise the "politics" of a workplace environment.  |
| 13   | interact effectively and respectfully with people from other cultures.  |
| 14   | learn from and collaborate with people representing diverse backgrounds or viewpoints.                              |
| 15   | continue to develop my work-related skills and knowledge independently.   |
| 16   | bring about a change in practices that will benefit the organisation or enterprise that employs me                  |
| 17   | take responsibility and act alone with autonomy appropriate to my role and level of training.                       |
| 18   | seek out opportunities for further learning to develop my workplace or professional skills and/or knowledge.        |
| 19   | recognise ethical practice in the workplace.  |
| 20   | identify the standards of performance or practice expected in the workplace / my profession.                        |
| 21   | develop a personal code of values and ethics.   |
| 22   | interpret and follow workplace procedures.  |
| 23   | demonstrate an awareness of the legislative and regulatory context in which the enterprise / profession operates.   |
| 24   | understand the key drivers for success in this enterprise / profession.   |
| 25   | judge the applicability of the knowledge gained in my studies to the workplace                                      |
| 26   | apply knowledge and skills gained in my studies to the workplace.   |
| 27   | link together different theoretical perspectives when working on a workplace or professional task or problem        |
| 28   | give clear instructions or advice to colleagues to achieve an outcome.  |
| 29   | seek clarification when I do not understand an instruction.   |
| 30   | write clearly using an appropriate style depending on the workplace and target audience.                            |
| 31   | listen empathetically, sympathetically and with compassion to colleagues in the workplace.                          |
| 32   | effectively manage multiple and different priorities to achieve a range of workplace or professional goals          |
| 33   | manage my emotions when in workplace or professional settings.  |
| 34   | take responsibility and be accountable for my workplace or professional practice, actions and decisions.            |
| 35   | use numbers and apply calculation formulas to solve numerical problems to an appropriate level of accuracy for work |
| 36   | identify the usefulness and value of continuing to learn in order to improve work or professional practice.         |
| 37   | identify the knowledge I lack / need to improve to be effective in the workplace.                                   |
| 38   | identify the skills I lack / need to improve to be effective in the workplace.                                      |
| 39   | recognise and value the role of theoretical ideas in work or professional contexts.                                 |
| 40   | be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills.   |
| 41   | understand the theories and principles in my discipline   |
| 42   | understand the practices and methods used in my discipline  |
| 43   | commence a job in my field and be immediately effective as a worker / new professional.                             |
| 44   | ready to commence work in your field or discipline  |
| 45   | able to obtain work relevant to studies   |

## RESULTS

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted (using principle axis factoring, with direct Oblimin for oblique or correlated factors in SPSS v.21). The KMO of the initial analysis (an indication that factor analysis would be appropriate where the value of the KMO statistic, a measure of sampling adequacy, is .6 or greater) was .97 indicating the factor analysis on these data was appropriate (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Communalities ranged from .24-.68. Through a series of iterations in which items were progressively deleted from the analysis based on criteria (communalities less than .3; factor loadings less than .32, or cross-loadings greater than .40, or theoretical incoherent collections of items), a solution was fitted that relied on 6 factors. This solution was then subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (using structural equation modelling in AMOS v.21). With trimming (based mainly on criteria including correlated errors between items on either the same or different factors or loadings between factors and items of less than .5), a final model was achieved that had good fit characteristics (the final model had an RMSEA of .046, a CFI of .946, a GFI of .966 and an parsimony-adjusted GFI of .95). The retained items and associated factors are shown below in Table 3.

TABLE 3. DEPENDENT VARIABLE scales (work-readiness) included in the SEM measurement model (FL=factor loading)

| Scale (DVs)                       | Item | Item text   | FL   |
|-----------------------------------|------|---|------|
| COLLABORATION                     | 9    | work towards a compromise between opposing views when is it the best thing for the enterprise / organisation.       | 0.56 |
|                                   | 10   | make sure everyone feels heard in group discussions.  | 0.60 |
|                                   | 11   | interact appropriately with people from different levels of management / leadership / seniority in a workplace.     | 0.69 |
|                                   | 12   | recognise the "politics" of a workplace environment.  | 0.55 |
|                                   | 13   | interact effectively and respectfully with people from other cultures.  | 0.73 |
|                                   | 14   | learn from and collaborate with people representing diverse backgrounds or viewpoints.                              | 0.74 |
|                                   | 31   | listen empathetically, sympathetically and with compassion to colleagues in the workplace.                          | 0.57 |
| INFORMED DECISION MAKING          | 5    | appraise the quality of information I obtain e.g. from the web, from books or from other people.                    | 0.61 |
|                                   | 6    | use information and my professional or workplace knowledge to come to reasonable decisions and then act on these.   | 0.75 |
|                                   | 7    | weigh up risks, evaluate alternatives, make predictions from data and apply evaluation criteria to options.         | 0.70 |
|                                   | 8    | collect, analyse and organise information.  | 0.64 |
| COMMENCEMENT-READINESS            | 1    | effectively seek work relevant to my studies.   | 0.67 |
|                                   | 2    | present myself effectively in selection interviews and processes.   | 0.59 |
|                                   | 3    | evaluate how well my skills and preferences "fit" different employment opportunities I might consider in the future | 0.63 |
|                                   | 43   | commence a job in my field and be immediately effective as a worker / new professional.                             | 0.66 |
|                                   | 44   | overall work readiness confidence   | 0.69 |
|                                   | 45   | able to obtain work relevant to studies   | 0.69 |
| LIFELONG LEARNIG                  | 36   | identify the usefulness and value of continuing to learn in order to improve work or professional practice.         | 0.69 |
|                                   | 37   | identify the knowledge I lack / need to improve to be effective in the workplace.                                   | 0.73 |
|                                   | 38   | identify the skills I lack / need to improve to be effective in the workplace.                                      | 0.72 |
|                                   | 40   | be prepared to invest time and effort in learning new skills.   | 0.66 |
|                                   | 41   | understand the theories and principles in my discipline   | 0.69 |
|                                   | 42   | understand the practices and methods used in my discipline  | 0.71 |
| PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE & STANDARDS | 17   | take responsibility and act alone with autonomy appropriate to my role and level of training.                       | 0.65 |
|                                   | 18   | seek out opportunities for further learning to develop my workplace or professional skills and/or knowledge.        | 0.62 |
|                                   | 19   | recognise ethical practice in the workplace.  | 0.70 |
|                                   | 20   | identify the standards of performance or practice expected in the workplace / my profession.                        | 0.73 |
|                                   | 21   | develop a personal code of values and ethics.   | 0.67 |
|                                   | 22   | interpret and follow workplace procedures.  | 0.69 |
|                                   | 29   | seek clarification when I do not understand an instruction.   | 0.61 |
|                                   | 32   | effectively manage multiple and different priorities to achieve a range of workplace or professional goals          | 0.60 |
|                                   | 34   | take responsibility and be accountable for my workplace or professional practice, actions and decisions.            | 0.68 |
| INTEGRATION OF THEORY & PRACTICE  | 25   | judge the applicability of the knowledge gained in my studies to the workplace                                      | 0.77 |
|                                   | 26   | apply knowledge and skills gained in my studies to the workplace.   | 0.75 |
|                                   | 39   | recognise and value the role of theoretical ideas in work or professional contexts.                                 | 0.62 |

Thus the identified dimensions of employability based on this work are:

- Collaboration and team work;
- Informed decision making / information literacy in context;
- Commencement readiness;
- Lifelong learning;
- Professional practices and standards; and
- Integration of theory and practice.

## DISCUSSION

The measurement of employability should rightly begin with its conceptualisation. It has been noted that the construct grows by accretion with the addition of new sub-constructs, and has been doing so for some time. Jackson's (2010) review makes this quite apparent, as do attempts to make comprehensive snap-shot models at some or other point in time (see for example Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007). One reason for this is the lack of theoretical "control" over the construct – in which members of the research community agree to limit the definition of the idea and allow for measurement studies to work from this definition to its operationalisation. Another reason is the politicisation of the construct – with many vested interests, from government, industry and the higher education sector all vying to have favourite sub-concepts included within the scope. The third reason for this chaotic accretion is the generality of the notion itself – it is so generic that of course it should be no surprise that just about every ability, capability and pro-social attitude ever identified eventually should be brought within its folds.

The dimensions of employability identified through the factor analysis give an indication of the scope of employability domains that can be distilled empirically. Note that this approach is not theoretical in one sense – for it does not start from premises about cognitive and psychomotor skill areas and operationalise those. Had we done that, the list would have been at least 41 domains long and for each of those domains there would have been at least three measurement items. That would have made the instrumentation untenably long and no respondent would have completed the study.

In the interests of thoroughness items were mapped against the 41 skill areas articulated in Jackson (2010). Table 4 contains the results of that mapping. The shaded items are those that made it into the final factor solution. In the cells are marks that indicate that the item in question is sub-tended or supported or implies the application of the skill area identified in the Jackson framework. From this it can be seen that each of our items relates to more than one of those domains identified in Jackson's review. This is because the items were written to capture the enactment of a skill in a workplace context, rather than the basic skill area itself. Jackson's list then is much more a list of specific psychomotor and cognitive skill areas many of which are deployed in the expression of "employability" behaviours in context. In that sense the "level" at which those skills are operationalised is more reductive than was the case in our approach.

A "meso-" rather than "micro-" level of item wording was adopted that targeted the skill domain *within the context of its application*. The operationalisation of, say, "critical thinking" would require micro-level items, or even objective testing (beyond the methodological scope of the project); we plumped instead for asking operationally vibrant and meaningful questions about actions in the workplace or professional context which in themselves might imply the use of one or many of those lower level, more basic, more micro skills. This is how the mapping against Jackson's 41 was generated: note that the way the skill enactment in context is described implies the enactment of a range of more micro-level skills. On the other side of the equation, an item such as "I can act effectively in a workplace" contains too little specificity, and is too general, too macro-level to be at all useful. Thus although it is plausible to suggest that the micro-level skills are constitutive of the abilities we are looking for in graduates and therefore those are the ones that we should measure, there are practicalities that such an approach does not take into account, chief among them being the impossibility of finding a workable instrumentation to use for quality assurance purposes if that approach is taken.

Table 5 shows the mapping with the items grouped according to their respective factors, and with the non-included items removed (as opposed to shaded, as in table 4). This mapping shows more clearly the logical or conceptual overlap, or rather clustering, of micro-skills together when meso-level "application" is the basis of the item wording; the resulting employability sub-dimensions bring together different collections of micro-skills. This is how the application of micro-skills is experienced, several of them being deployed together in acts of competence within operational environments. Taking this approach does not detract from the analytical validity





The items and the constructs they putatively represent are not measures of micro-skills, or skills in specific psycho-motor, motor, cognitive or affective dimensions. They are proxies for the constructs they measure and as is shown in Table 5. Each one can be “coded” against a variety of other more fine-grained attributes; thus the constructs themselves are composites of various related, but more fine-grained abilities and attitudes. This is what was meant in the preceding by “meso-level” measures. Micro-skills are analytically defensible, stand-alone aspects of competency, and can be understood and studied as such. But in application contexts, these skills are deployed in clusters to constitute acts of competent practice. For the purposes of applied research, items need to take this into account; they should be neither so micro-focused that they “break apart” competent performance, nor so macro-focused as to be useless practically.

It is expected that the items used in this study, and the constructs they represent, constitute a reasonable and defensible multi-dimensional model of employability-in-context that will be useful for research and quality assurance purposes; this is a strength of the approach taken. This approach however means that each scale is likely to be a measure of a multidimensional construct that combines collections of skills at a more fine-grained level. Thus the utility of the measures may be limited for some purposes where the focus is on that more fine-grained level of ability-measurement.

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# Capacity building through WIL in the Hospitality HE sector

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Dissatisfaction with graduate employability has been elevated within contemporary discussion with particular references made to a lack of general job skills and practical experience. Such dissatisfaction transverses disciplinary boundaries and is of heightened concern for the hospitality industry due to the service orientation of the work and rapid expansion of hospitality programs including key industry players penetrating the education market.

This paper examines the perspectives of recent graduates, employers and educators to establish the contribution of WIL to enhancement of hospitality graduate employability. Specific aspects of WIL that need to be managed for realisation of benefits and minimisation of negatives were identified. A mixed methodology was employed to triangulate the data, commencing with a quantitative online survey followed by qualitative focus groups.

The study concluded that graduates who have had experience of WIL in their tertiary studies are more attractive to employers and that extensive and varied contexts of engagement with WIL initiatives significantly enhance the perceived employability and performance of hospitality graduate employees. Progression of the Hospitality WIL agenda within the university format was found to be inhibited due to course simplification and standardisation together with an increased channelling of hospitality content away from universities and into TAFE Pathway Programs. The study developed a number of recommendations and guidelines for effective integration and reinforcement of WIL in hospitality tertiary education.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, capacity building, graduate employability, hospitality tertiary education

## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

Work integrated learning (WIL), industry-based experiences and the development of business-ready skills in graduates have been a source of major contention between employers and tertiary educators. Reports by numerous consultancies and quasi-governmental bodies (e.g. AC Nielsen, 2000; Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry [ACCI], & Business Council of Australia [BCA], 2002; Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council [BIHECC], 2007) refer to the existence of a proven gap between graduate attributes and industry expectations with particular references made to a lack of general job skills and practical experience. Graduate under/unemployment is increasingly detected within the Australian economy and has been specifically identified as a dilemma for the hospitality field (Breen, 2001; Kim, 2008). The prolific literature base on learning and education presents mounting evidence in support of WIL to enhance graduate employability (Bates, 2005; Bellamy *et al.*, 2013; BIHECC, 2007; Billet, & Henderson, 2011; Cashman, & Seifer, 2008; Choy, & Delahaye, 2011; McIlveen *et al.*, 2011; Richardson, 2009; Ricks, & Williams, 2005; Shehri, 2012; Smith, 2012).

Justification for this research and its timeliness arises through the rapid expansion and demand of hospitality programs, the role of the industry as a significant economic contributor, absence of accreditation standards and associated devaluing of hospitality qualifications (ABS, 2013; Australian Education International, 2012; Hobsons, 2013; The National Education Directory of Australia, 2013). The fragmented nature of the hospitality industry and varied skill-base requirements are reflected in the absence of a dedicated framework explaining the role of WIL in curriculums and literature (Tribe, 2002). This assertion stems from the separation of tertiary education in this discipline area between vocational technical providers and the university sector, particularly in Australia. It may be argued that the framework exists at the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and other college level offerings however, there is a marked absence of any such framework in university offerings of hospitality management. This absent framework in the university sector is evidenced by the lack of an accrediting body which awards 'competency to practise' standards existent for other service providers such as nurses, doctors, accountants, teachers and lawyers, among others. Whilst The International Centre of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE ICE), an international self-regulatory body, is attempting to address this gap through providing accreditation to university and college members in Australia and worldwide, membership is highly selective and there are no current plans in Australia to mandate accreditation for all university or other hospitality course providers.

There is an ongoing perception devaluing hospitality degree graduates as inadequately prepared for employment in the industry. Employers affix priority to attainment of practical work experience over formal

qualifications with graduates often having to work their way up from the ground regardless of attainment of qualifications if they failed to gain this desired work experience prior to graduation (Ladkin, 2000; Kim, 2008). Endemic questioning as to the necessity of hospitality qualifications is challenged by Minett, Yaman, and Denizci (2009) in their study on leadership styles of Australian hospitality managers. The notion of hospitality managers being multi-skilled in all business functions, i.e. marketing, HR and accounting, as well as possessing personal attributes including problem-solving, communication, flexibility, entrepreneurship and decision making, was supplemented in more recent literature as delivered through completion of a hospitality degree so managers could apply these skills to the complexity of the hospitality context which is fast-paced, dynamic and ambiguous (Dawson, Abbott, & Shoemaker, 2011; Kim, 2008). The prevalence of postgraduate programs, cadetships and internships that extend the basic orientation and induction to the business further suggests the requirement of employers to educate graduates before they are employable in a management capacity.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Based on my PhD thesis 'An assessment of work integrated learning (WIL) in hospitality tertiary education', this paper examines the perspectives of recent graduates, employers and educators in NSW to establish the capacity-building contribution of WIL to hospitality graduate employability. Specific aspects of WIL that need to be managed for realisation of benefits and minimisation of negatives were identified. The decision to focus exclusively on NSW was made to accommodate for variances in state and federal jurisdictions regarding tertiary providers.

A mixed methodology was employed to triangulate data, commencing with a quantitative online survey followed by qualitative focus groups. The decision to use quantitative methods first was to be able to access and identify broad and general themes relevant to WIL in the hospitality industry. This empirical data was then deconstructed through qualitative techniques of focus groups and drew out deep data on the issues identified. The survey framework was adapted from established conventions present through the works of Patrick *et al.* (2008), ACER (2010), Richardson (2009) and Kim (2008). Adaptations to terminology to achieve specificity of research foci and the use of psychometrically sound model allowed for comparable results while enhancing generalisability, reliability and validity of method and data. Focus groups are advocated as an effective and cost-efficient means to collect rich data through facilitating group interaction within a controlled, carefully-planned discussion conducted within a non-threatening setting (Kreuger, 1988; Morgan, 1988). The need to gain insight into the 'reality' of the situation on the ground as well as to allow for elaboration and collection of deep insight by practitioners, drove the focus group orientation. Ethicality and rigour of the study was maintained through the approval of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Western Sydney.

In the absence of central email registries and the paucity of hospitality vocational education listings, identification of all members of the sample population was not possible, thus limiting techniques to network and convenience sampling (Andrew, Nonnecke, & Preece, 2003). Three sample groups were identified (graduates, employers and tertiary educators). The survey resulted in 156 usable responses (55 graduates, 72 employers and 29 tertiary educators) representing a response rate of 26%. The quantitative data was subject to statistical analysis using SPSS 20 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software. The data was subject to descriptive and bivariate statistical analysis to identify trends, frequencies, and strength and significance of associations within the demographic and content areas of the survey responses. Four focus groups were conducted initially: graduates, employers, educators and mixed (representatives from each sample group). A subsequent employer focus group was conducted to enhance the employer data set. A combination of opening, framing, focal, probing and concluding questions were employed to ascertain rich qualitative data on the subject matter (McMurray, Pace, & Scott, 2004; Redmond, & Curtis, 2009). Qualitative software Nvivo9 was used for analysing the focus group transcriptions. These transcriptions were subject to a coding process and analysis of recurring themes, topics and key words.

## FINDINGS/ANALYSIS

The findings of the quantitative survey and qualitative focus groups support the existence of the graduate underemployment phenomenon within the NSW hospitality industry. With the majority of the graduate survey respondents residing in the low-income range (25% below \$30,000 and a further 50% below \$45,000), and 75% without full-time graduate-level employment, this study highlights the difficulty of transitioning hospitality

graduates into the industry. Graduates in the focus groups expressed difficulty gaining graduate-level hospitality positions as employers demanded industry and management-level experience.

I just graduated from university and I'm looking for a full-time position in a club or hotels but they're looking for three years at least industry experience ... but the experience they are looking for is management level, I already got like four years experience in the hospitality industry but ... not in management (Graduate 4).

The survey found that 64% of the total graduate sample worked in the hospitality industry prior to pursuit of hospitality tertiary studies and a reduced number of graduates sought employment after graduation on the basis of already being employed in the industry. This finding gives credence to the idea that simply working in the industry is insufficient to progress and formal qualifications are viewed favourably by employers. These results were replicated in the focus groups with workplace training completed by graduate and employer respondents linked to TAFE and college qualifications.

Hospitality qualifications, in particular bachelor's degrees, were more influential in commencing jobs than for progression, though again tempered by the variables of attitude and experience. The tag cloud in Figure 1 uses font size to showcase frequency of the terms used by focus group respondents to identify desired traits for hospitality graduates. References to education were present in the mix though at a lower frequency. Attitude followed by experience are regarded as the most valued traits yet completion of hospitality tertiary education was not deemed as a guarantee of these traits. There was consensus among all sample groups that hospitality graduates were not deemed 'job-ready' and that employers and the industry were expected to provide this. The sentiment that this lack of job readiness was a failure of the tertiary education institution was enunciated by all three groups of respondents.



FIGURE 1. Tag Cloud Desired Characteristics of Hospitality Employees

The survey and focus groups demonstrated the position of WIL in tertiary curriculums currently resides primarily in a voluntary capacity. As featured in Table 1, 57% were identified as 'Voluntary' or 'N/A'. Moderate statistically significant relationships were observed between 'Number of WIL Types' and 'Tertiary Type' with TAFE graduates participating in a higher variety of WIL initiatives compared to university graduates and the majority (75%) of graduates from other institutes not participating in WIL ( $V=0.464$ ,  $p=0.022$ ); and between 'WIL Participation' and 'Graduate Level Employment' where graduates with WIL experience were more likely to have attained graduate-level employment ( $V=0.405$ ,  $p=0.011$ ). Work experience, internships, apprenticeships and project-based learning were the predominant forms of WIL identified in the quantitative and qualitative research constituting simple, mainstream WIL initiatives with a long history of use in education. Graduate survey respondents were asked to identify total hours spent on WIL participation during their tertiary hospitality education. The distribution of responses was positively skewed with the modal group 'none' and the median group '21-40 hours' with only 18% spending 'over 200 hours'.

TABLE 1. Position of WIL / Tertiary Hospitality Education

|  | Tertiary Type |            |           | Total     |
|--|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
|  | TAFE          | UNIVERSITY | OTHER     |           |
| A compulsory course to complete my qualification | 10            | 5          | 1         | 16        |
| A mandatory requirement that is not a course     | 3             | 6          | 4         | 13        |
| A voluntary option                               | 7             | 3          | 10        | 20        |
| N/A  | 3             | 7          | 9         | 19        |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>23</b>     | <b>21</b>  | <b>24</b> | <b>68</b> |

There was a strong positive representation among all the sample groups for the career, social and personal benefits of WIL for graduates. The categories 'Opportunity to re-evaluate expectations of industry and job prospects' and 'Clarify requirements and preparedness of workforce entry' featured highly in the survey in comparison with 'Increased interstate and national mobility within the workforce' and 'Progressing quickly through the ranks at your workplace or industry', which scored the lowest ranked WIL benefits. Authenticity of WIL settings and tasks was emphasised for maximum capacity building although simulations were also recognised as contributing to employability skills, particularly when dealing with large cohorts and when students are unprepared or incapable of being put into industry contexts for fear of bringing 'disrepute' to the educational institute. A variety of WIL types, durations and settings scaffolded throughout the curriculum was advocated by the focus groups.

You could only do so much with simulated environments but if you have somebody who's learning in work, an actual work environment, they're actually coming across work problems on a regular basis, unforeseen problems which they have to be challenged by, have to solve these problems (Educator 6).

It was clear from the response to WIL negatives and satisfaction with WIL experiences in the survey, that many WIL programs participated in by respondents were poorly resourced, designed and executed. The foremost challenges to WIL participation were identified as 'Managing several commitments, i.e. family, study, work, etc., while on work placement' with limited resources/support for graduates, employers and educators. Hicks and Swain (2007), Lindstaedt *et al.* (2008), Patrick *et al.* (2008) and Raelin (2008) also noted this limitation in the literature. Educators were the most vocal respondents about the negatives of WIL perceiving involvement in WIL activities as being stressful, as they felt responsible not only for the design and execution of WIL initiatives but also for managing the wellbeing and interests of all stakeholders in efforts to secure ongoing positive relations, all while trying to balance inadequate resources including time, workload recognition and money.

## CONCLUSIONS

Whilst there has been a broad update of WIL and expansion of WIL literature, tertiary education institutions continue to struggle with strategic direction and effective design and integration of WIL in curriculum. Advancing the WIL agenda is difficult at the faculty and institution level with conflicting cultures, structures and hierarchy let alone at any strategic government level. Improved trans-disciplinary professional collaboration would benefit developing fields like hospitality, with all disciplines encountering the same dilemmas. To make a substantial contribution to improving the quality of hospitality tertiary education, considering the siloed nature of hospitality businesses and industry associations, in addition to the undervalued hospitality degree, is a momentous undertaking requiring champions from industry, education and government. Considering the capacity building contribution of WIL to hospitality graduate employability is in the best interests of industry and government; industry (supported by government) needs to push the WIL agenda.

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# Colouring Outside the Lines: Storying life experiences to showcase the broad skills and attributes of students in the recruitment process

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Job hunting can be daunting, especially for students who are first in their family to go to university, come from a low SES background, and have never worked in a professional capacity. Many such students have years of hospitality or retail experience while juggling immense family commitments, but fail to recognise the skills gained from their life experience as relevant or significant to a prospective employer.

Applying a constructivist approach, this paper will discuss the use of narrative in written job applications in a simulated shortlisting exercise. The application procedure was modified to include the students' personal stories in addition to standard bio-data. It explores how adopting a storying narrative can elicit compelling insights from students about their supposedly unremarkable experiences. It is theorised that storytelling in the application stage will impact employability.

This paper proposes that current skill matching practice in written applications does not allow students to fully illustrate their skills as unique individuals. It is argued, that students should be celebrating their experiences rather than apologising for them. Through this paper, UWS Careers will help them colour outside the lines.

Keywords: Narrative, graduate employability, equity students, reflection, storying experience

## INTRODUCTION

More than ever before, University students will expect their institution to prepare them for future success, and for many students 'success' means a full-time graduate job upon completion of their degree. Graduate employability is positioned as an important institutional performance indicator as Government fee deregulation broadens competition within the Australian tertiary sector. This poses a challenge for all institutions, but particularly those with high representation from equity groups including low socio-economic status (SES) students. Literature supports the premise that Low SES students enter the University system with less social capital than their middle and high SES peers (Jardine, A 2012). Students with little or no university educational capital may struggle to navigate the academic landscape and are less able to predict the shape of their university experience (Leese, M 2010). This may impact negatively upon career decision-making and subsequent graduate employability.

The University of Western Sydney (UWS) has the largest number of low SES student enrolments (Department of Education, 2012) of any Australian University, with 60 percent of students the first in their family to attend University. Access to opportunity is a key mission of the University, and whilst UWS sits above the sector in the enrolment and retention of low SES students, UWS graduates are underrepresented in full-time employment upon completion (Graduate Careers Australia, Graduate Destination Survey, UWS unpublished institutional data 2012).

It is the experience of the authors of this paper that lack of social capital inhibits student ability to effectively promote their transferrable vocational and life skills to prospective employers. To address this issue, and attempt to demystify recruitment practices, the UWS Careers unit has trialed a career storytelling initiative in written applications for on-campus jobs. This initiative was further informed by Larry Cochran's book *Career Counselling: a narrative approach* which states that "there has been growing disenchantment with impersonal techniques that match an individual's traits with skills required for a specific vocation, because such techniques neglect human purpose, passion and life history" (Cochran, L 1997, outside back cover). Bujold (2004) also asserts the limitations of such trait-factor matching in traditional recruitment practice as a process that "does not take into account all the complexity of career behaviour" (p471).

This paper will explore narrative in job applications through experimentation and analysis. It is hypothesised that storytelling in the application stage will positively impact employability.

## CONSTRUCTIVISM AND NARRATIVE THEORY

Constructivism proposes that each individual is an active agent in constructing meaning in their world based on their lived experiences and cognitive processes (Young, R and Collin, A 2004). Savickas applies constructivism to career counselling with his Career Construction Theory, as a way of explaining the “interpretive and interpersonal processes through which individuals impose meaning and direction on their vocational career” (Savickas, M 2005, p42). One of the components shaping Savickas’ theory is ‘life themes’ in which personal narrative is pivotal to understanding and shaping one’s sense of self in career development. In the words of Savickas, “in telling their career stories about their work experiences, individuals selectively highlight particular experiences to produce a narrative truth by which they live” (Savickas, M 2005, p43). Not only does Savickas’ seminal work note the importance of narrative but also clearly positions the career counsellor as a co-agent in the meaning-making process.

Narrative Career Counselling Theory focuses on these ‘life themes’ whereby the individual and counsellor collaborate to find meaning through storytelling. This can help the individual deepen their understanding of what they want (Ibarra & Lineback 2005, p5) as “it provides a framework for understanding the past events of one’s life and for planning future actions” (Polkinghorne, 1988 cited in Bujold 2004, p11).

While this paper is informed by Narrative Career Counselling Theory from the epistemological standpoint of constructivism, this paper will focus on the individual being the sole agent in their narrative career construction. This paper will redirect focus from how career storytelling impacts an individual’s process of meaning making to how it impacts on gaining employment.

## METHODOLOGY

A quantitative empirical investigation of a simulated shortlisting exercise, and semi-structured interviews were employed to conduct the research.

Three Jobs on Campus (JOC) employment opportunities were selected - Jobs A, B and C. Jobs A and B were advertised to UWS students in 2013 and Job C was advertised in 2014. The recruitment for all three opportunities was completed prior to the commencement of this exercise and all three opportunities were analysed retrospectively.<sup>1</sup>

For these JOC opportunities, students applied online by addressing the skills-based selection criteria and attaching a current resume. In addition, the application also included an optional free-text field called *About Me*. This was to encourage applicants to write a personal statement or story in support of their application using the following prompt (no word limit was applied to the field):

Writing a job application can be tough. This is your opportunity to provide us with some additional information about you (the person, not the resume). What interests you? What are you passionate about? Why did you choose to study your degree? What are your life experiences, and how have they shaped you? There is no right or wrong answer here, just be true to you. This field is optional for all applicants.

Two Recruitment Assistant interns (Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2) were selected to participate as shortlisters. Recruitment interns are extensively trained in recruitment processes and are responsible for the initial shortlisting of all applications received.<sup>2</sup>

In Phase 1, Reviewers 1 and 2 were provided with a copy of all applications for each role and were asked to read the selection criteria and resume component of the application first and categorise applicants as ‘shortlisted,’ ‘not shortlisted’ or ‘reviewer undecided.’

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<sup>1</sup> This exercise did not impact on the actual selection of candidates for any opportunity. This venture was purely a simulated shortlisting exercise.

<sup>2</sup> The Recruitment Interns who took part in this simulation were not involved in the initial recruitment.

In Phase 2, Reviewers were asked to read the 'About Me' field of the application in conjunction with the rest of the application and again categorise as 'shortlisted,' 'not shortlisted' or 'reviewer undecided'.

In Phase 3, Reviewers reflected on their experience during both shortlisting exercises.

The reviewers employed the regular shortlisting protocol used in all JOC recruitment processes and viewed applications independently without consultation. The reviewers were not made aware of the number of positions available for each opportunity, nor given any restrictions on the number of applications to shortlist. Applications were assessed based on individual merit without being ranked or compared.

## RESULTS

Although the *About Me* field was optional, the majority of applicants for the three opportunities chose to provide some information (Job B 73% Job C 88% and Job A 79% response rate).

The shortlisting exercise was quantified by each reviewer and analysed. The analysis revealed a change in the number of 'shortlisted,' 'not shortlisted' or 'reviewer undecided'. This suggests that the *About Me* field, the only variable in the applications, had an impact. The results are as follows:

### *Job A*

Reviewer 1 - *About Me* positively impacted 12 applicants. Five moved from 'not shortlisted' to 'shortlisted' and seven applicants moved from 'reviewer undecided' to 'shortlisted'.

Reviewer 2 - *About Me* positively impacted 15 applicants. Three moved from 'not shortlisted' to 'shortlisted' and 12 moved from 'reviewer undecided' to 'shortlisted.'

There were no negative impacts associated with the *About Me* field for any applicants.

There were some commonalities across reviewers with agreement on two applicants who moved from 'not shortlisted' to 'shortlisted' in Phase 2 of the simulation. There was also agreement on four 'reviewer undecided' applicants who all moved to 'shortlisted' in Phase 2 of the simulation.

### *Job B*

Reviewer 1 - *About Me* had no impact, positive or negative, on the shortlisting decision. Numbers remained consistent across the two phases of the simulation.

Reviewer 2 - *About Me* positively impacted one applicant who moved from 'reviewer undecided' to 'shortlisted'. There were no negative impacts associated with the *About Me* field.

The applicant impacted in Reviewer 2's simulation was originally marked as 'shortlisted' and remained 'shortlisted' by Reviewer 1 in phase 2 of the simulation.

### *Job C*

Reviewer 1 - *About Me* positively impacted one applicant who moved from 'reviewer undecided' to 'shortlisted'.

Reviewer 2 - *About Me* positively impacted one applicant who moved from 'reviewer undecided' to 'shortlisted'.

There were no negative impacts associated with the *About Me* field for any applicant.

Different applicants were impacted. In the first instance Reviewer 1 and 2 were both undecided in Phase 1 of the simulation, then Reviewer 1 changed the applicant to 'shortlisted' and Reviewer 2 remained undecided.

In the second instance, the applicant was marked as 'shortlisted' by Reviewer 1 in both Phase 1 and 2, and Reviewer 2 was originally undecided, and then changed the applicant to 'shortlisted'.

During Phase 3, three themes emerged from both semi-structured interviews which are important to the career story telling arena.

### 1) *The emergence of a 'likeability' factor*

Both reviewers indicated that they felt more invested in applicants that completed the *About Me* field. The reviewers "liked [the applicants]" and felt more inclined "to give them a go". This is consistent with Ibarra and Lineback's discussion of the effective use of narrative as providing accounts that are "so engaging that listeners feel they have a stake in our success" (2005, p2). One reviewer commented that the *About Me* field prompted a "kind of care for [the applicants]"; that this feeling was "weird" and not something experienced during the traditional JOC shortlisting process. The *About Me* field triggered an emotional connection and changed the way applicants were perceived, that is, from homogenous 'applicants' to unique individuals.

Interestingly, both reviewers felt disappointed if an applicant left the *About Me* field blank. They perceived it as a lack of effort or motivation rather than the applicant making a conscious choice not to disclose personal information. Both reviewers agreed that while this was disappointing, a blank *About Me* field did not alter the original short listing decision in any instance.

### 2) *Common characteristics of good stories*

When asked about the qualities present in the *About Me* field that had the most impact, some elements were common for both reviewers. Good stories demonstrated a passion, showed a depth or strength of character, as Reviewer 2 put it, "resilience, perseverance and optimism". They were also reflective with the applicant learning or growing from a past experience. Interestingly, language and grammar were less important in the *About Me* field than the traditional application. A good story was a good story. Reviewer 2 commented "In instances where I may have seen grammar...was a bit poor...[but they had] a really good story...I would think this person seems like they have the right mindset...I really wanted to give this person a go". One reviewer mentioned the length of the response was also noted, linking this to the notion of effort.

### 3) *The usefulness of story in assessing applicants*

The reviewers agreed that the *About Me* field enhanced the overall application, giving a depth of insight into the personality and motivation of an applicant. Both suggested that the *About Me* field helped to elucidate non-technical skills or attributes which often complimented the formal requirements of the role.

Both reviewers indicated that a field such as this would make it easier for employers to find a good person-role fit. One reviewer suggested the *About Me* field could provide employers with insight into an applicant's ability to fit within a team or organisation's culture. Reviewer 1 commented "there are things you can't get about a person from their selection criteria because it is predominately their skills and work attributes" and "you get to know the person before you interview them". Personal attributes are important "when you talk about things like cultural fit".

Both reviewers seemed to agree that the *About Me* field had the most impact if they were undecided about an applicant after Phase 1 of the simulation. This is consistent with the findings. Interestingly, one reviewer indicated that they would not shortlist based on story alone. This was contradicted in the findings with both reviewers changing applicants from 'not shortlisted' to 'shortlisted' in a number of instances after considering the *About Me* field.

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The simulation results validated the hypothesis that the use of narrative does increase the likelihood of students being shortlisted for a position. The inclusion of the *About Me* field had the greatest impact on 'Reviewer undecided' applications. However, there were eight instances where an applicant *would not* have been shortlisted without the inclusion of their story.

Despite the positive impacts evident in this simulation, the use of narrative raises concerns about a reviewer's ability to remain objective in the shortlisting process. Although not experienced, there is a possibility that divulging personal information in a job application could have a negative impact, leading to a reviewer (or employer) 'disliking' an applicant resulting in potential discrimination.

Reviewers were also not asked to shortlist a specific number. If limitations were placed on applications to be shortlisted, the results may have differed. The authors believe that ranking or comparing narratives would have led to additional complexity, foreshadowing the hypothesis to simply investigate the impact of story in job applications.

With UWS having such a large cohort of equity students, it is the authors' contention that narrative may benefit this group more than other applicants. These students' lack of social capital may inhibit their skill in describing and promoting their employability skills. This assertion would need to be researched with control groups in a larger sample size. Further research would also ascertain if the use of narrative is suited to some industries more than others, and if 'real world' employers are as influenced by narrative as the recruitment interns.

Despite this being a limited study, the authors believe that narrative empowers students, allowing them to connect with prospective employers increasing their likelihood of success in the competitive job market.

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# Maximising graduate capabilities: Linking knowledge, skills, and workplace experiences

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Work Integrated Learning (WIL) experiences are most effective when situated in a framework of learning outcomes, either a framework associated with a specific WIL experience or a framework that underpins the curriculum of their degree program. At a basic level, such a framework enables students to plan, prepare for and then reflect on their work experiences. At a higher level, a framework enables students to plan, manage and identify their learning while they are at university. Using the Masters of Engineering Practice (MEP) program case study as an example, this paper describes how the Define your Discipline (DYD) process has been used to gather critical information about a discipline's expectations and how the resulting Graduate Capability Framework can be used to inform the development of new programs or to enhance existing programs.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, field-based learning, define your discipline, graduate capabilities, recognition of prior workplace learning, self-assessment of prior learning

Over the last decade, increased attention has been placed on the need for universities to provide students with Work Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities (Abeysekera, 2006; Brown, 2010; Emslie, 2011; Smith, 2012; Swart, 2014). Simultaneously, the demand for criterion-based approaches in all areas of higher education has also become an increasing concern (Shah & Jarzabkowski, 2013; Tam, 2014). Accountability, evidence-based decision making, and directed student learning have become internationally used key terms as employers' expectations for new graduates have been made clearer to the institutions charged with educating emerging professionals in their prospective fields. Throughout this transition to a more outcomes-based education, WIL has been identified as an effective way for students to develop those critical employability skills and enhance their professional preparation (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2011; Gamble, Patrick, & Peach, 2010; Wilton, 2012; Yorke, 2011).

The implementation of meaningful WIL experiences has been explored at length throughout the literature. For example, WIL can include internships, supervised practice, practica, or simulations (Smith, 2012). Each of these models differs from the others in some way; however, they share the common element of uniting the formalised learning of the university with the processes undertaken by practitioners, with the aim of strengthening the student's preparation to enter the workforce (Jackson, 2014).

Because the attention on the quality of emerging professionals' workplace preparation shows no signs of decreasing (Swart, 2014), it stands to reason that similar attention will continue to be focussed upon the quality of work integrated learning programs. According to Smith (2012), the quality of these initiatives is inconsistent from organisation to organisation, and there is some uncertainty about how specific outcomes are achieved during the undergraduate program. In well-designed programs, however, students have significant experiences that strengthen their employment skills, as well as their academic outcomes (Coll *et al.*, 2009; Gamble *et al.*, 2010; Orrell, 2004). Programs that are poorly administered can also have undesired impacts (Abeysekera, 2006).

A variety of frameworks have been proposed for the implementation and assessment of WIL initiatives (Coll *et al.*, 2009; Ferns & Moore, 2012). Despite the differences between those frameworks, however, it is clear that there are several elements of WIL that stand out as significant. For example, physical and cognitive authenticity in the workplace setting enables students to face realistic problems that contribute to increased learner engagement and motivation (Keogh, Sterling, & Venables, 2007; Smith, 2012). Such rich learning experiences contribute to significant learning and an enhanced ability to apply that learning in different contexts (Fink, 2013). Furthermore, well-designed WIL experiences also emphasise the integrative nature of those experiences. Strategies requiring students to apply their classroom knowledge to their work-based experiences contribute positively to student learning (Jaekel *et al.*, 2011; Smith, 2012). Simply participating in an undefined work experience is insufficient, however, and a number of authors are calling for an emphasis on WIL experiences that deliberately integrate the theories introduced in the university classroom with the practice encountered in the workplace setting (Jackson, 2014; Orrell, 2004; Smith, 2012; Yorke, 2011).

To this end, it is important that students are able to situate their WIL experiences in a framework of learning outcomes, either a framework associated with a specific WIL experience or a framework that underpins the

curriculum of their degree program. At a basic level, such a framework enables students to plan, prepare for and then reflect on their work experiences. At a higher level, a framework enables students to plan, manage and identify their learning while they are at university.

There are many processes that can be used to develop learning outcomes for a program of study. For example, using Bloom's taxonomy as a basis for their work, Besterfield-Sacre et al. (2000) proposed a framework of 11 broadly-designed outcomes to guide engineering education for the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology. Another model that can be used to develop significant and detailed learning outcomes for a discipline, at school, state or national level, is the Define Your Discipline (DYD) stakeholder consultation process (Dowling & Hadgraft, 2013a).

### THE DEFINE YOUR DISCIPLINE (DYD) PROCESS

The DYD process allows the stakeholders in a discipline, such as nursing, to negotiate and clearly define a Graduate Capability Framework for their discipline. The process invites, values, and integrates the views of the sometimes disparate groups of stakeholders, while keeping a 'future-proofing' mindset that focuses on the capabilities graduates will need in five to ten years rather than current requirements. The DYD process ensures that the input from each stakeholder is equally valued so that the opinions or biases of individuals or groups do not impact on the final outcome.

Figure 1 clearly shows how each of the key stakeholders may influence the definition of the graduate outcomes for a program, and the development of the program. It also shows how the DYD process, and the resulting Graduate Capability Framework, can be used at a national level to facilitate the contribution of both individual stakeholders and groups of stakeholders into the program design process. Importantly, the DYD process can be used to capture the views of stakeholders that may not normally be included in the program development process, such as practitioners and recent graduates.

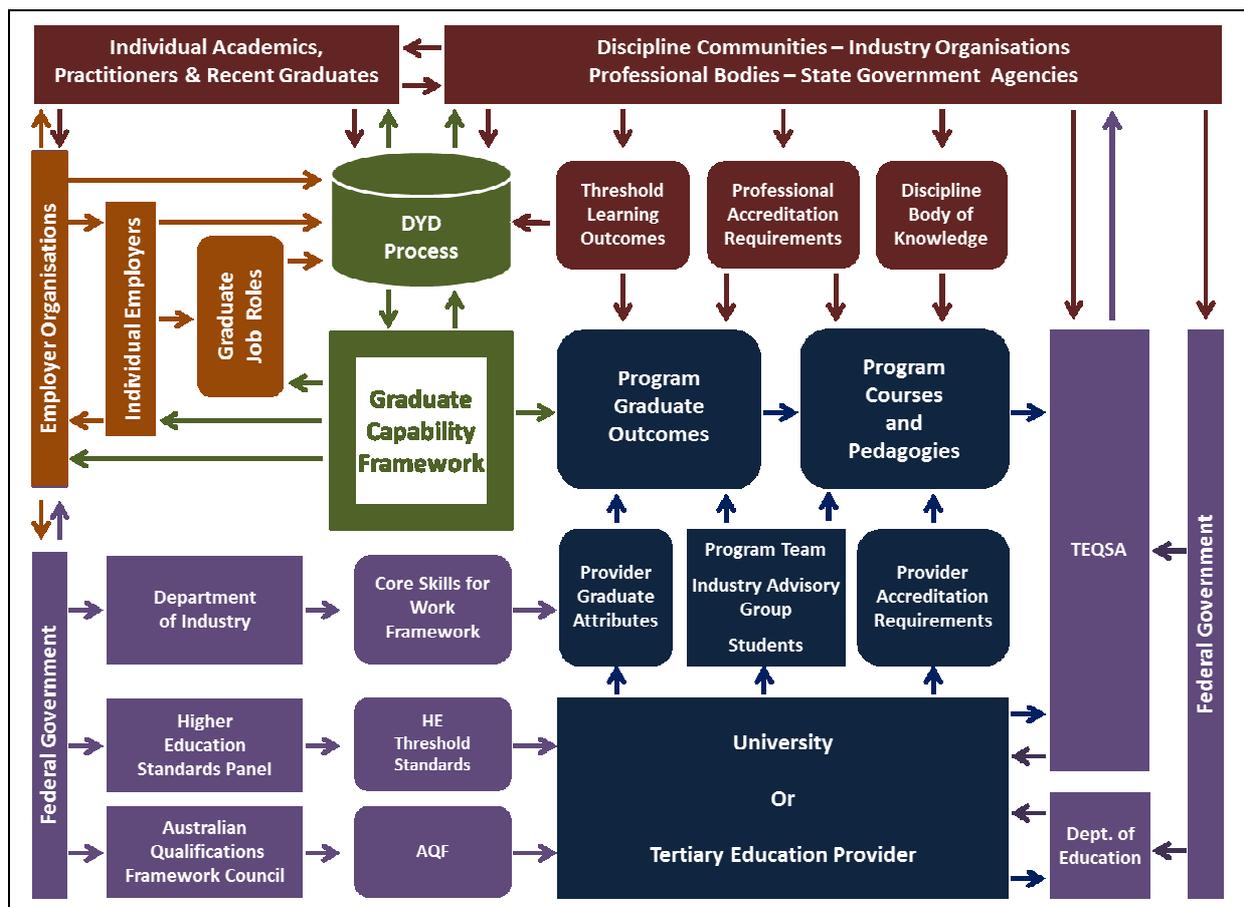


FIGURE 1. The DYD process in the current higher education context  
Source: (Dowling, 2013)

The Graduate Capability Framework that results from the DYD process generally incorporates three types of capabilities and a set of contexts in which the discipline is practised. The three sets of capabilities are:

- Technical capabilities – discipline knowledge and skills;
- Process capabilities – the processes that practitioners use to apply their knowledge and skills, e.g. an investigation; and
- Generic capabilities – graduate attributes and employability skills.

Two capability cubes can be developed to help users to visualise the relationships between the Graduate Capabilities and the contexts in which they used.

For example, the Environmental Engineering Graduate Capability Cube (Dowling & Hadgraft, 2013b), reproduced in Figure 2, shows the interrelationships between the three sets of capabilities which make up the axes of the Capability Cube. When undertaking a project, a graduate uses *Generic Capabilities* when applying a *Process* in one or more *Technical Domains*. For example, the shaded cell in the cube shows that a graduate may be gathering information (a *Generic Capability*) to prepare a design (a *Process Capability*) for a resource management and remediation project (a *Technical Domain*) at a mine site (a *Practice Context*).

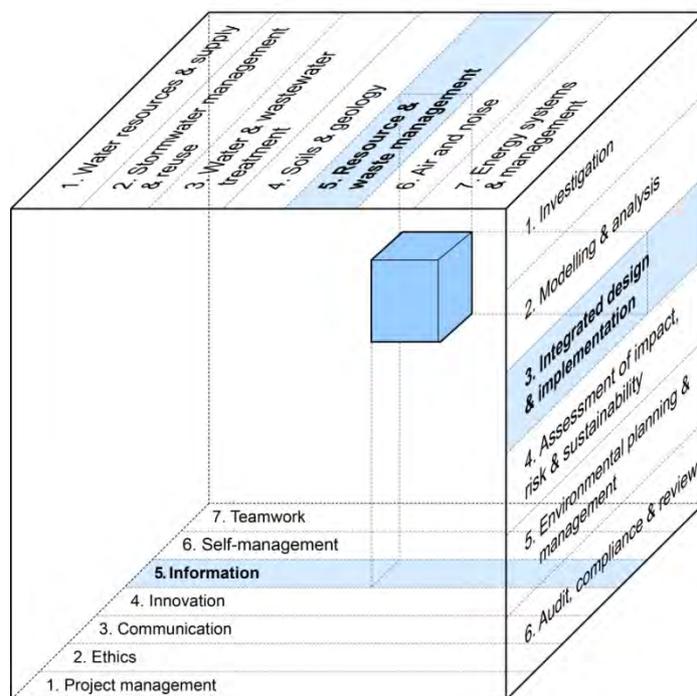


FIGURE 2: The environmental engineering capability cube

Source: (Dowling & Hadgraft, 2013b)

A Practice Cube can be used to show the scope of the work undertaken by an individual environmental engineering practitioner, i.e. their *specialist practice domains*. For example, the Environmental Engineering Practice Cube, which is shown in Figure 3, was developed by replacing the seven Generic Domains (shown in Figure 2) with the seven Practice Contexts. A person's *specialist practice domain* is a combination of their *Process* and *Technical Capabilities*, and the knowledge and skills they have gained from their work experience in one or more *Practice Contexts*.

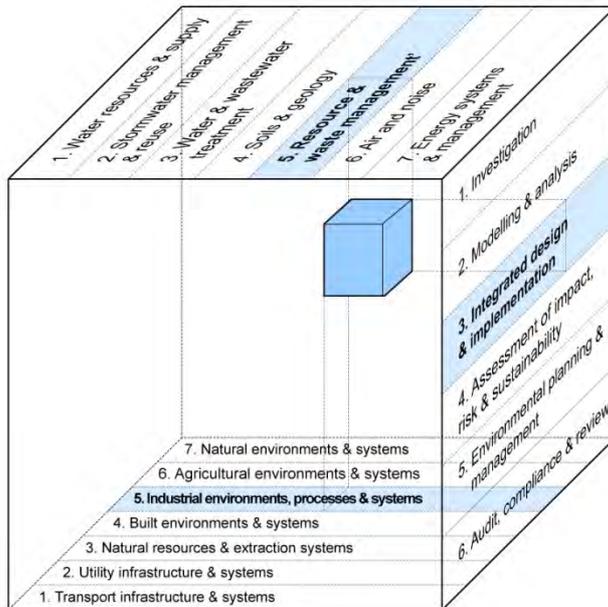


FIGURE 3. The Environmental Engineering Practice Cube  
Source: (Dowling & Hadgraft, 2013b)

The capability cube concept has proved to be an important outcome of the DYD process as it has promoted discussion about the nature of practice in the relevant discipline. This is because it is the intersection of these three dimensions, and the Generic Capabilities, that define professional practice and many employers would expect graduates to develop capabilities across all three dimensions while they are at university. Obviously, students may use their WIL experiences to develop their capabilities in all three domains, WIL experiences generally provide them with authentic opportunities to develop their *Process Capabilities* and to gain an understanding of the contexts in which their profession is practised.

Once a Graduate Capability Framework has been defined, a program development team can use it to inform their work by:

- identifying the capabilities that are to be incorporated in the program either in the curriculum, or in WIL activities. The team may also list the capabilities that are not included in the program, including those capabilities that the School expects employers to include in workplace training or professional development activities;
- unpacking each of the adopted capabilities, or aspects of capabilities, to determine those aspects that should be part of the curricula, and those that should be part of the training that graduates receive when they enter the workforce;
- developing a detailed set of graduate outcome statements for the program; and
- allocating the graduate outcomes to individual courses as course learning outcomes.

Importantly, students can use the Graduate Capability Framework to gain a better understanding of their discipline, and to inform their decisions about specialisations and career choices. They may also use the Framework to help manage their learning so that they acquire the knowledge and skills required for them to commence practice in their chosen specialisation.

Finally, the development and publication of a national Graduate Capability Framework for a program should engage members of the profession in the education process and help them to develop a shared understanding of both contemporary practice and future trends.

The following case study demonstrates how the detailed set of graduate outcomes defined for a program can be used by students to demonstrate their prior workplace learning.

#### CASE STUDY

The University of Southern Queensland's (USQ) Master of Engineering Practice (MEP) program was developed to address a specific need identified by Engineers Australia: the need for an accessible, efficient and relevant

articulation pathway that would enable many of its experienced Engineering Technologist members to gain the credentials required for them to become Professional Engineers.

In 2002, Engineers Australia’s Articulation Committee invited the Faculty of Engineering and Surveying to collaborate in the development of a distance education program that would meet the aforementioned identified need. A key criterion was that *students should be able to use their workplace learning to demonstrate achievement of the objectives in up to half of the courses in the program*. The Faculty accepted the challenge and the Associate Dean (Academic) developed and implemented the program, guided by a Program Development Team which included Faculty staff and three members of Engineers Australia’s Articulation Committee. The innovative Master of Engineering Practice program allows experienced Engineering Technologists from diverse cultural, educational and employment backgrounds to re-engage in higher education and undertake learning experiences that are tailored to their individual needs and enable them to become Professional Engineers. The program structure and pedagogies resulted from a creative synthesis of research-based learning and teaching approaches associated with distance education, adult learning, reflective practice, negotiated curriculum, and the self-assessment of workplace learning (Dowling, 2006). It enables students, who generally work full-time and study part-time, to use their workplace learning to complete at least half of the courses in their program. There has been a sustained growth in student numbers since the first offer in 2004: 281 students have enrolled and 57 have graduated. The program was offered for the first time in Semester 2, 2004, is accredited by Engineers Australia, and is having a significant impact on the careers of students and graduates.

A coherent and systematic approach was used to ensure the program structure and adopted learning strategies would achieve the defined objectives. The critical design features were:

- A detailed set of graduate outcomes was defined at the program level, with each outcome being allocated, as a learning objective, to one of the courses in the program. This enables students to use their workplace learning to demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives of a course;
- The first course must enable students to acquire the skills required to *self-assess* their prior learning and plan their individual learning pathway through to graduation;
- The students must complete the capstone courses in each *technical field* in the relevant Bachelor of Engineering specialisation (e.g. Civil engineering) so that the program could be accredited by Engineers Australia;
- A rigorous admission process would be used to assess prior qualifications and the length, type and level of engineering experience of each candidate; and
- The program was designed to satisfy both the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and university requirements for a masters degree.

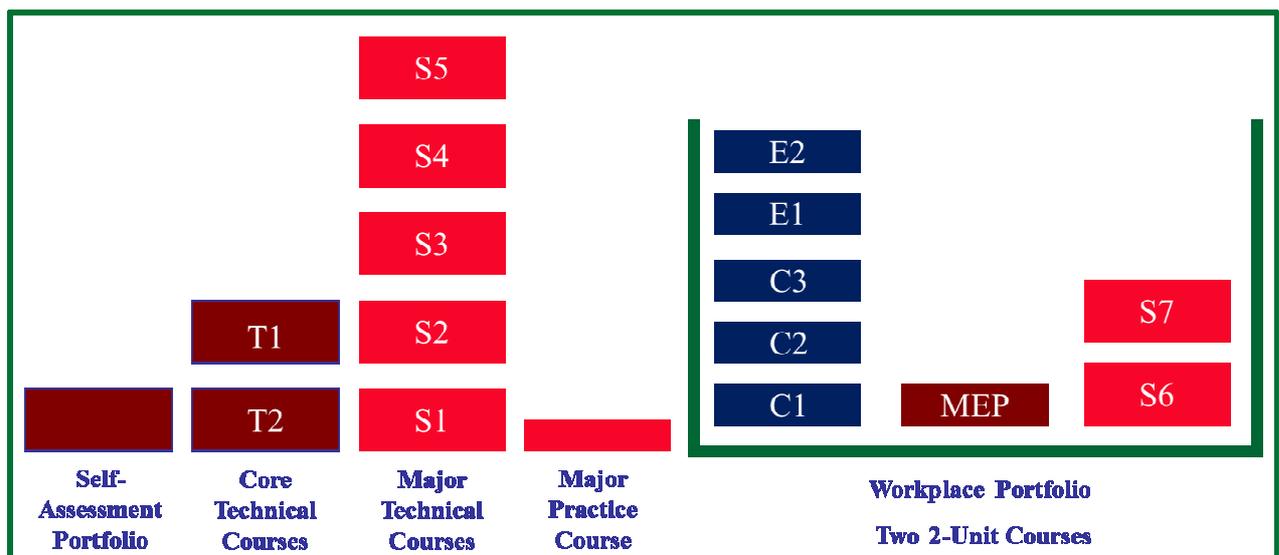


FIGURE 4. The structure of the Master of Engineering Practice  
Source:(Dowling, 2011)

As shown in Figure 4, the MEPR program now consists of 12 units of study: eight one-unit courses, two two-unit courses and a zero unit practice course, as follows:

**The one-unit *Self-assessment Portfolio*:** This is the first course students undertake in the program. It is used to assess:

- a) whether a student has, or would be able to acquire, the workplace learning required to demonstrate achievement of the learning objectives in at least six units of study; and
- b) whether a student has the communication skills required to identify and prepare reports on career episodes that clearly demonstrate achievement of the defined learning objectives for a course.

In this course students also collaborate with Faculty staff to develop their individual *Pathway to Graduation Plan*.

**Nine one-unit *Technical courses*:** The students then complete two prerequisite courses (T1 & T2 in Figure 4) before completing the seven technical courses in their specialisation (s1-s7). Students may complete a technical course (or the practice course) by: studying the course; using their workplace learning; or by receiving an exemption based on prior studies. It is important to note here that, because students can study a maximum of five of the *Technical* courses in their specialisation, they must complete at least two of the courses in their *Workplace Portfolio* (S6 and S7), or be exempted from those courses. Students who plan to use their workplace learning to complete additional *Technical* courses list the graduate outcomes for those courses in their *Workplace Portfolio*.

**Two, two-unit *Workplace Portfolio* courses:** The students use their workplace learning to demonstrate achievement of the specific learning objectives defined for the *Workplace Portfolio* courses, and any learning objectives from the core or technical courses allocated to the portfolio in their *Pathway to Graduation Plan*.

**A zero-unit *Practice* course:** During their program the students complete a one-week residential school.

The self-assessment process demonstrates the flexibility of the program structure because it caters for the diversity of knowledge, skills, prior learning, and workplace experiences that the students bring to the program and allows students to negotiate an individual learning contract that suits their learning needs.

“The Self-Assessment Portfolio was an excellent tool to identify deficiencies in my knowledge and to implement a strategy in the workplace to acquire the competencies to successfully complete the program” (Tony, pers. comm., 2008).

Although regarded as a single portfolio, the *Workplace Portfolio* (See Figure 4) consists of two *Workplace Portfolio* courses where the students demonstrate achievement of the following learning outcomes, called Elements of Competency in this program:

- the three compulsory Engineers Australia Stage 2 Units of Competency (C1 – C3);
- two of the ten Engineers Australia’s Stage 2 Elective Units of Competency (E1 and E2);
- a specific list of six Master of Engineering Practice Elements of Competency (MEP); and
- the Elements of Competency for at least two of the *Technical* courses in their specialisation (S6 and S7), unless they have received an exemption in those courses.

Having two separate *Workplace Portfolio* courses provides students with great flexibility as they can select and demonstrate up to half of the listed Elements of Competency in one of the courses early in the program, and then enrol in the second course at the end of the program when they have gained the additional work experiences required to demonstrate the remaining Elements of Competency.

The adoption of the Stage 2 Competency Standard, and the related presentation and assessment tools, for the MEP program means that graduates can use the documents they prepared for the MEP *Workplace Portfolio* courses in their application to Engineers Australia for Chartered status. This is an important outcome because gaining Chartered status is a key driver for many students to undertake the MEP program. While the high standards USQ staff set when assessing Career Episode Reports challenge MEP students, they ensure a smooth transition to Chartered status. For example, Ben achieved Chartered status a few months after graduating and wrote: “I did not have to rewrite any of the career episode reports (CER) that addressed the compulsory Units (C1, C2, and C3), but I did have to write some additional CERs to cover all of the Elements of Competency in the Elective Units I chose” (Ben, pers. comm., 2011).

The MEP program highlights the effectiveness of developing a detailed set of learning outcomes for a program as it enables students to:

- identify prior workplace experiences that they can use to demonstrate achievement of one or more learning outcomes;
- plan workplace experiences that they will be able to use to demonstrate achievement of one or more learning outcomes; and
- manage their learning.

These skills are important skills for graduates as they enable practitioners to reflect on, and learn from, their workplace experiences, and to manage their professional development. Consequently, they should be included in all undergraduate programs.

## CONCLUSION

The interest in work integrated learning shows little signs of decreasing. As university program leaders consider the inclusion or modification of their WIL initiatives, it is imperative that they consult the industry for which they are preparing their graduates. This is to ensure that the learning outcomes adopted for WIL programs represent current practice. More importantly, the definition of a detailed set of graduate outcomes for a program enables students to assess and demonstrate their workplace learning, manage their learning

This paper described how the DYD process has been used to gather critical information about a discipline's expectations and how the resulting Graduate Capability Framework can be used to inform the development of new programs, as outlined in this paper, or to enhance existing programs. It also engages all of the relevant stakeholders in the development of education programs in their discipline.

The MEP program case study demonstrated how the detailed definition of a set of graduate outcomes enables students to use their prior workplace learning to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes in a course. It also showed how the adoption of a detailed set of graduate outcomes for a program enables program development teams to increase the flexibility in their programs whilst maintaining the integrity of those programs. This would be a key outcome for students, particularly those who work either full-time or part-time while completing their studies.

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# Reflection: Alignment of practice as a strategy for building capacity for learning

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Reflective practice can play a key role in the collaborative education curriculum as it supports learners with developing a capacity to build cognitive bridges between the theory of the classroom and their professional or community experience. The argument presented is that a whole of institution and aligned approach to reflective practice may build capacity for learning and foster a deep approach to learning. The holistic approach adopted by the PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) initiative at Macquarie University provides the case material of a program that is core to a university's vision, and through which the embedding of reflective mechanism(s) is a requirement. A holistic approach to the practice of reflection is achieved through the alignment of policy, infrastructure and practice. Good practice examples of resources and strategies that can each contribute to building capacity at an individual, program and institutional level are outlined. Evaluative data and outcomes will be considered as a means for demonstrating the potential for success with institution-wide reflective practice – an approach that may offer synergistic and positive outcomes well beyond the Macquarie experience.

Keywords: Reflective practice, capacity-building, curriculum design, whole of institution approach

## INTRODUCTION

Nationally and internationally, there exists a widespread practice of incorporating reflection for learning across the collaborative education curriculum, a practice that traverses a diverse range of disciplines (Coulson, Harvey, Winchester-Seeto & Mackaway, 2010). In this context, reflection has three key roles: “in academic learning, in skills development and for lifelong learning” (Harvey *et al.*, 2010, p. 143). Reflective practice can also play a key role in supporting learners in developing a capacity to build cognitive bridges between the theory of the classroom and their professional or community experience (see, for example, Argyris & Schön, 1974; Dalgarno, Kennedy & Merritt, 2014; Reason & Kimball, 2012; Schön, 1987). In this paper, we argue that an aligned, whole of institution approach to reflective practice is an important way in which capacity for learning can be built, and fosters a deep approach to learning. We analyse the holistic approach adopted by Macquarie University and its PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) initiative as a case study of a program that is core to a university's vision, and in which the embedding of reflective mechanism(s) is a requirement. We then suggest avenues for further development of this approach and research directions.

## A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

How holistic an organisation's approach to an issue is, may be ascertained by asking three questions:

1. What is the organisation's expressed intent – what is its *policy*?
2. What enablers has it put in place to support action to follow through on this intent – what is its *infrastructure*?
3. Are its actions an embodiment of, and consistent with, this intent – what is its *practice*?

For an educational institution, a holistic approach to an area of educational practice, such as reflection, necessarily involves considering how the institution as a whole should be organised to support that practice. In the following sections, we examine each of the above questions in relation to the Macquarie University example. We then present evaluative data to demonstrate the potential for success of institution-wide reflective practice – an approach that may offer synergistic and positive outcomes well beyond the Macquarie experience

## POLICY

Reflective practice and transformative learning are important features of Macquarie University. The University acknowledges the ways in which meaningful reflection can maximise learning (individually, collectively, and institutionally), as well as institutional planning for the future (Correia & Bleicher, 2008). Macquarie University's Vice-Chancellor, Professor S. Bruce Dowton has identified the "need for a period of *reflection* and discernment about our future" (Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Macquarie University, 2013, emphasis added), in order to ensure that the University's strategic plans align with the expanding narrative of the institution and the needs of its stakeholders.

This emphasis on reflective practice cascades through the University's pedagogical approaches, especially in the University-wide Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) initiative. From 2016, all Macquarie undergraduate students will complete a PACE unit<sup>1</sup> as a required part of their degree. Noteworthy is that all PACE units are required to include "mechanisms through which students can reflect, document, evaluate and/or critically analyse what they have learned over the course of the PACE activity ... The reflective task must be incorporated into an assessment task and/or a required learning & teaching activity in the unit" (Macquarie University, PACE, 2011, p.1). This policy framework justifies an investment in infrastructure to support its implementation and encourages the alignment of practice across the institution.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The University's ongoing commitment to building the capacity for an effective and holistic approach to reflection is demonstrated through the significant investment in infrastructure and resource development in PACE and to learning and teaching. The development and implementation of adaptive organisational structures and systems to support operational collaboration, innovation and shared learning are key to this approach. Dedicated PACE staff, comprising Academic Directors embedded in each of the four faculties and an Academic Developer in the central PACE office are strategic and core to this structure. This fosters coordination and collegiality, supporting innovative and collaborative curriculum and unit development that meets PACE criteria while at the same time responding to the needs of academics teaching PACE units, their students and partners. The alignment of the infrastructure with policy has enabled a teaching and research focus on reflective practice to flourish.

Institutional engagement with reflective practice can also be seen by its embedding in the university's teaching preparation programs such as FILT (Foundations in Learning & Teaching) and FLAME (Flexible Learning at Macquarie). FILT in particular aims to develop the reflective capacity of academics so they, in turn, can support student engagement with reflective practice. Inherent in the program is practicing reflection through a peer review process (Harvey & Solomonides, 2013).

In addition, Macquarie University's Reflection for Learning Circle was established in 2012. The group is made up of a collaborative team from three of Macquarie University's four faculties who came together because of a common commitment to reflective practice for learning. The team meets on a monthly basis in order to explore creative and innovative ways of practising reflection for learning. At the beginning of each meeting, the group participates in a different reflective activity. This is followed by a group discussion around the effectiveness of the activity, and how to implement and/or adapt the activity in a variety of contexts. These monthly gatherings provide scaffolded support for developing reflective capacity at both the individual and the group level, which is crucial to embedding reflective practice into the wider university community.

The Circle has played a pivotal role in the evolution and implementation of reflective practice at Macquarie. It has overseen the development of reflective practice resources for PACE, applying for and being awarded internal grants to (i) evaluate the practice of reflection in these professional and community engagement units, and (ii) develop resources and training for staff in these and other units. The Circle has experimented with diverse forms of reflective practice, including art (Harvey *et al.*, 2012) and *felt* understanding (Gendlin, 1997; Walkerdén, 2009) centred approaches. They have piloted and adapted them in their own teaching, and developed a suite of reflective practice resources and run collaborative and interdisciplinary reflective workshops for colleagues

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<sup>1</sup> The experiential components of these units, known as PACE activities, include but are not limited to, service-learning and Work Integrated Learning (WIL) (Baker *et al.*, 2013). For a typology of PACE activities see: [http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum\\_assessment/pace/resources/effective\\_curriculum/](http://staff.mq.edu.au/teaching/curriculum_assessment/pace/resources/effective_curriculum/)

across Macquarie. The central role of the Circle in engaging the wider campus in reflective practice demonstrates the importance of having people who can champion reflective practices amongst their colleagues, as well as being active at the level of policy (cf. Hassed, 2004).

## PRACTICE

Building organisational capacity for reflective practice has been facilitated through reflective practice being a core pedagogical approach in the curriculum design of PACE units. Investment in resources has allowed the development of a range of curriculum resources (including online modules for staff and students, custom-made videos, and a suite of reflective exercises). These resources are utilised by a small but growing Community of Practice, comprising professional and academic staff from across the university. Building individual and group capacity for reflective practice has been facilitated through an authentic orientation to practice founded on integrity, trust and respect.

As one example, Faculty PACE Units, which are open to students of any discipline, have provided a unique forum for the implementation of reflective practices, as they must be taught in such a way that fosters learning for a diverse cohort of students with equally varied PACE activities. In the PACE units of the Faculties of Science and Arts (FOSC300 and FOAR300) this has included engaging students in iLearn<sup>2</sup> posts throughout the session as a means of providing a reflective scaffolding to which students can refer at the end of the session in order to synthesise their learning. Additional in-class and at-home exercises are designed to encourage students to reflect in creative ways which are meaningful and useful to their experience and learning approach. Evidence of the effects of this approach can be found in the students' reflections themselves:

We often don't want to think about our own mistakes, or actions that we could have performed better/differently, because it often means we have done something wrong, or incorrectly. ... what I find inspiring about [reflection is that] individuals must challenge within themselves to critically analyse their behaviours and actions, to think about what they could have done differently. ... it creates that basis of forming a learning curve based on our past actions that help make our future actions, in many cases ... result[ing] in better outcomes (Undergraduate student, Science)

This evidence is representative of recurring themes found in student reflections (through iLearn, assessment tasks, and practical exercises) across five offerings of FOAR300 and FOAR300 (N=38, 2013).

In addition, we have begun a pilot program with Higher Degree Research (HDR) students to build their capacity in and support their reflective practice. We introduce them to three re-framings of their relationship to their research practice:

1. Approaching practice experimentally: as action to be considered reflectively, and played with deliberately in a search for more helpful forms of practice (Schön, 1987; Walkerden, 2009).
2. Shifting attention to microprocesses, and looking for opportunities to develop helpful, reusable micropractices from them (Walkerden, 2005).
3. Exploring a gestalt shift from making the 'explicit content' of one's research practice pivotal (e.g. research outputs) to making one's 'evolving feel' for what may be helpful pivotal. This invites holistic, open, creative sensitivity to possibilities in one's research practice (cf. Gendlin, 1997; Walkerden, 2005).

The majority of candidates (seven of the eight) in the initial HDR program pilot found the program very helpful, and five of them found significant applications beyond their research practice as well as within it. The eighth found the sessions very interesting, but did not apply the work significantly in his own research. The broad-ranging impact of the program is evident in the following feedback:

[I]'s given me a bit of confidence in developing a research methodology. Doing a creative practice PhD., I feel there's not a whole lot of guidance about what to do when or how to start, [...] I haven't yet come across a lot of guidance on how you mix the creative work with the more theoretical work. So in that sense I feel like I've got some tools to start developing a methodology (PhD student, Creative Arts)

and

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<sup>2</sup> iLearn (ilearn.mq.edu.au) is Macquarie's learning management system, which enables learning, teaching, communication and collaboration online (Macquarie University, 2014).

[...] like when I'm reading my work, and I have something that doesn't feel right. For example, [I had] a paragraph sitting out on the side, and I couldn't work out where it fits in: you've given me a number of different strategies that I can use to help work through that. One of which was the clustering [a non-linear writing technique]. That was one. The other one was to sit back – the not running away – you remember how I told you I [would] get up and walk away [from my desk]. I have stopped doing that completely. [...] It is amazing. I've been doing that all through my law degree. I wasn't even conscious that I was doing it during my law degree (PhD student, Law).

These student reflections also suggest the value of reflective practice approaches to students from a range of disciplinary backgrounds.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This paper has presented a case study of the institution-wide approach to reflective practice at Macquarie University. Whilst it is clear that the holistic approach has a positive impact, at both an institutional and personal level, particularly in terms of student learning, the Reflection for Learning Circle is now aiming to ensure wider faculty representation, as well as better gender balance (as the current core group is 85% female). Such ongoing challenges and resistance are acknowledged and managed, but their discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. We also aim to expand the integration of reflective practice beyond the University, and begin collaborations with our partner organisations. Evaluative and evidence gathering research into the relationship between student learning outcomes and reflective practices remains an ongoing focus.

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# **A thematic analysis and a reflective description of the experience of nursing, midwifery and paramedic students on a short-term mobility community health placement in Vietnam**

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Internationalisation of the curriculum, work integrated learning (WIL) and inter-professional education are priorities for health professional education at Flinders University. Fourteen students studying Nursing (4), Midwifery (2) and Paramedics (8) plus two staff completed a three week primary health care placement in Vietnam. The students were immersed in cultural activities and professional practice in a different health care system and provided basic health care and education in hospitals, rural clinics and schools which facilitated their clinical assessment and problem-solving skills. The students were presented with opportunities to practise skills in cross-cultural communication and culturally safe practices with this community which upon their return were able to be translated into their practice setting.

A brief review of the literature identified a paucity of research combining work integrated learning, inter-professional education and study mobility. Data was collected from the reflective journals kept by the students which described their insight into their learning experiences during their placement. A thematic analysis revealed the environment, communication, culture, resources, education, group dynamics, politics and personal development were important key experiences. This paper provides insight into student learning outcomes from an overseas community health placement and extends our knowledge about WIL with an international partner.

Keywords: International work integrated learning opportunities, inter-professional education, building student capacity

## **INTRODUCTION**

Internationalisation of the curriculum, work integrated learning (WIL) and inter-professional education are priorities for health professional education at Flinders University. Fourteen students studying Nursing (4), Midwifery (2) and Paramedics (8) completed a three week primary health care placement in Vietnam. The students, accompanied by two academic staff, local educational tour guide and interpreters were immersed in cultural activities and professional practice in a different health care system, providing basic health care and education in hospitals, rural clinics and schools which enriched their clinical assessment and problem solving skills. The students were presented with opportunities to practise skills in cross cultural communication and culturally safe practices which upon their return were able to be translated into their practice setting.

This study is important as it provides insight into the student perspectives about their learning experiences when undertaking an international, inter-professional work integrated placement. A review of the literature has identified that, while there has been research on work integrated learning, inter-professional education and study abroad programs, there appears to be limited research on bringing these concepts together. By investigating the synergistic effect of combining these three concepts in one experience, universities will be better positioned to provide more high quality international learning opportunities to supplement local placements.

A thematic analysis of student interviews and journal entries revealed the environment, communication, culture, resources, education, group dynamics, politics and personal development were important key experiences. This paper provides insight into student learning outcomes from an overseas community health placement and extends our knowledge about WIL with an international partner.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Short term mobility or 'study abroad' programs enable students to participate in an international placement as part of their higher education experience, enabling the student to be engaged in 'work integrated learning' whereby they are able to translate their developing skills in an international practice setting (Patrick *et al.* 2008). Pedagogically, the

international work integrated placement is founded on an internationalised curriculum and inter-professional practice as well as the attainment of various graduate qualities, such as the ability to connect across boundaries, collaborate, communicate and apply knowledge (Crossman & Clarke 2010, Flinders University 2007). In developing short term mobility programs, Gonsalvez (2013) identifies a number of key essential elements which include a well-planned program with explicit links to academic content; local community engagement; student group interactions and close monitoring while on placement.

In the Australian higher education context, international short term mobility study abroad programs are promoted and financially assisted by the Federal Government (Commonwealth of Australia 2010). The government promotes these experiences as being beneficial to the student through the exposure to different teaching styles, meeting other students, lasting benefits for personal growth, self-confidence and independence (Commonwealth of Australia 2010).

When determining the outcomes of the experience, the best way in which to measure the short and long term benefits to students, beneficiaries and stakeholders remains unclear. For students, the experience offers the ability to develop global awareness, cultural competence, self-confidence, leadership and lifelong learning skills (Mawji *et al.* 2014; Delpuch 2013; Malick & Potts 2013; Jones, Neubrandner & Huff 2012). It has also been demonstrated to improve their academic results after their return and increase the likelihood of graduation (Malick & Potts 2013).

Whilst there is international literature available, limited research exists about the Australian inter-professional health student experience and placement in the Asia Pacific region thus leading to the focus of this study.

## METHODS

A qualitative study design was used to describe the student experiences and reflections relating to an inter-professional community health placement in Vietnam. Ethics approval was received from the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee.

A semi-structured face-to-face interview with 14 students was facilitated prior to the placement to enable the researchers to ascertain the expectations of the students and their previous travel experience. After the placement seven participants were interviewed face-to-face or by phone and asked to compare and contrast their reflections having completed their trip. An additional source of in-depth data was obtained from reflective journals kept by seven of the participants. The journals afforded an insight into their experiences providing a significant component of the research data. The interview transcripts and reflective journals were read and analysed for emergent themes, words or ideas which described the community placement experience.

The data was separated into three main categories; 'prior to departure', 'during study tour' and 'post study tour'. Data was analysed manually for key themes and major points in each of the three categories, which were then distilled into a final list of important key learning experiences for the students. The final identified themes were; the environment, communication, culture, resources, education, group dynamics, politics and personal development.

## FINDINGS

### *Environment*

Most students mentioned that coping with the climate in Vietnam was challenging, and whilst the humid tropical heat was expected, the freezing climate in the rural clinics was not. Students noted that the cold temperature may have been a significant contributor to the rate of illness which spread throughout most of the group and also its impact on the health of patients. Following the assessment of a male patient, Student 5 noted that oesophageal burning and stomach pain symptoms were more pronounced with the cold weather and eating spicy food. Through questioning the student ascertained that he drank more alcohol to keep warm in winter which seemed "a reoccurring trend in this community".

A number of students noted that other environmental difficulties related to humidity, rainfall and mud had a negative impact on travel, access to clinics and cleanliness.

### *Communication*

Difficulties arising from language and communication issues primarily related to cultural confusion or miscommunication between the Australian group and Vietnamese hosts, guides, clinicians or locals were identified in student journals. Having better protocols and access to communication channels, especially to contact home was considered essential by one student.

Debriefing as a group on a regular basis was identified as being important for students to communicate about their experiences and learning throughout the international program. Student 6 identified that a debrief with the students, academics and clinical health staff in response to students being told they were 'too slow', highlighted the difference between local and students history questioning techniques and resulted in a clinic nurse participating in patient assessments.

### *Culture*

Students developed a greater cultural awareness from their trip to Vietnam. The cultural difference between the role of the nurse and midwife in Australia and Vietnam caused some difficulties for both students and local clinicians. Students found that the role of the patient's family in regular personal care activities of the patients, challenging at times as in Australia this is usually the role of the nurse. A student reflected on this practice as follows:

Parents are the ones that do all the care for the children in the hospital – including feeding (supply of food), bathing, etc. This to me is the role of the nurse because this is what we do in Australia – although it does make sense to do it this way so the children are kept comforted by their parents (Student 2)

Students learnt about the Vietnamese health care system and the different standards of health care and issues relating to both urban and rural populations. The outcome of this education broke down stereotypes of Vietnamese patients and allowed students to accept people as they are without the influence of preconceived cultural expectations. From this, students were also better able to consider the cultural, religious and historical factors involved in health care, thus making them less judgemental of other health beliefs in Australia. Furthermore a better understanding of the perspective of someone who feels completely foreign and isolated in Australia was developed, given that in Vietnam the students were the isolated ones. Students were better able to understand the values evident in Vietnam, particularly those related to "family, hard work and achieving aspirations, modesty and honesty" (Student 1).

Students also found coping with and adapting to conditions in Vietnam difficult at times. This included learning to deal with beggars, sellers and haggling, traffic conditions and the general level of poverty.

### *Resources*

Practical difficulties arose from issues related to resources, such as limited or unreliable electricity (especially in rural areas), unavailability of plumbing for showering and clothes washing facilities limited to the use of a bucket. Students were challenged in their delivery of patient care due to lack of clinical equipment and consumables as evident in the following quote by Student 7 who identified "the antiquated methods and tools in use here. The hospital is obviously limited by funding".

Students were also distressed by the poor conditions in the orphanage specifically the poor conditions of living spaces, buildings, insulation against weather, lack of hygiene and resources.

### *Education*

The ratio of academic staff, translators and students presented logistical problems in relation to ensuring students were well supervised and gained appropriate learning experiences. This was particularly evident with students undertaking clinical experiences in different hospital wards given the differences in language and health care delivery. Whilst this was further complicated by the inter-professional nature of the student cohort and their individual interests within these discipline groups, the students were nevertheless actively encouraged to work across disciplines providing them with diverse learning opportunities and insight into different models of care. Student 6 stated that having a mix of paramedic, nursing and midwifery students in their paediatric assessment team

meant that “we had a great scope of knowledge between us” while another student identified that “it was a great chance to see how they [the midwifery students] worked and start seeing some patients” (Student 7).

The international placement better enabled students to appreciate the importance of Australian clinical and professional standards in relation to patient care, occupational health and safety (i.e. sharps disposal, personal protective equipment) and showing respect and empathy for patients.

#### *Group dynamics*

Despite students recognising the value of learning from the different disciplines, students also noted that at times it was difficult to work within a group, especially in the primary health clinics. These problems included practical issues such as exhaustion, illness, homesickness and some students found it difficult to cope with different discipline and health assessment styles within their groups. This was heightened by the diversity in age, year of study, life experience and confidence levels within the student clinical working groups.

#### *Politics*

Students were exposed to the history and politics of Vietnam prior to departure as part of their preparation activities however the reality of the political effects on individual health was more apparent to students when immersed in health service provision in country. The effect of trying to work without electricity raised concerns for students who noted “the government has the power to switch off the electricity when they want” (Student 6)

Students learnt about the Vietnam War from the Vietnamese perspective which some students found ‘confronting’ (Student 1) whilst others find it confusing due to contradictions with their previous knowledge of the war (Student 3 and 4).

#### *Personal development*

An often-unexpected outcome of both domestic and international work integrated learning experiences is the growth and development of the individual student from the experience gained. As one student stated:

I have already found that my confidence within the clinics has increased hugely since yesterday.... I felt proud of myself for having that instinct and following it through and believing in myself (Student 2)

Whilst academics recognise that personal development opportunities for students are a key focus of any work integrated learning experience, the students are often surprised:

... this week has felt more like a month with physical, mental and emotional stress, pain and growth. But I leave with no regrets. (Student 6)

Today is one I’m likely never to forget! Challenge, perseverance, friendship and serenity. Touché Vietnam! (Student 1)

This personal growth and development is however difficult to quantify in terms of its value to future employers.

## CONCLUSION

This study provided insight into student learning outcomes from an overseas community health placement and extends our knowledge about work integrated learning (WIL) with an international partner. In keeping with contemporary issues of WIL, student safety, support and academic standards remain critical to a positive student learning experience in an international context.

Additional student safety considerations such as international travel advice, occupational and safety standards and awareness of potential local hazards (i.e. traffic) add to the planning and organisation requirements for a successful international WIL experience.

Student support is required at every stage of any international WIL experience requiring appropriate consideration of staff/student ratio’s the use of interpreters and the development of processes to enable debriefing, reflections and resolution of group dynamic issues.

Ensuring appropriate academic rigour and professional standards are achieved is significant for all WIL placements. In the international context this is dependent upon high quality relationships with the international partner(s) and 'a truly integrated approach to learning through a combination of academic and work-related activities' (Flinders University, 2014).

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# Graduate attributes for a global society: the RMIT International Industry Experience and Research Program (RIIERP)

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Work integrated learning (WIL) is a key part of the distinct educational philosophy of RMIT University; indeed WIL is embedded within RMIT policy, which mandates a minimum level of WIL activities as part of the experiences and assessments of all students in Higher Education and Vocational Education coursework awards. As a global university of technology and design, RMIT has established RIIERP to help fulfill its global and WIL aspirations, providing a global WIL experience of between 6 and 12 months for more than 2,500 students. RIIERP partners with over 200 organisations in 17 different countries in Asia, Europe and North America, that contribute approximately \$2.7 million each year to the program. Long-term partnerships of more than 10 years duration have been established with successful global companies such as Audi, BMW, Siemens, Bosch, Volkswagen and Bayer. RIIERP allows early exposure and promotes awareness of students to different cultural settings, and gives students the opportunity to improve their global employability, thus instilling the desired generic attributes for graduates of the future in a global society. The authors draw on the evidence provided by RIIERP, developed more than two decades ago, to engender the development of graduate attributes of a global work-ready citizen.

Keywords: graduate attributes, global work integrated learning, global work-ready citizen, RMIT International Industry Experience and Research Program (RIIERP)

## INTRODUCTION

RMIT is a global university of technology and design, committed to providing students with the skills and experiences that will enable them to succeed and engage with their professions in a global context. This vision informs the collaborations and partnerships RMIT has locally and across the world, including those related to the work integrated learning (WIL) opportunities made available to students each year.

WIL is a strategic learning and teaching priority for RMIT, and it was first etched into the university's philosophy at its very beginning as the Working Men's College that only awarded technical and expert certificates upon proof of students' engagement in practical work with industry (Murray-Smith & Dare, 1987). In the years since, WIL has remained a distinguishing and positive feature of many RMIT programs and in 2008 the provision of WIL was embedded in university policy. Intended to make a significant contribution to the work readiness of RMIT students, in particular "their development of the core skills and capabilities of practice" (RMIT, 2014, Work integrated learning (WIL) at RMIT policy, para. 2), this policy mandates that WIL must form part of all Higher Education and Vocational Education (AQF Levels 5 to 9 inclusive) awards offered by the university. At RMIT, interaction with and feedback from the workplace is deemed integral to the WIL experience, and assessment of WIL contributes to academic credit.

The RMIT International Industry Experience and Research Program (RIIERP) is a unique WIL activity offered by RMIT. The program seeks to equip RMIT graduates with attributes that will enable them to live anywhere as global citizens and perform competently as professionals. RIIERP offers undergraduate, graduate and research collaboration opportunities in any discipline, and this paper focuses on how the international WIL experiences provided by RIIERP have contributed to the development of work-ready global graduates.

## THE RMIT INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE AND RESEARCH PROGRAM (RIIERP)

Gacel-Avila (2005) maintains that one of the basic functions of a university should be the fostering of global awareness and understanding amongst students, of their own and other cultures. Further, universities should also be a key educational resource for training citizens with critical perspective, and adequate preparation to work and live effectively and successfully in a global context (Gacel-Avila, 2005).

These qualities could be achieved if universities gave their graduates time overseas during their study (Abanteriba, 2006). It was on this basis that RIIERP was established in 1992, with the following goals:

- a) to expose students and graduates to different cultural environments;
- b) to facilitate the development of graduates who are worldly in outlook and globally employable;
- c) to offer students and graduates with access to infrastructure only available overseas, to enhance their development of vocational and/or research skills;
- d) to provide RMIT with a means to assess the quality of its students/graduates from a global perspective; and
- e) to promote partnerships with international companies with acknowledged best practice and expertise.

RIIERP is a unique program in Australia that offers six different WIL placements designed to meet the learning needs of an individual student or graduate cohort (Figure 1).

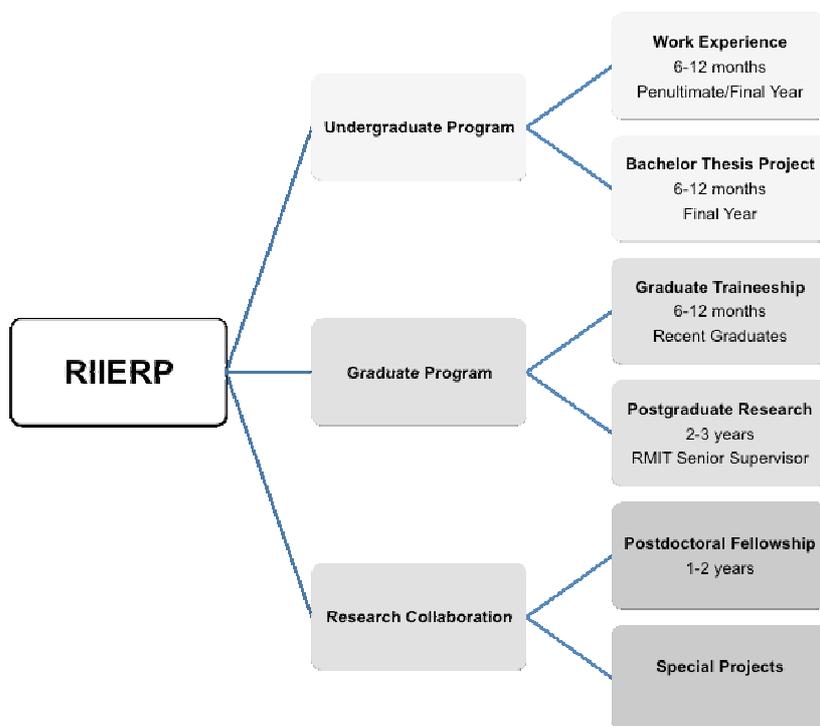


FIGURE 1. RIIERP work-integrated learning programs and placements

The number of RIIERP WIL placements offered each year has grown substantially, particularly during the first decade (Figure 2).

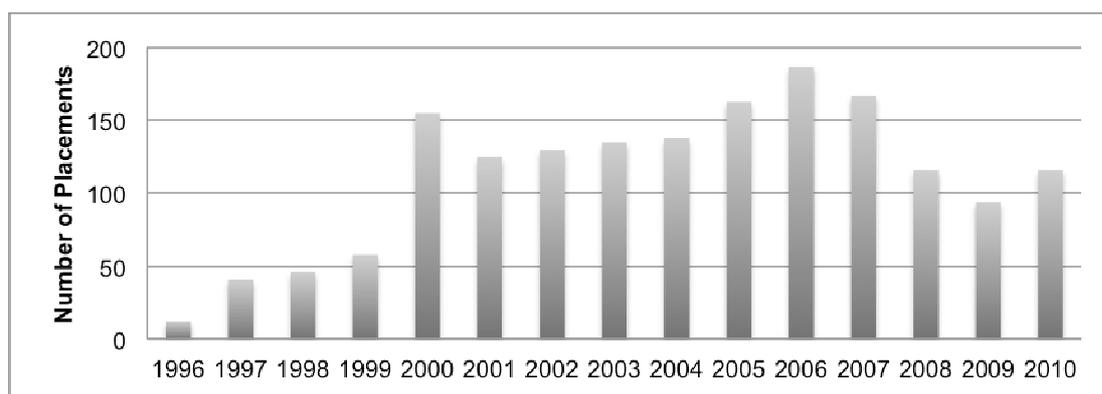


FIGURE 2. RIIERP placements summary (1996-2010)

Overall, RIIERP has partnered with more than 200 companies located in 17 countries to offer WIL placements to more than 2500 RMIT students. These companies also contribute up to AUS\$2.7 million each year in student allowances. Table 1 presents a selection of the companies hosting RIIERP students in 2014.

TABLE 1. Selected 2014 RIIERP international company partners

| Country | Company  | Country     | Company  |
|---------|--|-------------|--|
| Austria | INTALES GmbH<br>Robert Bosch AG  | Hungary     | ThyssenKrupp AG  |
| Canada  | Rolls-Royce Canada Ltd.  | Japan       | Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.  |
| France  | Airbus Headquarters<br>DEGREMONT SAS<br>Keolis/Yarra Trams   | Sweden      | AB Volvo   |
| Germany | Airbus Defence and Space<br>Audi AG<br>BMW AG<br>Continental<br>Daimler AG<br>German Aerospace Center (DLR)<br>IBM Deutschland<br>John Deere GmbH & Co.KG<br>Lufthansa Aviation Center<br>Nestlé Deutschland AG<br>Porsche AG<br>Robert Bosch GmbH<br>Rolls-Royce Deutschland Ltd & Co KG<br>Volkswagen AG | Switzerland | ABB Ltd<br>Alstom<br>Wärtsilä Switzerland Ltd.   |
|         |  | UK          | Airbus<br>Bentley Motors<br>MAHLE Powertrain Ltd.<br>Rolls-Royce International Ltd.  |
|         |  | USA         | BETA CAE Systems USA Inc.<br>Boeing Capital Corporation<br>GE Aviation<br>McQuay International<br>Pratt & Whitney<br>Rolls-Royce Corporation |

#### *The RIIERP process*

RIIERP placements, including project details, are advertised via the RIIERP website and applications open in June for placements in the following year. Applicants must have a grade point average of at least 2.0 out of 4.0 (credit average), and their application consists of a formal cover letter detailing their interest in participating in RIIERP, a full resume and their current transcript of results. Applicants also list three international host companies and the project they would like to complete in order of preference. The application process also includes a rigorous interview intended to provide each applicant with the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of RIIERP and its goals, as well as how their professional development needs match the opportunities offered by their preferred host companies. Each applicant is then ranked according to their academic performance (60%) and their interview (40%).

A short list is made available to each host company, which then confirms the successful applicant and sends them a letter of offer and employment contract. All students and graduates undertaking RIIERP are required to enroll in an RMIT elective course and confirmation of this enrolment must be submitted with their work permit (required for all students) and visa applications (if required).

RIIERP placements are formally assessed, and students and graduates must submit all assessment tasks within two weeks of their return to Australia. As shown in Table 2, a range of tasks is used so that different perspectives are included in the assessment of a student or graduate's skills (Ferns & Moore, 2012).

TABLE 2. RIIERP assessment tasks and weightings

| Assessment Task                           | Contribution to Final Grade |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Project Report (8,000 words)              | 20%                         |
| Cultural Report (8,000 words)             | 20%                         |
| Oral Presentation – Project (30 minutes)  | 10%                         |
| Oral presentation – Cultural (30 minutes) | 10%                         |
| Reflective Journal (5,000 words)          | 10%                         |
| Company Supervisor Feedback               | 30%                         |

### Evaluating RIIERP

A series of surveys was conducted between 1992 and 2010 to capture the RIIERP experience as follows:

1. The *Participating Student* Survey collected feedback from students and graduates who completed a RIIERP placement between 1992 and 2000. The 14-question survey was given to students in hard copy or via email to complete on their return to Australia.
2. The *Graduate Student* Survey collected feedback from students and graduates who completed a RIIERP placement between 1992 and 2010, and had since graduated from RMIT. The 14-question survey was given to graduates in hard copy to complete on their return to Australia, or emailed to graduates for whom contact details could be obtained.
3. The *Overseas Companies* Survey collected feedback in 2000 and again in 2005 from international companies that had participated in RIIERP. The same 10-question survey was used each time and it was emailed to company contacts.
4. The *Australian Companies* Survey was distributed to a group of Australian organisations in 2000 purposely selected on the basis of their size and relevance to RIIERP placements. The six-question survey was mailed to company contacts.

### SURVEY RESULTS

#### *Participating Student Survey and Feedback*

Overall 210 students and graduates were invited to participate in the survey and 196 surveys were completed and returned (96%). The majority of respondents (59%) had participated in RIIERP during 1999 and 2000 (Figure 3). Overall, 57% were in their 4<sup>th</sup> year of study, 7% were in their 5<sup>th</sup> year of study and 36% participated as a recent graduate.

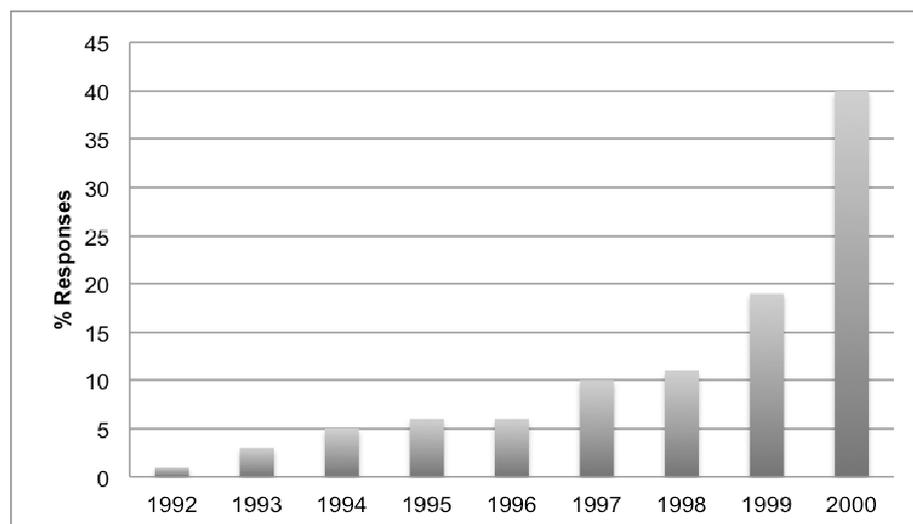


FIGURE 3. When survey respondents participated in RIIERP

The benefits reported by students participating in RIIERP are shown in Figure 4. At the time of the survey, 67% of respondents had graduated from RMIT. Of these, 93% were employed and 7% indicated they were completing

graduate studies. Of those employed, 96% said it took them less than a year to find employment. Further, 13% of respondents said they had received an offer of employment from the company where they completed RIIERP.

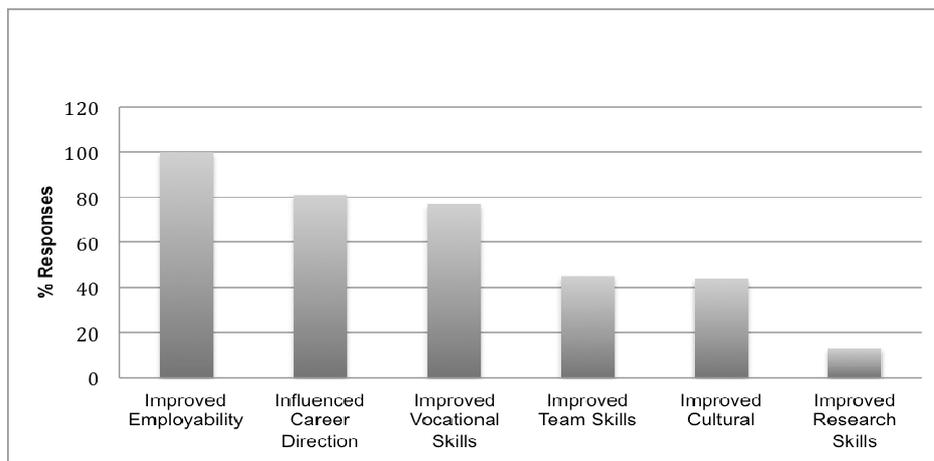


FIGURE 4. Self-reported benefits of participating in RIIERP

Even though the majority of participants said they knew little (67%) or nothing at all (14%) about their international host company prior to RIIERP, they all rated RIIERP as good to excellent in their professional development and also said that they would recommend the program to others. This is also highlighted in the following comments from RIIERP participants:

Being in the work force makes you think, feel, problem solve, and analyse while working on real life projects. It forces you to step up to the next level which I found both challenging and very exciting. (RMIT Aerospace Engineering / Business student at ACE GmbH, Friedrichshafen).

I found this to be a very rewarding experience, as not only did I get to work in the highly competitive Space Industry, I also got to see some of the most incredible human inventions that have been and are being created. (RMIT Aerospace Engineering student at Astrium in Bremen).

The highlight of my time at BMW Group was the month I worked at the test track assisting with the collection of wheel force and displacement data. It was great to be involved with the testing and to experience all the sights, sounds and smells of the track environment. (RMIT Aerospace Engineering / Business student at BMW Munich).

#### *Graduate Student Survey and Feedback*

The response rate for the Graduate Survey was 87% (384 respondents of 442 graduates invited to participate). Of the respondents, 74% participated in the Work Experience opportunity of RIIERP, 25% participated in the Graduate Traineeship and 1% participated in Research Placements. Most respondents (70%) were Australian citizens.

At the time of the survey, 96% of graduates were employed and 81% noted they had gained employment within six months of graduation. Of those employed, 63% were working in Australia, 18% in their home country and 19% in another country. Although only 7% of respondents said that they were offered a job overseas as a result of their RIIERP placement, one graduate did provide the following comment:

Going to the other side of the globe to work on the F136 program has been such a fantastic experience and has allowed me to gain invaluable skills and experience in one of the world's leading power systems companies. I'm very excited to gain a position on the Graduate Leadership Development Program and continue my career with Rolls-Royce. (RMIT Engineering Graduate at Rolls-Royce Indianapolis).

Overall, 99% of the survey respondents said that their participation in RIIERP helped them secure a job, and had helped in their career development. In particular one graduate commented:

I have gained an understanding of Lean and Six Sigma methodologies which are a useful skill set that can be transferable to any given industry or workplace. Working for a multinational organisation has broadened my views of various cultural norms when dealing with colleagues across the globe. (RMIT Marketing Graduate at Siemens in Mühlheim).

### Overseas Company Survey and Feedback

Overall 104 companies were invited to participate (20 companies in 2000 and 84 companies in 2005) and 98 surveys were completed and returned (94%). As shown in Figure 5, survey respondents demonstrated a spread of experience with supervising RIIERP participants.

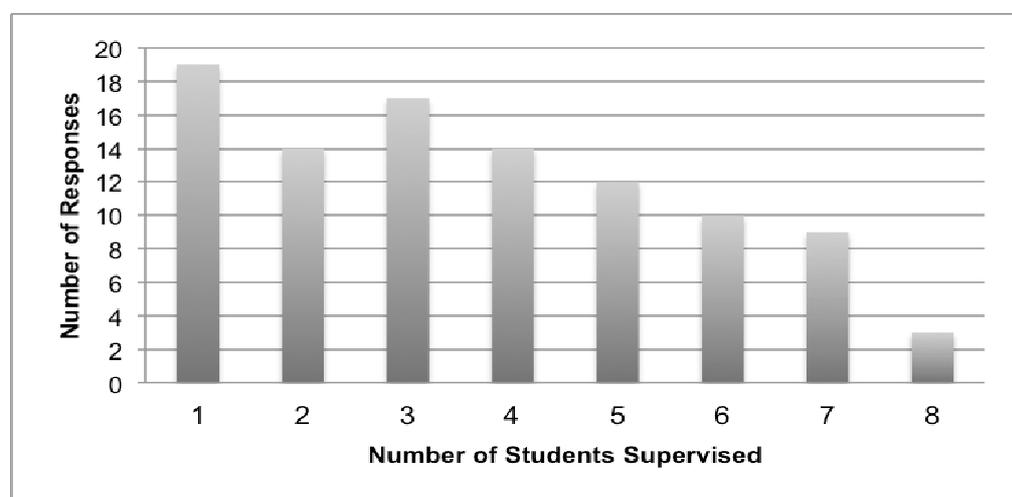


FIGURE 5. Overseas company data regarding supervision of RIIERP participants

Eighty-eight percent of international companies rated RMIT students' and graduates' ability to carry out tasks as excellent, and 75% rated their ability to work in a team as excellent. Further, 95% of companies surveyed said that RMIT students integrated into the company social environment easily.

When asked to compare RIIERP students to those in their own country, one company stated that RMIT students were better, and the remainder responded that RMIT students were comparable with their international peers. Finally, when asked if they would employ RMIT graduates at the conclusion of RIIERP, all respondents said that if there were no visa restrictions and positions were available they would employ the RMIT graduate in their company. In addition all respondents agreed that they would recommend RIIERP to continue in their company. It is important to note that two company survey respondents noted that the students' lack of knowledge of languages was a weakness in the program, and one other said that the time taken to arrange student visas was an issue.

### Australian Company Survey and Feedback

Of the 25 companies invited to participate in this survey, 20 participated (80%). Eighty percent of respondents said that as an employer, they would favor an applicant who had undertaken overseas work experience at an international company, during his/her studies. When asked to qualify this response, the following reasons were provided:

- "Maturity.... ability to work in different environment".
- "Appreciation of working globally ... experience in dealing with different cultures and environments".
- "More flexible approach to work".
- "Improve mobility of the team ... be able to cope when sent to work in other regions".
- "We equate 6 months graduate trainee-ship in Germany with 2 years effective working experience in Australia. This is reflected in the starting salary".

On the whole, 90% of Australian companies said they would recommend that undergraduate students should have training such as RIIERP, and 90% considered a student's exposure to different cultural environments a necessary component of their professional development. Most (75%) of the respondents also commented that an employee with such exposure would have better chances of advancement in the company for the following reasons:

- "Necessary in this information age".
- "Important for a globalised industry".
- "Breadth of experience gained".
- "Gives students the opportunity to measure themselves against their peers from overseas".

- “Excellent opportunity for students.... our company has offices in the UK, Asia, South Africa, etc.”

## DISCUSSION

Feedback from student, graduate and company respondents in this study clearly indicates that RIIERP improves the vocational and cultural skills of participants, as well as employment opportunities locally and globally. Students also claimed that their participation in RIIERP influenced their career direction, and graduates believed that participation in RIIERP assisted in securing a job and developing their careers.

Although not active participants in RIIERP, Australian companies involved in the study also perceived there was value in students and graduates participating in RIIERP. These respondents expressed a preference for employing graduates with international experience over those without, and indicated that the experience could help graduates advance in their careers, as well be financially remunerated. These observations are consistent with recent findings that linked international work placements with enhanced professional networks, global expertise and career advancement (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Sison & Brennan, 2012;).

The views of overseas companies that host RIIERP students and graduates were overwhelmingly supportive. Even though the participants’ lack of knowledge of other languages was noted, it is clear that RIIERP participants integrate into the company’s social environment well. In addition, these overseas companies value RIIERP, as reflected in their continued involvement over many years and their desire to recommend that the program continue within their organisation.

All international companies rated the skills demonstrated by RIIERP participants as comparable to those expected from students in the host country. This, the authors believe, is a clear indication that this group of RMIT graduates and students are indeed capable of working productively overseas. These findings also demonstrate that RIIERP is implementing what Van Rooijen (2011) argues that industry now demands: “practical, real world education that is relevant, current and translates from theory to practice into sustainable impacts” (p.6). In accordance with the study by Crossman & Clarke (2010), the findings show that programs like RIIERP do enhance learning, skill development and employability.

RIIERP has, through its international WIL placements, developed comprehensive and long-term partnerships with high profile companies at the international level. The success of the program has developed over time, and in its early days placement numbers were low as a result of the significant commitments in resources the program required, both from the university and from the companies concerned. However the growth of the program and the diversification of the WIL placements offered demonstrate that this alliance has turned out to be beneficial for all stakeholders. The feedback from the students, graduates and companies that participated in this study overwhelmingly indicates that they believe their participation has been beneficial for professional development and employability of the students and graduates.

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# Student-reported quality of supervision/mentoring in Work Integrated Learning

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The literature in the work integrated learning space is primarily centred on increasing the capacity for work integrated learning (WIL), challenges associated with developing WIL placements, and implementation of alternative WIL experiences for students. Student involvement in assessing the outcomes of a WIL experience is usually their experience with the activity as a whole. There is however little in the literature on evaluation of the teaching and learning associated with the WIL from the students' mentor or supervisor. The current paper will draw on the experience from health professional clinical education where the students regularly assess the quality of the teaching provided by their educator or supervisor. Assessment of the teaching or supervision quality can assist institutions to identify valuable student mentors or supervisors to enhance the WIL experience.

Keywords: Work integrated learning (WIL), industry supervisor role, workplace assessment, workplace educator

## INTRODUCTION

There is increasing interest in the implementation and integration of work integrated learning (WIL) experiences into the curriculum of university programmes, regardless of the profession, in order to improve employability (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Lyons & Brown, 2003). Drivers for this change have been predominantly the employers who appear to value social skills and personality (Archer & Davison, 2008), and those skills required for lifelong learning (De La Harpe, Radloff, & Wyber, 2000) in university graduates. The ability to reflect on one's experiences is a cornerstone of lifelong learning (Schön, 1987), something that is widely recognised and explicitly included in curricula for the health professions (Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009). Without the ability to reflect, it can be argued that one is unsure of the skills or knowledge that need to be acquired to improve themselves personally and professionally. However, it may be unrealistic to expect a university graduate to possess these higher order skills (Cranmer, 2006) and these generic skills may be learnt or acquired during their employment post-university. As such, the student may in fact be work-ready after their university program that has included a WIL experience.

The literature has described extensively the perceptions of students (Collin & Tynjälä, 2003; Freestone, Thompson, & Williams, 2006; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008), graduates (Crebert\*, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini, 2004; Koppi, Edwards, Sheard, Naghdy, & Brookes, 2010; von Treuer, Sturre, Keele, & McLeod, 2011) and employers (Hernández-March, Martín del Peso, & Leguey, 2009; Kavanagh & Drennan, 2008) about their experiences with WIL and whether it has met, or meets, their expectations. The challenge in the assessment of WIL experiences however is "...more complex than evaluation of a standard university unit" (von Treuer *et al.*, 2011).

The use of WIL experiences is well established in professions such as teaching, law, medicine, nursing and the allied health professions (Trigwell & Reid, 1998). WIL experiences are central to the educational programs for these professions and operate in an authentic environment with a supervisor, mentor or as Trede (2012) refers to, a 'workplace educator'. Their role is to guide and assist the student with their transition to the workplace in their chosen profession, and allow the student to develop their professional identity (Trede, 2012). Given this important role in the students' learning and development, it is not unreasonable to assess whether the workplace educator is perceived to be positively impacting the student (Billett, 2009; Sturre *et al.*, 2012). The student could perform this assessment of the workplace educator during and/or after their placement.

## WORKPLACE EDUCATOR QUALITY

Trede (2012) highlight a number of challenges for the workplace educator: they may ill-prepared or lack the experience and knowledge to facilitate student learning; provide or participate in an environment that is not conducive to learning; and, play a dual, conflicted role as educator and assessor. These challenges can impact on the student and what they 'take away' from their WIL experience. Although a student may be able to provide narrative feedback to their university workplace coordinator through their assessments, the provision of structured feedback to the workplace educator could also be of benefit. Given the personal nature of the relationship between the workplace educator and student in their WIL experience, identifying the characteristics of quality educators is of value.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF WORKPLACE EDUCATORS IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS

Irby (1995) is one of the most frequently cited works on clinical teaching practice, and highlighted four key behaviours of the "excellent" clinical educator: 1) positive role model; 2) effective mentor and supervisor; 3) applies a dynamic approach to teaching; and, 4) is supportive. Perhaps not surprisingly, these behaviours could be extrapolated to most workplace educators, and the development of structured workplace educator feedback processes could be based around these behaviours. In their review of the literature, Sutkin *et al.* (2008) presented their identified key characteristics of good clinical teaching: 1) medical/clinical knowledge; 2) clinical skills; 3) positive relationships and learning environment; 4) communication skills; and 5) enthusiasm. Hewson & Jenson (1990) provide an outline of the roles of a clinical educator (Table 1).

TABLE 1: Roles of a clinical educator

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Clinical role model | The clinical educator displays attitudes, clinical skills and knowledge to the student |
| Clinical supervisor | The clinical educator aims to optimise patient care in the clinic                      |
| Professional mentor | The clinical educator serves as a trusted counsellor to the student                    |
| Instructor          | The instructional methods are appropriate to the clinic                                |
| Evaluator           | The clinical educator seeks feedback from and gives feedback to the student            |
| Consultant          | The clinical educator contributes experience and knowledge in patient care             |

Other authors have also highlighted that timely feedback to the student about their performance is important (Copeland & Hewson, 2000; Curtis, Helion, & Domsohn, 1998; Dolmans, Wolfhagen, Essed, Scherpbier, & van der Vleuten, 2002; Ernstzen, Bitzer, & Grimmer-Somers, 2009; Ramani & Leinster, 2008; Richardson, Jackling, Henschke, & Tempone, 2013), as well as the regular observation of student undertaking their WIL activities (Fernandez, 1998; Parsell & Bligh, 2001).

Provision of a good learning environment is a strong theme in the health professions literature related to clinical education. Bates, Konkin, Suddards, Dobson, and Pratt (2013) have previously demonstrated that a positive relationship with a workplace educator can create a positive learning environment. This finding has also been supported by other authors (Boerboom *et al.*, 2012; Boor *et al.*, 2008; Dolmans, Wolfhagen, Heineman, & Scherpbier, 2008; Hughes, 1998; Levy *et al.*, 2009). WIL placements should foster and encourage learning and this can, in part, be achieved through a positive learning environment, although as Hughes (1998) suggests "...the workplace, whilst offering rich authenticity, is a far from ideal learning environment for employees and students."

The behaviours listed above add to, and in some cases expand on, those identified by Irby (1995), particularly in the areas related to environment and interpersonal factors, as well as the role of assessor. The development of a positive interpersonal relationship between workplace educator and student has been highlighted in successful accounting WIL experiences (Abeysekera, 2006). Again, the behaviours identified above are valuable to assess in a workplace educator regardless of their profession.

Rowe, Mackaway, and Winchester-Seeto (2012) provide another model to explore the characteristics of workplace educators. These authors list four roles; support, education, administration and guardianship.

There is overlap in this model with those behaviours listed above which is unsurprising given that the elements of the model are widely used in nursing. The descriptors of each of these four roles by Rowe *et al.* (2012) could also provide an excellent theoretical basis on which to develop a method to assess workplace educator quality.

## EVALUATING WORKPLACE EDUCATOR QUALITY

To ensure that the students are receiving quality instruction and education as part of their WIL experience, it is necessary to evaluate the performance of the workplace educator and the quality of their teaching. The quality of clinical teaching can have a significant impact on a number of stakeholders including students, university program administrators, employers or the workplace educators direct-report, and the workplace educator themselves (Abeysekera, 2006; Snell *et al.*, 2000).

In the health professions, evaluation of the quality of workplace educator teaching is typically undertaken using student ratings, as this is the group exposed to clinical teaching on an ongoing basis (Dolmans *et al.*, 2002; Snell *et al.*, 2000). It is important to survey students to learn about the quality of clinical teaching as they have an opinion and expectation as to what constitutes a good clinical educator (Parsell & Bligh, 2001). This equally applies to students in all WIL situations. There are substantial number of questionnaires that have been developed to assess workplace educators in the health professions (Beckman, Ghosh, Cook, Erwin, & Mandrekar, 2004; Fluit, 2010), and many of these questionnaires are designed to assess the instructional quality in particular environments (Beckman, Cook, & Mandrekar, 2006; Conigliaro & Stratton, 2010).

Multiple sources of information (or triangulation) provide a comprehensive overview of teaching quality and effectiveness. The process of obtaining this information is often referred to as 360° (London & Beatty, 1993) or multisource feedback (Atwater, Waldman, & Brett, 2002; Smither, London, & Reilly, 2005) and is used widely in a variety of industries to improve employee performance. It has also gained acceptance in the health professions where the patient is included as a feedback source along with peers, managers and self-assessment (Jahangiri, Mucciolo, Choi, & Spielman, 2008; Sargeant, Mann, & Ferrier, 2005; Violato, Lockyer, & Fidler, 2003). Whilst it may be difficult for some organisations to incorporate peer assessment of workplace educator quality, self-assessment is entirely possible and should be encouraged by both the university and employer as part of their review of the students' WIL experience.

When constructing a questionnaire to assess a workplace educator, it is important to consider and establish its validity. This ensures that the questionnaire measures what it purports to measure, as well as measures those aspects of the teaching and learning provided by the workplace educator that are perceived to be important by the relevant stakeholders. Further, if the outcomes of these assessments are used for employment decisions, or decisions about whether to send students back to the organisation for their WIL experiences, it is necessary to ensure that the results obtained are reliable (Snell *et al.*, 2000; van der Leeuw, Lombarts, Heineman, & Arah, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

This commentary has highlighted that although the assessment of workplace educator quality is routine in the health professions, and many tools exist to undertake these assessments, it does not appear to be the case for many other professions. Structured feedback (in the form of a questionnaire) from the student about quality of the teaching and learning experience is valuable for a number of stakeholders in the WIL process. Firstly, the university can gain an appreciation for the quality of the teaching and learning provided by the workplace educator, thereby ensuring the value of the experience. This is not an unreasonable expectation given that students provide feedback to, and complete teaching quality evaluations of, their academic teachers routinely. Secondly, the employer (where they are not the students' workplace educator) can use the information as part of their quality assurance processes, use them in promotion decisions for their workplace educators, and potentially advertise the quality of their WIL experiences to prospective students. Lastly, for the workplace educator themselves, it provides them with an opportunity to receive feedback

from another source (other than their employer), reflect on their own experiences and identify where they can focus their own professional development, and use the information from the assessments in promotion and employment opportunities. Those academics and educators who lead WIL experiences at their respective institutions are encouraged to develop, investigate and report their endeavours to assess the quality of teaching and learning provided by the workplace educator.

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# Developing the ICT workforce for the future: Breaking down disciplinary silos to create an authentic work integrated learning experience

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Work Integrated Learning activities including industry placements are supported both by the requirements of professional societies and by the drive of Universities to ensure that their programs have practical relevance. However, this may not be feasible for Information Communication and Technology (ICT) programs in a regional area where local industry is unable to provide sufficient student placements. To overcome this limitation and facilitate the development of work-ready skills, James Cook University ICT students take on work-like roles in multidisciplinary collaborative teams to develop website projects for an industry client. Students receive guidance and feedback from the client and an industry expert to direct their learning towards workplace requirements. A two-year study was conducted using surveys of 53 ICT students to analyse their perceptions of this authentic learning environment. Results show that this approach is well received and contributes effectively to students' development of work-ready skills required in the ICT industry.

Keywords: Work integrated learning (WIL), professional skills, multidisciplinary collaboration, industry feedback, authentic learning, Information Communication and Technology ICT

## INTRODUCTION

ICT educators are continuously challenged by the need to adjust their courses to the ongoing technological developments in the field to provide up to date and industry relevant learning experiences for students (Janicki, Cummings & Kline, 2013). Adding to the challenge, there is a perceived gap between ICT industry and university, with some research reporting that ICT graduates are not sufficiently prepared when entering the workplace (e.g. Aasheim, Lixin, & Williams, 2009; ISIS, 2011). In particular, professional skills, those usually developed in professional context and over time, seem to be underdeveloped in ICT graduates. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) can help students develop those skills. WIL encapsulates 'a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum' (Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher, & Pretto, 2008, p. iv). WIL activities are supported both by the requirements of professional societies in the ICT sector, such as the Australian Computer Society, and by the drive of Universities to ensure that their programs have practical relevance.

While the Australian ICT industry clearly 'values models of WIL that involve direct experience within a workplace environment' (Ogunbona, Koppi, Armarego, Bailes, Hyland, McGill, . . . Roberts, 2013, p. 116), not all universities can provide sufficient internship opportunities. 'Many regional and rural universities ... would have difficulty in sourcing appropriate industry placements within their immediate location' (Pilgrim, 2011, p. 2; Ogunbona *et al.*, 2013, p. 112). This is certainly the case at the regional campuses of James Cook University (JCU) in Townsville and Cairns where the small size of the local ICT industries means they are unable to provide sufficient relevant student placements. Alternative industry-relevant experiences to provide 'students with an improved understanding of professional responsibility and the attainment of generic skills' (Ogunbona *et al.*, 2013, p. 8) need to be explored.

This paper reports findings of a two-year study that introduced undergraduate ICT students to multidisciplinary collaborative learning activities and linked ICT industry into students' learning experience. Students took part in authentic challenges that provided them with the opportunity to take on work-like roles in multidisciplinary collaborative teams.

## WORKPLACE REQUIREMENTS FOR ICT GRADUATES

Nagarajan and Edwards (2012) claim that 'many IT graduates with good technical skills do not get jobs, mainly because of their poor professional skills' (p. 480). Professional skills are described as non-technical skills or behavioral skills and include skills such as leadership, communication and teamwork. A longitudinal study conducted by Aasheim, Shropshire, Lixin and Kadlec (2012) revealed that the nine highest ranked skills (evaluated by 315 ICT managers) are all personal and interpersonal skills, namely honesty/integrity, attitude, willingness to learn new skills, communication skills, analytical skills, professionalism, ability to work in teams, flexibility/adaptability and motivation (Aasheim, Shropshire, Lixin & Kadlec, 2012, p. 198). Similar results were produced by other studies. Swinarski, Parente and Noce (2010) found that successful ICT professionals 'need a proper mix of both "soft" skills ... and "hard" IT skills'.

## REFLECTING INDUSTRY PRACTICE IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Teaching ICT students how to communicate and how to work in teams in a professional context does not appear to require direct workplace experience. Hernandez (2014) argues that 'companies hire people for core technical depth. ... they spend a fair amount of time and effort with recent graduates integrating them into teams, coaching them to be effective in what is rapidly becoming a more team-oriented environment'. Indeed, ICT 'is increasingly becoming interdisciplinary' (Goldberg & White, 2014, p. 457). The sophistication and diversity driving many ICT projects requires specialised expertise beyond the capacity of any one individual (Kacmarek, 2001; Womack, 2005). Websites for example 'have evolved from simple "brochureware" to sophisticated "megasystems", and this logical progression has led to the challenge of successfully developing complex websites' (Waltuch, 2001, p. 154).

Although working as part of a multidisciplinary team appears to be a common industry practice, especially for Web development, ICT education generally does not reflect this, resulting in students being poorly prepared for the realities of the workplace. In particular, the lack of teamwork skills has been identified in ICT students (e.g. CCI, 2011; ISIS, 2011). Hernandez (2014) suggests giving 'students experiences and opportunities where they can develop those skills as part of their academic achievement'.

Contextualising learning through WIL activities can include industry-based learning, industry examples in case studies and industry-linked projects which are seen as authentic engagement and 'have the potential to bring significant benefits to all stakeholders' (Pilgrim, 2011, p. 1). Working on authentic projects provided by industry clients and interacting with professionals from the industry in the learning environment can increase students' ability to tackle unfamiliar problems and build their confidence in presenting outcomes (Beaubouef, Zhang, Alkadi & Yang, 2011). Ogunbona *et al.* (2013) highlight that 'a successful WIL experience provides students with an improved understanding of professional responsibility and the attainment of generic skills which are strongly valued by industry' (p. 8).

Responding to identified shortfalls, the development of the learning environment was guided by current industry requirements for attributes and skills of graduates and the description of a future graduate required by both ICT and creative industries as being 'T-shaped' (Kelly, 2005). A T-shaped graduate is a specialist with a set of broader skills or understanding (Hernandez, 2014), able to work effectively in multidisciplinary teams due to their ability to contribute specialised skills to a collaborative work process and their understanding of the other disciplines involved.

Breaking down disciplinary boundaries to reflect industry practice in the classroom, 2<sup>nd</sup> year Web Programming students from the Bachelor of Information Technology and 2<sup>nd</sup> year design students from the Bachelor of New Media Arts worked together on a real world project provided by an industry client. Students worked in multidisciplinary teams for seven weeks to develop a website that provided enough complexity to be challenging for each discipline. Since the intention was to mirror industry practice, students took on appropriate work-like roles related to their discipline. ICT students worked in technical roles including programming, and design students performed the visual and interactive design tasks. Each team presented their project during the developmental stage to a local industry

professional who provided feedback, benchmarking the projects against industry standards. In the final week, students formally presented their finished sites to the client who also provided feedback to students.

## METHODS

This research study was conducted over two years (one trial each year) applying a pragmatic approach (Creswell, 2008; Punch, 2009). The study focused on exploring the extent to which multidisciplinary teamwork and engagement with an industry professional provided students with an authentic learning experience relevant to industry requirements. Students were surveyed immediately after their participation in the subject using an online questionnaire designed to collect both quantitative feedback through multiple-choice questions and qualitative feedback by asking respondents to provide a rationale for the provided answer. Quantitative data were analysed using statistical functions provided by the online survey tool, SurveyMonkey. Qualitative data were coded using the research analysis software NVivo.

53 ICT students across both trials provided feedback, a response rate of 79.1%. Although all participating disciplines were surveyed, the focus of this paper is on the learning experience of ICT students.

## FINDINGS

The reflections of ICT students are presented in the following. Table 1 presents students' reflections on the multidisciplinary teamwork process, and Table 2 provides insight into the extent to which students were able to develop an understanding of how to work with other disciplines.

TABLE 1: ICT students' reflections on the multidisciplinary teamwork process

| The development of the website was a team project. Did you like working in a multidisciplinary team?     |             |             |                           |                                |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  | Trial 1     | Trial 2     |                           |                                |
|  | %<br>(N)    | %<br>(N)    | Total no. of<br>responses | Average<br>across two<br>years |
| Yes  | 29%<br>(7)  | 17%<br>(5)  | 12                        | 23%                            |
| It was challenging at times,<br>but I liked it.  | 42%<br>(10) | 69%<br>(20) | 30                        | 56%                            |
| I did not like it, but I can see the benefits<br>of working in a team on such a project.                 | 29%<br>(7)  | 4%<br>(1)   | 8                         | 16%                            |
| No, I did not like it.<br>I think I would have done a<br>better job working on the project on my<br>own. | 0%<br>(0)   | 10%<br>(3)  | 3                         | 5%                             |

TABLE 2. ICT students' reflections on the extent to which they were able to develop an understanding of multidisciplinary teamwork processes

| Do you think that you have developed a better understanding on how people from ICT and Design could work together or are working together on such projects? |              |             |                           |                             |
|---|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
|   | Trial 1      | Trial 2     |                           |                             |
|   | %<br>(N)     | %<br>(N)    | Total no. of<br>responses | Average across<br>two years |
| Yes   | 100%<br>(24) | 86%<br>(25) | 49                        | 93%                         |
| No  | 0%<br>(0)    | 14%<br>(4)  | 4                         | 7%                          |

Overall, the outcomes are positive. Table 1 provides evidence that 79% of ICT students surveyed across two years found the multidisciplinary learning experience beneficial. Furthermore, 16% of students stated that although they did not like the experience they could see the benefit of working in multidisciplinary teams, clearly emphasising the value of the experience. Only three students across two years thought they would have produced a better outcome when working on their own.

Overwhelmingly positive was the feedback that nearly all students (93% across two years) were able to develop a better understanding of how students from different disciplines work together in multidisciplinary teams (Table 2).

When students were asked to reflect on what they would do differently if they were to start over with the team project, the following key themes emerged:

- organise more time for collaboration;
- assign a team leader;
- ensure good and active communication between all team members;
- take more control of milestones and have meetings more often; and
- start implementing the design from an earlier time.

Table 3 provides insight into ICT students' reflection on the effectiveness of directly interacting with an ICT industry professional.

TABLE 3. ICT students' reflections on the effectiveness of integrating an ICT industry professional in the learning environment

| Did you like having the creative industries professional giving feedback about your project? |             |             |                           |                             |
|--|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
|  | Trial 1     | Trial 2     |                           |                             |
|  | %<br>(N)    | %<br>(N)    | Total no. of<br>responses | Average across<br>two years |
| Yes  | 96%<br>(23) | 83%<br>(24) | 47                        | 89%                         |
| No   | 4%<br>(1)   | 17%<br>(5)  | 6                         | 11%                         |

Table 3 shows that the vast majority of students (89% across two years) appreciated the direct interaction with an industry professional. The qualitative feedback revealed that students were generally enthusiastic about receiving 'real world feedback'. It provided students with 'industry insights', and the feedback was experienced as authentic and valid due to the "'real world" experience' of the industry professional. Some students commented that this 'was the best part' of the subject because 'it gave us a professional outlook on what we need to do, and it could almost emulate what happens in the real world.' Others reflected positively on the opportunity 'to pick the brain of someone in the industry'.

Room for enhancement identified in the collaborative project was of an organisational nature in that students suggested that the industry feedback could be given earlier during the project and feedback sessions could be longer. Some students found engaging in the multidisciplinary teamwork process challenging, and a small number of students would have preferred to not work in teams and/or did not respond positively to engaging with industry.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the two-year trial, the learning experience provided students with insights into issues and processes similar to what they would encounter in the workplace including teamwork, project management, and communication issues. These issues are all directly related to the kind of professional skills that the literature suggests is needed by ICT graduates in the workplace (e.g. Aasheim *et al.*, 2011; Janicki *et al.*, 2013). While not all teams were equally successful in terms of project outcomes, the students were able to reflect on the experience including considering how to organise multidisciplinary teamwork differently in future, showing evidence of positive learning outcomes.

The feedback from students on the experience was very positive overall and showed that students were able to gain insights into how different disciplines operate, an understanding that is important for their future work environments. Student reflections suggest that some would approach the teamwork process differently the next time. It is notable that this was the first time these students engaged in multidisciplinary teamwork in their ICT subjects. It would be valuable to continue research to evaluate whether students find multidisciplinary collaboration less challenging in subsequent subjects. Furthermore, suggestions in regards to the organisational nature of the interaction with the industry professional (e.g. providing feedback earlier during project development) need to be implemented and evaluated in the future.

Overall, engaging students in authentic learning activities by combining multidisciplinary teamwork on a real world project with industry involvement and feedback can be a suitable substitute for industry placements by providing an effective WIL experience that helps students to develop work-ready skills to improve their transition from university to the workplace.

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# Learning through work: How can a narrative approach to evaluation build students' capacity for resilience?

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This paper considers the way professionals talk about their capacity for resilience in stories of their careers. The way narratives could be used to construct stories about resilience and other capacities is considered relevant to gaining insight into professional identity. In using the term 'professional identity' we acknowledge that some professionals have a conscious purpose-driven identity and others learn through social interactions about the culture of the workplace and the experiences they have that are valuable in the workplace. The empirical research draws on the narratives professionals at different life and career stages share about their professional development over their careers. The research findings highlight the importance attributed to building resilience, but also the themes associated with building professional identity. Vignettes of the stories told are presented in this paper to highlight ways in which resilience is acquired through building networks and being adaptable. Based on the findings of this study, it is proposed that building students' understanding of resilience should be an important element of work integrated learning (WIL). Developing resilient qualities through participating in communities of practice may improve the quality of the students' experiences and improve their chances of having successful, fulfilling and enduring careers.

**Keywords:** Narrative analysis, professional identity, work integrated learning

This paper considers how a narrative approach to building capacity for resilience can assist professionals, work integrated learning (WIL) co-ordinators in universities who manage student placements, and students engaged in WIL experiences evaluate learning through work. It is suggested that a community of practice approach for co-ordinators of WIL could provide opportunities to discuss and showcase how they overcome problems and build resilience in implementing WIL practices. Further, narrative constitutes a very effective methodology for sharing experiences and insights across partnership teams. The community of practice approach is also useful for students engaged in WIL practices because it enables students to discover how others build their resilience through work experiences. The community of practice approach enables participants to reveal the situated nature of learning (Grealish, 2012).

This paper begins with the premise that resilience can be developed through work, and therefore through WIL experiences. Resilience can be understood as a concept that focuses on building individuals' wellbeing (Rutter, 2001) or as positive adaptations to adverse circumstances (Masten, 2001; Redl, 1969). Masten *et al.* (1990) define resilience as adapting to a cultural context in order to achieve a successful outcome despite challenging circumstances. The precise definition of resilience depends on the kinds of adversity faced and, as such, is related not only to personal but also to broader social and political issues. Resilience is sometimes described as an important capability within institutional contexts. For example, RMIT University has a code of conduct which is underpinned by a behavioral capability framework, within which resilience is defined as the capacity to adapt and knowing when to seek support. Eade (2007) describes capacity-building as an approach that identifies obstacles that inhibit development as well as those that facilitate development.

Resilience is an important concept for social policy because it focuses on quality enhancement, and is associated with social capital, particularly building social networks (Bottrell, 2009). Professional identities are constructed from local and institutional knowledge of an individual's social positioning and behaviors are learned that constitute valuable cultural and social capital (Bottrell, 2009). Contemporary theories of resilience primarily focus on factors that mitigate the risks of adverse conditions and circumstances (Bottrell, 2013; Rutter, 2001). Within this paper the concept of resilience is understood to have implications for building communities of knowledge within universities about WIL and the data demonstrate the way talking about capacity may be developed via narrative analysis and by telling stories.

The aim of this paper is to emphasise the importance professionals attribute to their own resilience in regard to their career success, and how resilience and other capacities are drawn upon to tell a story about a person's

professional identity. A narrative approach is proposed as a key method to gain insight into students' WIL engagements and to assess outcomes for students while evaluating program and learning outcomes.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, in-depth interviews were conducted over a two-year period with a total of thirty participants at various career and life stages all working in professional roles. The sample group was selected by purposive sampling, identified through professional networks accessible to the researcher. Participants were asked to participate in an interview to discuss their experiences of growth and development in their work. The interviewer was an experienced career consultant and met the participants on several occasions to clarify their stories. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed following the interview.

The empirical approach utilised in this study was narrative analysis. Bamberg and Andrews (2004) argue that we develop our identities as professionals by telling stories about our lives and living the stories we tell. Riessman (1993, 2002, 2008) defines narrative interviews as a discursive process in which participants engage in an evolving conversation that is collaboratively produced. The narrative career counselling approach applied in this study (described as one that provides opportunity for reflection on career resources) has been explored by numerous researchers (see Campbell & Ungar, 2004a, 2004b; Savickas, 1997, 2001, 2008; Saviackas *et al.*, 2009).

The key question participants were asked was: How have you developed and grown in your professional life? Prompts were then used to encourage reflection on any barriers experienced and how these were overcome. A combination of structural and thematic analysis was developed to explore discursive patterns in transcripts. There are various techniques available under the narrative family of methods (Riessman, 1993, 2002, 2008). This study is based on a methodological approach that has been applied in varied forms by narrative researchers (Bamberg, 2003, 2006, 2011; Johnson, 2003, 2009; Johnson & Watson, 2004; Riessman, 2008). Themes in the full data set were compared using a method of analysing proportion of time spent on each theme using NVivo 9. Coding was applied to dominant and counter themes. A matrix of relationships was formed by cross-tabulating the coded themes. Definitions of 'counter story' are drawn from Bamberg and Andrews (2004) and Chase (1995).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this paper, examples of two cases are presented (Betty and Ernest, pseudonyms), including vignettes to highlight certain themes, together with a summation of the overall themes evident across all participants. Participants told stories about their identities as professionals – stories about the struggle to develop and grow in the context of their work and sometimes about the way their life in general impacted on work. The stories participants told were dependent on their life experiences and a reflection of their interactions at work. Overall, the dominant career theme communicated the story of career success, and the counter themes communicated emotional and social features in the work culture that influenced participants' experiences. For instance, counter themes included problems and how challenges were overcome. One of the counter stories, which form the focus of the present paper, was about building resilience. Participants were encouraged to consider how they had overcome barriers and how this assisted them to develop an understanding of their professional identity and their capacity for resilience.

Both Ernest and Betty were in senior managerial roles at the time of the interviews, Betty a deputy vice-chancellor in a university and Ernest a chief executive officer in a company that provides leadership development programs to a range of corporate businesses. It was clear from their interviews that neither had a detailed career plan when they left university, but certain capacities helped them to succeed in their professions. Betty talked about what she saw as some of the ingredients for success, such as adaptability:

Stay focused on your work, and persevere in the face of adversity, be prepared to change jobs too; if not between organisations, at least within your organisation.

Similarly, Ernest discussed adaptability as an important characteristic, including being open to ideas and learning to adapt to a business or corporate culture that was different from his earlier affiliations with the arts culture:

I acted opportunistically. As things arose I said OK I'll do that. I never sort of said I'll go into this area. I've always said 'What looks interesting? What looks exciting? Let's do that.'

Ernest, like many of the participants, told stories about developing their resilience through engaging in difficult experiences.

Table 1 summarises the dominant and counter themes identified across the data set. The narrative method is adaptable and could be used when facilitating and evaluating outcomes of community of practice session with university staff engaged in managing WIL projects and placements but also for evaluating program and learning outcomes.

TABLE 1. Dominant and counter narrative themes across the full group of participants split by gender and career stage: senior career, middle career and junior career.

|  | Senior |     | Middle |      | Junior |     |
|--|--------|-----|--------|------|--------|-----|
|  | Women  | Men | Women  | Men  | Women  | Men |
| <b>Counter themes</b>                          |        |     |        |      |        |     |
| Adaptability and flexibility                   | 2.9    | 0   | 1.7    | 0.3  | 0      | 1.5 |
| Becoming part of professional group            | 2.1    | 1.0 | 1.3    | 1.3  | 1.0    | 1.0 |
| Formal education and informal knowledge        | 3.0    | 2.3 | 1.6    | 12.0 | 2.0    | 2.0 |
| Recognising the barriers and learning to adapt | 22.0   | 4.0 | 16.0   | 3.0  | 2.0    | 1.0 |
| <b>Dominant themes</b>                         |        |     |        |      |        |     |
| Building relationships                         | 15     | 5   | 9      | 8    | 5      | 5   |
| Capacity for introspection                     | 15     | 12  | 8      | 8    | 4      | 3   |
| Pursuit of hero or heroine quest               | 12     | 7   | 13     | 14   | 6      | 12  |
| Recognising ingredients for productivity       | 19     | 17  | 8      | 11   | 8      | 10  |

Numbers indicate the number of times participants referred to each theme, divided by the number of participants in each group, so the prevalence of themes is portrayed by life phase and level of responsibility.

## DISCUSSION

By drawing on a narrative approach it becomes clear how this framework can be used to focus on the less dominant discourses, which can provide insight into struggles within work cultures. This paper explores how professionals narrate their stories about their professional identity and how resilience is woven into this story as an important capacity to develop. The narrative method of analysis is highlighted as a way to enable people to engage in discussion about practice-based learning (Grealish, 2012; Higgs, 2011). By developing opportunities for stakeholders engaged in WIL projects to evaluate learning through work using narrative methods it may be possible to build resilience and awareness of other capacities. The finding suggests that different people at different life and career stages emphasise various themes that can be seen to be linked to capacity. Although there is diversity in the way people tell stories about professional experience and professional identity, there are themes that run across and between generations. Building resilience has been associated with the role of professional practice and the opportunities people have to build relationships (Jordan, 2006; Le Cornu, 2009; Mate, 2013).

One of benefits of building resilience in students may be retention of numbers; for instance, high proportions of new teachers leave the profession in the first five years of teaching (Le Cornu, 2009). Early career teachers who stay in the profession beyond the first few years operate within a 'resilience framework'. A resilience framework is referred to as a student's ability to create their own support networks and learning experiences and to persevere when confronted with risks and dilemmas (Benard, 2004; Biglan *et al.*, 2004). Similarly, senior managers who have experienced adverse situations place greater importance on resilience than those who have not needed to adapt and seek support from others (Mate, 2013). Narrative analysis can provide a means to explore the local and global ways in which professional identity is developed (see Mate, 2010).

WIL is an umbrella term used to describe a range of approaches to practice-based education, usually involving student placements in the workplace (Grealish, 2012; Higgs, 2011; IRU & ACCI, 2011). Effective WIL experiences emerge from three-way partnerships between the employer, the university and the student (IRU & ACCI, 2011), in which the parties together agree on tasks and learning goals. It is the responsibility of the university WIL coordinator to make decisions about the outcomes of any assessment aligned to stated (agreed) learning outcomes. As these assessments and evaluations of learning can be complex, communities of practice (where parties evaluating WIL opportunities engage in regular conversations and share methods of evaluation) may

provide insight into how three-way agreements can be developed to engage parties effectively (Le Cornu, 2008; Wenger, 1988). In addition to establishing external affiliations, developing communities of practice across universities could provide opportunities for academic staff to discuss their implementation of WIL with colleagues from different disciplines. When evaluating the WIL experiences of students it is important to consider how relationships are built to develop students' insight into their professional identities, but also how communities of knowledge are built to engage students in their WIL experiences. These communities of practice may be developed through internal supports based within universities, but also through host organisations.

Narrative identity theories are situated in the discursive and dialogical branch of narrative theory (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). Some studies have explored how communities of practice can be relevant for building knowledge about practice-based learning (Grealish, 2012; Higgs, 2011); however, they did not focus on how they may be utilised to overcome obstacles and potential risks associated with engaging students in practice-based learning, nor about how the narrative approach can be used to build students' resilience and career endurance.

In conclusion, this research offers insight into the way narratives are embedded within workplace cultures and provide a rich source of understanding about capacity development. The way obstacles are understood by people, and by those that facilitate development, can be explored through a narrative approach and therefore the approach provides scope for capacity development. The professionals who shared their stories directly considered building resilience to be an important capacity, and many of the themes discussed could be considered relevant to resilience and professional identity. Consequently, it is argued throughout this paper that to adopt a narrative approach that may involve building a learning communities model during a WIL placement may have the scope to develop students' knowledge about their professional identity, but also their capacity to build resilience.

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# Understanding the needs of all the stakeholders: Training and preparation for students and their supervisors

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Clinical placements have multiple stakeholders, each with their own set of expectations and requirements, both explicit and implicit. Placement negotiations happen at many levels and those at the coalface are often unaware of these multiple expectations. Teaching students and their supervisors to consider the stakeholders more broadly can build their capacity to manage the WIL experiences more skilfully, leading to better outcomes for all.

Two academics who work closely with a range of practice-based learning placements for students in Nursing and Allied health suggest that by developing the ability to consider what advantages and disadvantages there may be in one encounter for all the stakeholders, students and their clinical supervisors are in a strong position to maximise the benefits, limit the disadvantages and increase the satisfaction of the greater number of stakeholders. While this cannot be learnt by rote or ticked off against any particular checklist, social awareness, communication skills and relationship development and maintenance hold the key to success.

Keywords: Multiple stakeholders, social astuteness, WIL, clinical placements, expectations

Clinical placements have multiple stakeholders, each with their own set of expectations and requirements, both explicit and implicit. Placement negotiations happen at many levels and those at the coalface are often unaware of these multiple and often, conflicting expectations (Siebert & Costley, 2013; Yap, 2011). Freeman (1984, p. 46) has defined a stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objective'. Teaching students and their supervisors to consider the stakeholders more broadly can build their capacity to manage the WIL experiences more skilfully, leading to better outcomes for all. Importantly, successfully managed stakeholder relationships have the potential to benefit the institutions through ongoing and sustained relationships and by providing students with opportunities for employment after graduation.

Clinical placements are integral to preparing healthcare workers to take up positions in the health workforce after graduation. They are a requirement for accreditation for nurses and allied health workers. Clinical placements provide students with opportunities to integrate theory with practice, to develop clinical competence, strengthen confidence and build on their skillsets (Rodger et al., 2008). As clinical placements hold an important position in the health education of nurses and allied health disciplines, much effort is expended ensuring that students are prepared for their placements. Professional development is available to clinical teachers and those who aspire to fulfil these roles. Unfortunately, a number of issues of unmet expectations for both students and hosting facilities are consistently identified in the literature (A. E. Nielsen, Noone, Voss, & Mathews, 2013; C. Nielsen, Sommer, Larsen, & Bjork, 2013).

Employers often comment that students are ill-equipped to demonstrate agency, intentional motivation to work towards strategic goals (Fortune, Ryan, & Adamson, 2013). Graduates are seen as unprepared for the realities of employment, and unable to cope with the pressures of the work environment (Adamson, Hunt, Harris, & Hummel, 1998). It is necessary to provide learning experiences that help students develop social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability and apparent sincerity (Ferris et al., 2007), while demonstrating the skills and knowledge they have acquired and their understanding of the models and theories that underpin their learning. Harvey, Harris, Harris & Wheeler (2007) argue that politically skilled individuals are better able to manage interprofessional relationships due to their skills in interpreting social information and responding to the information with situationally appropriate behaviours (p.108). This ability to understand social interactions at work helps them to respond to situations effectively, minimising disruption and maximising benefit.

The success of placements is measured on multiple parameters that include the satisfaction of multiple stakeholders: students; the facility; the clinical teachers; the patients/clients; the unit assessors; university and accrediting bodies, to name a few. It includes the strategic objectives of multiple organisations and this makes it crucial not only to identify all the salient stakeholders, but to manage robust relationships with them so these objectives can be managed optimally (Assudani & Kloppenborg, 2010). Students and clinical supervisors need to

develop self-management skills, so that social stressors of multiple demands in the workplace can be managed without the intrusion of personal stress that can disrupt effective learning and supervision.

Freeman (2010) argues that instead of viewing stakeholders as disparate in their interests, to manage stakeholders well, they should be seen as “bound together by the jointness of their interests” (p.7). In other words, it is important to understand how the relationships work. It is, therefore, vital to consider what the student placement brings to the relationships that already exist. Clearly this is a complex issue. It is unreasonable to expect students and clinical teachers to understand the complexities of the relationships and interests that exist in the workplaces they enter to spend relatively short periods of time. However, this does not mean that they should ignore their existence. While they may be forgiven for failing to fully understanding these relationships, they may not be forgiven for ignoring their existence.

Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997) provide some guidance for defining who and what really counts in stakeholder recognition. They categorise stakeholders according to their possession of one, two or all of the following attributes:

- (1) The stakeholder’s power to influence the institution/s
- (2) The legitimacy of the stakeholder’s relationship with the institution/s
- (3) The urgency of the stakeholder’s claim on the institution/s

In the case of successful ongoing placements, the needs of and benefits to all stakeholders have been established, either purposefully, or serendipitously, and the efforts to maintain the relationships have become shared across the placement communities. However, it is never wise to rest on one’s laurels, as these relationships are dynamic and the needs and objectives of the parties are likely to shift or change. These relationships are likely to have a life cycle with several stages in which the different priorities exert their influence and demand for attention. The need for vigilant, careful management of these relationships is a constant one.

#### EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD

Students from three disciplines were provided placements in a primary health care setting with older adults. They were afforded the opportunity to interact with adults in residential care, and with adults living independently; managing their own health in the villages attached to the residential care facilities. The facilities had provided placements for nurses in the residential care facility as part of an ongoing agreement, but had not provided placements for either the clinical exercise physiology (CEP) or occupational therapy (OT) students before. In OT terms these were emerging placements, with opportunities to introduce new primary healthcare services and demonstrate their benefits to the placement partners and the participants.

The two emerging placements differed in both the number of students on placement and also the nature and timing of the placements. The CEP students varied in number on any one day from one to eight and their placements were spread across four separate sessions, with ten students provided with placement opportunities over the period. The clinical supervision of these students was shared by two registered clinical exercise physiologists who also work in private practice. These were master students completing placements for accreditation with Exercise Sports Science Association (ESSA).

The OT students were in their final placement before graduation, at the end of a four year undergraduate degree. Their programme stipulated a placement of ten (10) weeks in a block of time. They were supervised by a registered OT who also worked in private practice. Due to the length and intensity of the placement, the project leader worked with the residential care facility and the managers of the independent living village to scope two projects that would be of benefit to both the students and the placement sites.

The director of nursing in the residential care facility made every effort to ensure that the OT students were made to feel a part of the establishment. Students were accommodated in the office shared by the senior health team. They were included in staff training and were encouraged to accompany the staff on their rounds. They were also directed to provide professional insight and support in specific cases. The real world task requested by the director of nursing was an audit of the facility from an OT perspective with recommendations for a planned refurbishment of a wing. The second task was an overview of the health status of the residents of the

independent living village from the information gathered through the risk and resilience assessments with the participants, providing vital planning information.

#### NARROW FOCUS ON OWN EXPECTATIONS

Despite the clear direction given to the occupational therapy students and the support provided by the facilities, the clinical supervisor and the project leader, the two young women found it difficult to settle in and tackle the tasks. They focused on their fairly narrow interpretation of the assessment requirements for registration, unable to think more broadly about the ways in which the required tasks not only fulfilled those requirements, but also provided valuable on-the-job learning, evidence of two real world tasks and opportunities to develop skills and an understanding of the day to day operations of two different entities, both involved with the health and well-being of older adults. They were unable to recognise the multiple stakeholders, and therefore, their needs, and remained focused on their own expectations of the placement. The project leader and the clinical supervisor expended much time and effort trying to expand their understanding of the opportunities and of their responsibilities, working together to motivate the students who exhibited low levels of engagement and poor attitude by the end of the second week.

In an attempt to engage the OT students and to meet their expectations of the placement, the clinical supervisor worked with the students as if they were her clients. She asked them to reflect on their lifestyle habits, health challenges, anxiety and fears of life transitions, personal life goals, mindset and psychological barriers. Under the guidance of the clinical supervisor, each student developed a small personal project that appealed to their own views of what they wanted to achieve on the placement, but which also had benefit for the older adults from independent living: a walking group and a series of health and wellbeing talks. These projects were in addition to the projects negotiated with the placement. This approach appeared to improve the student engagement in terms of the level of energy and commitment they showed in performing the tasks connected to the projects they had each chosen. However, they were less motivated in producing the reports that had been negotiated and promised to the management of the residential care facility and the independent living village. While they had collected most of the data, in each case, for the reports, they baulked at the notion of writing the reports. The project leader took responsibility for these reports and worked with the students and the clinical supervisor to ensure that the reports were completed in time and at the expected professional level.

#### CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING A STAKEHOLDER'S INTERESTS

The attitude of the OT students and their inability to see beyond their own needs resulted in a missed opportunity. They failed to demonstrate to the director of nursing that there was sufficient benefit from this placement to consider the services of an occupational therapist on her healthcare team. By contrast, the clinical exercise physiology students, who, granted were not tasked with a deliverable, such as a report, found favour by doing what was expected in terms of assessing the participants, both in the residential care facility and in the independent village. The value of their services was identified and despite clinical exercise physiology not being recognised by the Australian Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI) as a fundable service, the director of nursing was keen to introduce clinical exercise physiology into the residential care facility as a pain management and falls prevention strategy.

#### SUGGESTIONS FROM LESSONS LEARNT

While it may not be fair to compare and contrast the experience of the placements of these two disciplines, there are lessons to be learnt about understanding expectations, managing expectations and understanding the multiple expectations of stakeholders in any one clinical placement situation. Importantly, as a stakeholder, the director of nursing possessed all three attributes of importance (Mitchell et al., 1997); she had the power to influence decision-making regarding employment; the legitimacy of her relationship with the facility and the urgency of her claim to the facility were unquestionable. The students viewed this stakeholder's needs only in terms of their own assessment requirements, without considering her needs or indeed her influence in terms of the placement.

It is important when preparing students for placement, to help them understand that there are multiple stakeholders at any placement. It is not always possible to understand the competing needs and expectations of

any one situation, however clearly stated, at the start of a placement. However, as Cooper, Orrell & Bowden (2003) advise, it is important to take a proactive rather than reactive approach. They recommend the reciprocal approach of communicating and listening; gathering information through communication and reflecting on its meaning and implications. Be aware, as students and clinical supervisors, that although the placement may be a short-term, one off situation for you, it has been forged through many discussions, promises, compromises and agreements. These have resulted in a relationship that needs to be nurtured and maintained, so that the relationship continues and the source of placements is sustained to mutual benefit. Engaging in brainstorming sessions or using a mindmap, before and continuously throughout the placement as they gather additional information, students and their supervisors, can attempt to gauge the extent of the various stakeholders and their interests.

While there is the expectation that a student's needs and expectations will be met, each student is only one small part of the bigger picture. Nevertheless, that small part has the potential to make or break the ongoing relationship. By developing social astuteness, the ability to consider what advantages and disadvantages there may be in one encounter for all the stakeholders, students and their clinical supervisors are in a strong position to maximise the benefits, limit the disadvantages and increase the satisfaction of the greater number of stakeholders.

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# Boosting Graduate Employability: Bridging the Cognitive and Affective Domains

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Australian universities and select businesses recently struck an alliance to boost graduate employability, a milestone in Work Integrated Learning (WIL). However, teaching for WIL competency is largely directed at delivering appropriate discipline knowledge and practical abilities based mainly on cognitive skills with little emphasis on the affective domain including emotional skills, a requisite in the workplace. This study looks at empirical evidence of work-readiness of WIL students through their learning experiences and their understanding of the cognitive domain as well as the affective domain. The research is based on a validated employability framework, the Work Skills Development framework (Bandaranaike & Willison, 2009), which was used to assess core employability competencies and performance levels of 138 multidisciplinary WIL students and gain feedback from 111 employers. Statistical analysis was used to compare variations in the application of cognitive and affective skills and tested across gender, age, discipline and previous work experience. The study concluded that overall among students there was a limited understanding of the affective domain. However, the employers' emphasis was on improving student emotional skills. Therefore, to unlock the potential of the cognitive skills and for a deeper understanding of emotional skills by students, the concept of *Emotional Work-readiness* [EW] is introduced in this study.

Key Words: Cognitive domain, Affective domain, Emotional Intelligence, Work Integrated Learning

The contemporary world demands instant gratification, expeditious delivery, prompt employment, instant social networking with minimal time to reflect on our emotions, feelings and social relationships. Employability is most often associated with generic and specific competencies (Core Skills for Work developmental framework (CSfW), 2013; Australian Qualifications Framework, 2013; DEEWR, 2012; van der Heijde & van der Heijden, 2006), qualifications (Hillage & Pollard, 1998), preparedness for work, career development (Nilsson & Nilsson, 2013), teamwork (Bradshaw, 1989; Riebe *et al.*, 2010) and developing critical, reflective abilities (Harvey *et al.*, 2003, p.3). However, employment and employability are complex phenomena that involve more than the acquisition of cognitive skills (Yorke, 2006). Not only do graduates need to engage in ways that are socially and emotionally savvy, but there are strong reasons to suggest that these affective ways of operating are crucial to the unlocking of the potential of the cognitive skills.

Universities increasingly require students to undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs so that they may gain a full, if not fully developed, repertoire of employability skills through relevant employment experience (Gardner, 2011). WIL is intended by universities to meet the demand for work-ready graduates (Patrick *et al.*, 2008, p.3). Yet, employers identify graduates, even those in programs that incorporated WIL, as having mainly cognitive skills and not necessarily the ability to 'intelligently apply that knowledge in the work setting' (McLennan & Keating, 2008; Business Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council, 2007). De la Harpe *et al.* (2000) suggest that there is concern world-wide that existing undergraduate programmes are not producing graduates with appropriate life-long learning skills necessary for their careers. Archer and Davison (2008) confirm that most employers view social skills and personality type as more important than their degree qualification.

The economic imperative to make graduates work ready with cognitive-oriented graduate attributes has to a large extent resulted in the neglect of affective skills. These social and emotional skills are the ones most highly sought by employers and yet are different from the skills students typically possess on graduation (Krahn, Lowe and Lehmann, 2002). Higher order thinking facilitated only within the cognitive domain limits graduates' ability to 'self-regulate learning and process new knowledge' while in employment (Michalsky, 2012, p.1106).

To address this gap, the current study introduced '*Emotional Work-readiness*' (EW), a concept that presents the emotional and social attributes of the affective domain in order to deepen conceptualisation and practice that enables students to be more work ready than is currently the case.

The aim of this study was firstly, to evaluate WIL learning outcomes in the cognitive and affective domains, and secondly, to introduce the concept of EW to facilitate higher order holistic graduate employability.

This paper will first, apply the *Work Skills Development framework* (WSD: Bandaranaike & Willison, 2009, 2010) to assess WIL learning outcomes in the cognitive and affective domains; secondly, test the significance of variations in the application of the cognitive and affective skills; thirdly, introduce the concept of EW in the workplace and discuss its implications for WIL pedagogy.

## METHODS

The analysis is based on a conceptual framework, the Work Skills Development framework (WSD) which has been tested and applied to WIL students since 2009 (Bandaranaike, S., & Willison, J. (2010). It is an assessment tool for WIL students, which mirror the concepts and philosophy of the Research Skills Development framework [RSD] of Willison and O'Regon (2006). The WSD comprises six work skill facets of *Initiative, Technology, Learning, Management, Problem Solving and Communication* as defined in Table 1 (see Appendix). Since the aim of this study was to evaluate the performance of WIL students in the cognitive and affective domains, the above skills were categorised into three primarily cognitive focus facets of *Technology, Management and Problem Solving*, and three primarily affective focus facets of *Initiative, Learning and Communication*.

While the cognitive skills engage in developing knowledge and intellectual skills (Bloom, 1956; Anderson *et al.*, 2000) and is the focus of most employability frameworks (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2011), the affective skills are based mainly on Goleman's concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI). Goleman defined EI as 'the capacity for organising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions within ourselves and in our relationships' (Goleman, 1998, p.317). EI is used to analyse job satisfaction, turnover (Cherniss & Goleman, 2001), performance (Bachman *et al.*, 2000), gender differentiation (Fernandez-Berrocal *et al.*, 2012), and general emotional attributes in the workplace (Sharma *et al.*, 2013). Overall the affective domain contributes to the development of a student's motivation, confidence, relevance of perceived knowledge, and the significance of the learning experience (Polhemus *et al.*, 2000). The affective domain thus shapes learning into meaningful, pertinent lifelong learning experiences.

The analysis in this study is based on student and employer transcripts at the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville between 2009 and 2014. The transcripts ranged from Reflective Journals, Essays, and Interviews to Employer feedback assessment. Students made regular entries in their Reflective Journals under each of the WSD work skill facets throughout their placement duration of 5-8 weeks. The Essay was written on guided reflections in the cognitive and affective domains, at the end of the placement. This was followed by a 45-minute face-to-face interview to extend their understanding of the cognitive and affective skills. The interviews, transcripts, data coding and interpretation were finalised by the Placement Coordinator. Employers were either interviewed directly or feedback mail outs sent and comments received on student performance in each of the work skill facets. The data analysed from the above transcripts form the basis of this study. Students ranged from undergraduates to postgraduates and across the disciplines of Environmental and Marine Sciences ('Environmental'), Geology and Earth Sciences ('Geology'), and Urban and Regional Planning ('Planning'). Variations in gender, age, disciplines and previous work experience across the cognitive and affective skills were tested for statistically significant differences as explained below.

### *Research Questions & Hypotheses*

Research Questions RQ<sub>1</sub> and RQ<sub>2</sub> analysed broad trends using descriptive statistics. Hypotheses H<sub>1</sub> to H<sub>4</sub> tested mean differences in cognitive and affective skills using t Tests, ANOVA and Tukey-Kramer Post Hoc test.

**RQ<sub>1</sub>** : Is there a difference of opinion between employers and students in the learning experiences of cognitive and affective skills in WIL?

**H<sub>1</sub>** : There is no significant difference in gender and the application of cognitive and affective skills

**H<sub>2</sub>** : There is no significant difference in age and the application of cognitive and affective skills

**H<sub>3</sub>** : There is no significant difference in disciplines and the application of cognitive and affective skills

**H<sub>4</sub>** : There is no significant difference between students who had previous work experience and those that did not, in their application of cognitive and affective skills

**RQ<sub>2</sub>** : Do students display *Emotional Work-readiness* in WIL?

The Iman-Conover Rank transformation method [RT] was used to convert ranks of data and to apply usual parametric tests (Conover & Iman, 2003). A two-tailed independent t Test was used at  $p < 0.05$  to test hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>4</sub>. A One Way ANOVA analysis was used at  $p < 0.05$  to test H<sub>3</sub>, followed by the Tukey-Kramer Post

Hoc test (Ramsey & Ramsey, 2007) to explore additional differences among means and provide more specific information on which means were significantly different from each other. The results and findings are discussed below.

## RESULTS & FINDINGS

The analysis will focus on (i) differences in perceptions between employers and students in the use of cognitive and affective skills in the workplace (ii) significant differences between skills and the independent variables of gender, age, discipline, previous work experience (iii) the level of students' *Emotional Work-readiness*.

*RQ<sub>1</sub> - Is there a difference of opinion between Employers and Students in the learning outcomes of cognitive and affective skills in WIL?*

More than two-thirds of Employers [N=111] emphasised **Initiative** (68%) as one of the most important skills in the workplace. Employers were typically looking for - "... a net gain in productivity during their [students'] stay. We have a heavy workload and the induction and supervision of students takes time so in return, we look for completion of a required task or project with a high degree of motivation". **Communication** skills (46%) were also rated high in the workplace. Employers preferred students who "asked questions"; "have a team focus and get along with different people".

Student transcripts (N=138) indicated higher learning outcomes from cognitive skills of **Technology** (42%), followed by **Management** (33%) and **Problem Solving** (33%). They also said "... total focus was on doing the job, problem solving"; "I need to absorb as much information as possible" or in brief, getting the job done rather than the human and social context of how the job is done. This high association with cognitive knowledge and skills most probably was a consequence of students focusing their behaviours on experience gained from their previous training (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2011).

Cognitive and affective work skills were also tested against the four independent variables of Gender (male/female), Age ( $\leq 25$  and  $>25$  years), Discipline (Environmental, Geology, Planning), and Previous Work experience (yes/no). A mean (M) value of between 5 and 6 indicated a very high association/application of a skill and a mean closer to 1 or 2 indicated a lower association or appreciation of that skill in WIL, and are discussed below.

*H<sub>1</sub> - There is no significant difference in Gender and the application of cognitive & affective skills.*

In **Technology**, **Management** & **Problem Solving** (cognitive domain), the null hypothesis was accepted or there was no significant difference between male (N=81) and female (N=51) students. This was also true in the affective domain with **Initiative and Learning** skills, but not with **Communication**. In the latter, the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, which stated differences did exist in that females (M=4.6, SD=1.5) applied communication skills better in the workplace than males (M=3.7, SD=1.9),  $t(132) = 0.004$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

*H<sub>2</sub> - There is no significant difference in Age and the application of cognitive and affective skills.*

There were no significant differences between the domains, with the exception of **Technology** (cognitive skill). Students  $\leq 25$  years had a higher learning outcome from the use of **Technology** (M=4.6, SD=1.5) than students  $>25$  years (M=3.9, SD=1.9)  $t(107) = 0.02$ ,  $p < 0.05$ .

*H<sub>3</sub> - There is no significant difference in Disciplines and the application of cognitive and affective skills.*

Interestingly, results from One Way ANOVA indicated significant differences between the sub groups, in all of the cognitive skills. The ANOVA results were extended further using the ANOVA Post Hoc tests (Ramsey & Ramsey, 2007) to identify which of the three disciplines was significantly different from the rest.

Geology students displayed a significantly higher learning experience in **Technological** skills (M=4.8, SD=1.8) than Environmental Students (M=3.3, SD=0.2) or Planning students (M=2.3, SD=0.2),  $t(2, 78)$ , 8.69,  $p < 0.05$  due to the nature of the discipline, as for example, the high focus on techniques of mineral identification in rocks and the practical use of safety gear. Planning Students on the other hand, found significantly higher utility in the application of **Management** skills (M=5.5, SD=1.7) than Geology (M=4.4, SD=1.7) or Environmental students (M=4.9, SD=1.4)  $t(2, 78)$ , 4.26,  $p < 0.05$  thus focussing more on organising and managing information. Environmental students (M= 5.9, SD=1.4) indicated significantly higher application in **Problem Solving** skills than Geology (M=3.1, SD=1.0) or Planning students (M=4.4, SD=1.2),  $t(2, 78)$ , 7.8,  $p < 0.05$ , conceivably emphasising the conservation and natural resource management aspects.

H<sub>4</sub> - There is no significant difference between students who had Previous Work Experience and those that did not.

In both cognitive and affective skills there was no significant difference between those who had previous work experience and those who did not.

#### EMOTIONAL WORK-READINESS (EW)

RQ<sub>2</sub> - Do students display Emotional Work-readiness in WIL?

Students' feelings and emotions when faced with challenges and stressful situations in the workplace (WIL) were analysed to assess Emotional Work-readiness in WIL. Results indicated that 83% of the challenges related to inter-personal relationships of not understanding others' communication styles (21%), visualising gender and age discrimination (26%), interpreting language (accent, modulation) (10%), accepting habits and perceptions (15%), and ethnicity and cultural understanding (11%). Typical student transcripts read – "... opinions of people who have worked only short time in a mine site are not heard as it is considered they don't have knowledge or adequate understanding!"; "way we communicate is a challenge"; "... as a student planner they think I don't understand things and they talk down to me. At times it can be a challenge to explain that I understand what they are talking about"; "age gaps seem to be a primary driver of hierarchy". Seventeen percent of the challenges were intra-personal such as "... in report writing ... I had to redesign large chunks which left me stressed and nervous"; "I found it stressful adjusting to different perceptions like 'don't touch that!' ... 'how can you destroy that?'"; and the search for 'perfectionism'.

It is a fact that students are mindful of feelings and emotions generated in the workplace ('self-awareness', Goleman, 1998) – "I get frustrated and depressed when I cannot identify a mineral [in rocks] and then receive contradictory identification from others when I ask for help". Yet, they lack an understanding of how to deal with those emotions ('self-management', Goleman, 1998) which supports the notion that students do not currently display Emotional Work-readiness in the workplace.

#### DISCUSSION

It is clear from the above analysis that there is a strong emphasis by industry partners for students to develop emotional/social skills and improve their work etiquette. This needs to be considered in future WIL training. RQ<sub>1</sub> confirms while the majority of placement students are cognitively-oriented, the employers emphasise the greater practice of affective skills in the workplace. Gender analysis [H<sub>1</sub>] supported the existing documentation that in the workplace, females are more sensitive emotionally than males (Day & Carroll, 2004; Lumley *et al.*, 2005; Palmer *et al.*, 2005) and particularly in *Communication*. Younger students [H<sub>2</sub>] were found to be more accomplished in the use of technology in the workplace and thereby favourable with graduate recruiters who are increasingly attracted by new graduates with the right skills (Harvey *et al.*, 1997, 1998). Across disciplines [H<sub>3</sub>] there was a greater emphasis on the learning experience from cognitive skills - Technological, Problem solving and Management - than affective skills. As for pre-placement work experience [H<sub>4</sub>], it did not have a significant impact on placement behaviour. Possibly this is due to more financial motivation than WIL training when they first took on employment.

Emotional Work-readiness [RQ<sub>2</sub>] is the key to understanding feelings and emotions within oneself and of others, and the management of those emotions when working with cognitive knowledge and skills. It has its origins in EI and specifically Goleman's EI model (1998). The function of EW is to trigger social responsibility in the individual (Table 1). For example when applying cognitive skills in *Technology*, EW triggers social responsibility in terms of 'Adaptability' (monitoring and managing the emotional and social context of delivering Technology to others); 'Innovation' (accepting a new idea and managing one's own emotions); and 'Understanding Others' (empathising and being thoughtful of behaviours of others who may be unfamiliar to new skills).

Graduate employability has taken a new impetus with the recent *Statement of Intent* signed between Universities of Australia, ACEN and select industry groups with one of its major objectives - 'improving the work-readiness of university graduates' (Statement of Intent, 2014). While employability is the propensity of the graduate to exhibit attributes that employers anticipate will be necessary for the effective functioning of their organisation (Harvey, 1999), employer expectations are sensitive to a demand for work ready graduates who have intellectual capacity and also equipped with work place expertise (Ferns, 2012). While industry representatives appear generally satisfied with the technical or discipline-specific skills of graduates, there is a perception that employability skills are under-developed (Precision Consultancy, 2007). This focus on the cognitive domain could be a legacy of the Australian based Mayer Report (1992) and its emphasis on the application of cognitive knowledge and skills. Perceptions of employment and employability must move on and link the cognitive and affective domains for greater work readiness. The concept of EW has the potential to make students understand

emotional and social skills, and bridge the gap between the cognitive and affective domains. EW makes students aware of another significant dimension (the affective domain) in WIL. In practice, EW can be introduced to WIL through a series of guiding questions written into an assessment such as an online reflective journal.

The objective of this study was to rationalise the application of cognitive and affective skills in WIL using WSD as a practical assessment tool. Student and employer perceptions on priorities in the workplace were analysed and WIL learning experiences and outcomes noted. Hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>3</sub> and H<sub>4</sub> have proved the current imbalance between the cognitive and affective skills in the practice of WIL. The main learning experience for all students was clearly on the cognitive, in Technology, Management, and Problem Solving. In the affective domain the main learning experience, albeit often negative, was through Communication, for both males (25%) and females (31%). This current focus on the cognitive domain could be a consequence of the training delivery at universities. The need to develop the affective skills in WIL was also strongly supported by the employer responses. However, the ability to articulate and address this issue clearly in curriculum design, teaching strategies and assessment procedures will remain a challenge.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

Apart from current drawbacks in WIL training, one of the limitations in this study was the absence of questions directed specifically at EW in the transcripts. To optimise student learning outcomes, a set of EW descriptors should be used. This work is currently in progress. The most effective strategy would be to develop learning pedagogies that deliver emotional and social skills in an online environment to maximise student learning and meet the trends of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The analysis indicated significant differences between disciplines (H<sub>3</sub>) in WIL learning experiences. Therefore further research in EW descriptors needs to take into account the nature of each discipline and modify the generic EW descriptors given in Table 1 (Appendix).

#### CONCLUSION

This study has attested that in order to boost graduate employability and contribute to work-readiness, WIL training must not be restricted to the cognitive domain only but extended to the affective domain as well. Our changing world economy, changing demographics, changing technology, has made our planet too inanimate with high tech, speed, greater output at the expense of losing the human touch, feelings, emotions, conversations. Therefore in the context of WIL, cognitive knowledge and skills should be delivered through an awareness of Emotional Work-readiness for future capacity building in employability. The Emotional Work-ready skills are sector independent, operationalise affective skills, draw on emotional and social attributes and combine with job-specific cognitive skills to optimize an individual's employability.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1. Contextual Background to Work-Readiness

| WORK SKILLS<br>[based on WSD]   | Application of EW in the<br>workplace   | Emotional Work-readiness [EW] Attributes<br>[based on EI Models <sup>1</sup> ]   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Initiative<br/>Student is goal directed and clarifies &amp; embarks on role</p>  | <p><i>Student communicates feelings, beliefs and thoughts openly and defends personal rights and values in a socially acceptable, non-offensive, and non-destructive manner</i></p>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achievement drive: strives to improve or meet a standard of excellence</li> <li>• Commitment: aligns with the goals of the group or organization</li> <li>• Optimism: persists in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Technology<br/>Student applies skills, knowledge, technology and other resources to find and generate information</p>                            | <p><i>Student adapts emotions, thoughts and behaviours to unfamiliar, unpredictable circumstances when applying skills, knowledge and other resources</i></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptability: flexible in handling change</li> <li>• Innovation: comfortable with an openness to novel ideas, approaches, and new information</li> <li>• Understanding others: an intuitive sense of others' feelings and perspectives, and shows an active interest in their concerns and interests</li> </ul> |
| <p>Learning<br/>Student critically evaluates their role and reflects on lifelong learning skills and career management</p>                          | <p><i>Student copes with stressful or difficult situations &amp; believes in managing or influencing situations in a positive manner and remains hopeful and resilient despite occasional setbacks.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional awareness: recognises one's emotions and their effects and impact on those around</li> <li>• Accurate self-assessment: knows one's strengths and limits</li> <li>• Self-control: manages disruptive emotions and impulses</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Planning<br/>Student organises and manages self while being perceptive to managing the needs of others</p>                                       | <p><i>Student has ability to be self-directed and free from emotional dependency on others while making decisions, planning and engaging in daily tasks.</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-confidence: certainty about one's self-worth and capabilities</li> <li>• Conscientiousness: takes responsibility and is accountable for personal performance</li> <li>• Building bonds: nurtures instrumental relationships for employer/work success</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Problem Solving<br/>Student analyses &amp; synthesises information to create coherent understanding</p>  | <p><i>Student is resilient, self-directed and shows transparency, adaptability and the drive to meet standards of excellence</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity: initiates and/or manages change in the workplace</li> <li>• Persuasive: uses effective tactics and techniques to persuade and convey desired results</li> <li>• Reliability: maintains standards of honesty and integrity</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Communication<br/>Student communicates and collaborates with others, and applies ethical, cultural, social and professional standards [ECSP]</p> | <p><i>Student articulates interpersonal understanding and acts with social consciousness, and concern for greater community.</i></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coherent: sends clear and convincing messages that are understood by others</li> <li>• Conflict resolution: negotiates and resolves disagreements with people</li> <li>• Collaboration and cooperation: networks with others toward shared goals and accommodates diversity</li> </ul>                          |

# Improving Exercise Science students' self-efficacy in making positive career decisions

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Field Project A is an elective course in the Bachelor of Exercise Science program at Griffith University and includes elements of both career development learning and work integrated learning. This paper aims to determine the effects of the learning activities and assessment items developed for the course on students' self-efficacy in making positive career decisions. Two days of workshops were conducted prior to the placement based on the SOAR model (Kumar, 2007). Self-awareness activities included: a discussion of career theory; explanation of the SOAR model; the Personal Style Inventory; sensing dimensions; Lifeline exercise; identifying skills and abilities; work values; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator; influential external factors; and the Systems Theory framework and a walk-through Assessment 1- Personal Profile. Opportunity Awareness concepts consisted of: information gathering; gaining industry knowledge; informational interviews; the labour market and employment information; and a lead-in to Assessment 2 – Personalised Job Study. The activities related to Aspirations involved: making decisions; the life-raft activity; setting career goals; and a walk-through Assessment 3 – Career Action Plan. Other assessment items were related to placement and included performance on placement, a reflective journal and oral presentations conducted following the completion of placement.

The career decision self-efficacy scale (CDSS) (Taylor & Betz, 1983) was administered prior to and on completion of the course. Additionally, responses from an open-ended questionnaire were analysed to determine common themes. Comparison of pre- and post-scores on the CDSS demonstrated statistically significant differences in relation to students' confidence in self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning and problem solving. The results of the study indicated that students perceived the course increased their awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability, as well as their knowledge of specific occupations. Students suggested that they were more able to set career goals, had developed skills to achieve those goals and had improved their abilities to solve problems related to their career development.

Keywords: Exercise Science; self-efficacy; career decisions; career development learning; work integrated learning

## BACKGROUND

### *Self-efficacy Theory*

The potential importance of the self-concept and self-esteem to vocational behaviour has long been recognised (Leong & Barak, 2001). More recently research has focused on the construct of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's beliefs in their ability to perform a particular behaviour. Self-efficacy expectations refer to a person's beliefs concerning his or her ability to successfully perform a given task or behaviour and were perceived to be major mediators of behaviour and behaviour change (Bandura, 1977). Low self-efficacy expectations regarding a particular behaviour could lead to avoidance of those behaviours, whereas stronger self-efficacy expectations would more likely lead individuals to approach behaviour.

### *Career Self-efficacy*

Over the past few decades, increased attention has been paid to the process by which career decisions are made (Miller, Roy, Thomas & McDaniel, 2009). A construct that has received significant research attention is career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) which was introduced by Taylor and Betz (1983) with the development of the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSES). The scale was designed to measure an individual's degree of belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions. Several studies have shown CDSES scores to be related to behavioural indicators of educational and career adjustment (Taylor & Popma, 1990; Mathieu, Sowa & Niles, 1993; Nevill & Schlecker, 1988; Peterson, 1993).

### *Career Maturity Theory*

Although the concept of self-efficacy expectations provided the primary theoretical basis for the development of the CDSES scale, Crites's (1978) model of career maturity provided the original authors (Taylor & Betz, 1983) with a framework for deciding how to define and operationalise the skills required in career decision-making. Crites' five competencies and subsequently the subscales of the CDSES were: (a) accurate self-appraisal (the

ability to accurately appraise one's own abilities, interests and values as they relate to educational and career decisions); (b) gathering occupational information (the ability to locate sources of information about university programs and occupations, including the ability to identify and talk with people employed in the occupations of interest; (c) goal selection (the ability to match one's own characteristics to the demands and rewards of careers as to identify one or more programs or careers to pursue; (d) making plans for the future (knowing how to implement an educational or career choice, including in enrolling in educational programs, job search, resume writing and job interviewing; and (e) problem-solving (being able to figure out alternative plans or coping strategies when plans do not go as intended) (Betz & Luzzo, 1996).

#### *The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale*

The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSES) (Taylor & Betz, 1983) is a measure of the way people perceive their ability to make educational and vocational decisions. The CDSES is one of the most frequently used scales in career counselling and vocational guidance. Betz and Luzzo (1996) reviewed the research on the CDSES scale and cited research attesting to its reliability, as well as content, criterion and construct validity. As the original CDSES was fairly lengthy (i.e. 50 items) and time consuming, Betz, Klein and Taylor (1996) published a short form of the questionnaire (Career Decision Self-Efficacy scale – short form (CDSES-SF), which included 25 items (5 for each factor). In 2005 a version was made with the same number of items but with a 5-level confidence continuum – 1 being “no confidence at all” and 5 referring to “complete confidence” (Betz, Hammond & Milton, 2005). The scale scores can be reviewed to indicate an individual's pattern of higher and/or lower confidence areas as they relate to career decision-making competences. Furthermore, the scale scores can be utilised to evaluate the effectiveness of educational and career interventions.

#### CASE STUDY

Field Project A is an elective second-year course in the Bachelor of Exercise Science program conducted at Griffith University. The rationale for including this course in the program is to make students aware of the requirements of the industry they wish to enter and to expose them to the working environment of various organisations in which they may wish to seek employment. The course involves both career development learning and work-integrated learning (Reddan & Rauchle, 2012) with students required to complete work experience in a relevant industry. Two days of workshops were conducted prior to the placement based on the SOAR model (Kumar, 2007) with learning activities related to self-awareness, opportunity awareness and aspirations.

Self-awareness activities included: a discussion of career theory; explanation of the SOAR model; the Personal Style Inventory (Champagne & Hogan, 1979); sensing dimensions; Lifeline exercise; identifying skills and abilities; work values; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers, 1987); influential external factors; and the Systems Theory framework (Patton & McMahon, 1999) as well as a walk-through Assessment 1- Personal Profile. Opportunity Awareness concepts consisted of: information gathering; gaining industry knowledge; informational interviews; the labour market and employment information; and a lead-in to Assessment 2 – Personalized Job Study. The activities related to Aspirations involved: making decisions; the life-raft activity; setting career goals; and a walk-through Assessment 3 – Career Action Plan. Other assessment items were related to placement and included performance on placement, a reflective journal and oral presentations conducted following the completion of placement. The course is graded with the assessment items directly linked to the learning activities.

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### *Research Purpose*

This particular study examined the effectiveness of the learning activities of Field Project A in relation to students' career decision self-efficacy to seek out real-world positions in industries relevant to their undergraduate studies in Exercise Science. The results will be used to consider possible improvements of the course for future students. The research included two main research questions:

1. What effects did the learning experiences of the course have on students' career self-efficacy?
2. How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to their:
  - a. awareness of their personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability?
  - b. knowledge related to a specific occupation in which they are interested?

- c. ability to set goals for their career?
- d. skills in planning to achieve their career goals?
- e. ability to solve problems related to their career development?

#### Data Collection

The research was conducted using 15 second-year Exercise Science students who made up the entire cohort in Field Project A at Griffith University. The instruments used for data collection included the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale – Short Form (CDSES-SF) (Appendix I) and an open-ended questionnaire specifically designed for this study (Appendix II). Content analysis of the completed questionnaires examined common themes in student responses.

#### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings are reported here using the research questions as headings.

##### 1. *What effects did the learning experiences of the course have on students' career self-efficacy?*

The CDSES-SF was administered to the entire cohort (N=15) at the commencement and completion of the course. Students were required to indicate their level of confidence in relation to five variables (25 statements) using a five point Likert scale, with 1 being “no confidence at all” and 5 referring to “complete confidence”. These variables included self-appraisal (SA), occupational information (OI), goal selection (GS), planning (P) and problem-solving (PS). Statistical analysis was performed using the Wilcoxon ranked pairs test. This non-parametric test is appropriate for data from an ordinal scale.

Table 1 indicates that the scale scores collected at the completion of the course were significantly greater ( $p < .05$ ) than the scale scores achieved by students at the commencement of the course, thus indicating that students had gained significantly in confidence in relation to their overall career decision self-efficacy and also in each of the five sub-scales of self-appraisal, occupational information, goal selection, planning and problem-solving.

TABLE 1. Statistical analysis of results of CDSES pre- and post-course

| Question | N <sup>1</sup> | W   | Critical W <sup>2</sup> | Conclusion             |
|----------|----------------|-----|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1/SA     | 10             | 1.5 | 8                       | Significant difference |
| 2/OI     | 12             | 13  | 13                      | Significant difference |
| 3/GS     | 10             | 7   | 8                       | Significant difference |
| 4/P      | 14             | 2.5 | 21                      | Significant difference |
| 5/PS     | 15             | 15  | 17                      | Significant difference |

##### 2. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy?*

###### a. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to developing awareness of their personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability?*

Responses indicated that almost all students developed a greater awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability following the learning activities conducted during the course. “The activities have allowed me to identify the more important components in which I excel or need to work on.” One student noted that he had not experienced any real change, whilst several students suggested their confidence in regards to employability had increased significantly. The personal profile was perceived to be a valuable teaching activity in assisting the development of a deeper understanding of these issues.

###### b. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to knowledge related to a specific occupation in which they are interested?*

The majority of students (87%) suggested that they became more knowledgeable about a specific occupation at the completion of the course. Various learning activities were indicated to assist in gaining more information about particular careers. “The personalised job study was great – it gave me a lot of information about my chosen

career". Another student noted that the career plan greatly improved their awareness but it "also made me feel more relaxed knowing the job outlook in the years to come". The placement component of the course was regarded to be very influential in providing both theoretical and practical perspectives of particular occupations. Importantly, students perceived that they had become more aware of the resources to find information, particularly concerning the terms and conditions of particular occupations. Several students indicated that the learning activities of the course had consolidated their ideal career choice, whilst others mentioned that it "was useful to look at other options".

- c. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to ability to set goals for their career?*

Generally students considered that they were more able to set career goals as a result of the learning activities presented. "The course helped me to set goals and identify pathways to specific careers". One student suggested that her goals were "more clear and precise". However, two students (13%) indicated that little change had occurred in this aspect through the course as they had independently conducted their own research and set goals prior to the commencement of the course. "I had already set my goals so I knew what I have to do to achieve them through my own research". Several students noted that the career plan was valuable as "everything has been broken down into manageable steps". Another commented that "the SMART goals initiative was very helpful in designing my goal-setting program". This activity required students to set goals that were specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed.

- d. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to skills in planning to achieve their career goals?*

Students suggested that their planning skills were more developed and organised following the course. Several noted that they were more aware of skills they already possessed and those which they needed to develop in order to improve their employability. "The course helped develop and identify skills that help to plan and achieve career goals". One student commented that the skills were "cemented – this course has really helped", whilst two students indicated that the learning activities conducted during the course assisted in providing places or resources to turn to for assistance. Another student noted that the personal profile assisted in developing her confidence to successfully plan for her future career.

- e. *How did the learning activities of the course affect students' career self-efficacy in relation to ability to solve problems related to their career development?*

The general consensus of students was that the learning activities assisted their ability to solve problems related to their career development. "It's encouraged me to remain committed and dedicated to my studies and has helped me overcome my fears concerning employment". Students suggested that the work-experience placement, the reflective report, the informational interview and discussions with professionals were very valuable experiences in regards to this specific ability. Several students indicated that the learning activities provided more direct contacts at the university who can assist students with any problems that might arise in regards to career development.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research clearly indicate positive trends in students' perceptions in regards to the benefits of this course in regards to improving their career decision self-efficacy. Graduates from Exercise Science programs enter a very competitive employment market in which self-efficacy in regards to making career decisions is essential. Field Project A provides students with a variety of learning experiences that have been demonstrated to significantly improve their self-efficacy in this regard. In summary, there were several important findings from this study. Students became more aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability following the course. The learning activities were found to be valuable in providing students with knowledge concerning specific occupations in which they are interested. Students indicated they were more able to set and develop plans to achieve career goals at the completion of the course. In general, students suggested they were also more confident in their ability to solve problems and more aware of possible contacts to assist them in their career development.

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APPENDIX 1: Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Course: \_\_\_\_\_

For each statement below, please read carefully and indicate how much confidence you have that you could accomplish each of these tasks by marking your answer according to the following 5-point continuum. Mark your answer by writing the appropriate number next to the statement.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5  
No confidence at all    Very little confidence    Moderate confidence    Much confidence    Complete confidence

Self-appraisal

- Accurately assess your abilities \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine what your ideal job would be \_\_\_\_\_
- Decide what you want in an occupation \_\_\_\_\_
- Figure out what you are and are not ready to sacrifice to achieve your career goals \_\_\_\_\_
- Define the type of lifestyle you would like to live \_\_\_\_\_

Occupational Information

- Find information about occupations you are interested in \_\_\_\_\_
- Find out the employment trends for an occupation over the next 10 years \_\_\_\_\_
- Find out about the average weekly earnings of people in an occupation \_\_\_\_\_
- Talk with a person already employed in the field you are interested in \_\_\_\_\_
- Find information about postgraduate programs \_\_\_\_\_

Goal selection

- Select one degree program from a list of potential programs you are considering \_\_\_\_\_
- Select one occupation from a list of potential occupations you are considering \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose a career that will fit your preferred lifestyle \_\_\_\_\_
- Make a career decision and then not worry about whether it was right or wrong \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose a major field of study or career that suits your interests \_\_\_\_\_

Planning

- Make a plan of your goals for the next 5 years \_\_\_\_\_
- Determine the steps you need to take to successfully complete your chosen degree program \_\_\_\_\_
- Prepare a good resume \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify employers, firms and institutions relevant to your career possibilities \_\_\_\_\_
- Successfully manage the job interview process \_\_\_\_\_

Problem solving

- Determine the steps to take if you are having academic trouble with an aspect of your chosen degree \_\_\_\_\_
- Persistently work at your major academic or career goal even when you get frustrated \_\_\_\_\_
- Change degrees if you did not like your first choice \_\_\_\_\_
- Change occupations if you are not satisfied with the one you enter \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify reasonable degree programs or career alternatives if you are unable to get your first choice \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX II: Field Project Questionnaire

Please respond to the following questions.

**How have the learning activities in this course affected:**

- a) Your awareness of your strengths and weaknesses in relation to employability?

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- b) Your knowledge related to a specific occupation in which you are interested?

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- c) Your ability to set goals for your career?

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- d) Your skills in planning to achieve your career goals?

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- e) Your ability to solve problems related to your career development?

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# Will the bucket overflow? Maintaining WIL capacity in the face of increasing veterinary student numbers

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As employer expectations of practice-ready graduates increase and student numbers in higher education institutions grow, competition for work integrated learning (WIL) placements is becoming more intense. Accreditation bodies require veterinary schools to provide WIL opportunities for all students in both university-operated teaching hospitals and in external veterinary workplaces. With veterinary undergraduate student numbers increasing significantly in recent years, the sustainability of the current model of WIL has been a matter of vigorous debate, but there is a dearth of scholarly literature to inform such a debate. This paper reports on a survey of 300 veterinary employers purposively selected from a university database, with questions exploring motivations and barriers to their involvement in undergrad WIL and their perceptions on appropriate remuneration for their educational role. Survey findings suggest that despite the increasing numbers of veterinary students, the majority of veterinary employers were satisfied with their current student numbers, level of (usually non-financial) reward, and cited a desire to 'put back to the profession' as a significant driver for their involvement in WIL. By implication, capacity for WIL placements is not an inherent threat to sustainability of current models; instead of being an absolute value, capacity can be built or diminished. Universities would do well to invest in sustaining altruistic motivation and mutually beneficial relationships with their external partners.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, veterinary medical education, employer attitudes

## INTRODUCTION

Increased competition for work integrated learning (WIL) placements is a feature of contemporary higher education, arising at the intersection of diverse phenomena including historically high undergraduate student numbers and continued demand from employers for workplace-ready graduates. The economic load involved with increased WIL is borne by workplaces and students, as well as by universities, a factor of considerable interest and controversy in a variety of disciplines. This paper reports on data from the questionnaire component of a mixed-methods study exploring veterinary employers' involvement in undergraduate clinical WIL.

## WIL IN VETERINARY EDUCATION

The veterinary profession offers an example of a discipline in which WIL has a long historical tradition in diverse workplace settings, following the still dominant Flexnerian model of medical education (Cooke, Irby, & O'Brien, 2010). Universities have been required to, and the majority still do, own and operate veterinary teaching hospitals. In the United Kingdom and its former colonies (including Australia) an additional less formal program of WIL in external veterinary practices, termed *extra-mural studies* (from the Latin 'outside the walls') is a requirement for accreditation (Australian Veterinary Boards Council, 2010; British Veterinary Association, 2009). More recently, models of distributed education have seen privately owned veterinary businesses designated as teaching hospitals in their field of expertise (Abbott, 2009; Fuentealba, Mason, & Johnston, 2008).

In the decade from 2004-2014, three new veterinary schools have been established in Australia and existing schools have expanded student numbers. Concern has been expressed over the capacity and sustainability of current models of WIL involving private veterinary practitioners. The Council of Veterinary Deans of Australia and New Zealand, in arguing that veterinary education in Australia is structurally underfunded, suggested that 'there is growing pressure from all veterinarians...for compensation for the high costs of supervision and opportunity and material costs imposed by training students in a practice setting (2011, p. 4).' A recent opinion piece in the professional literature claimed

that veterinary businesses are subsidising undergraduate education by \$20 million per month, calculated at \$250 per hour for student teaching (Smyth, 2013). The veterinary scholarly literature to date focuses on student perspectives of WIL (Baguley, 2006; Schull, Morton, Coleman & Mills, 2011) with a dearth of literature reporting practitioner perspectives on WIL. Particularly in times of increasing fiscal pressure on universities and students, consideration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators of practitioner support for WIL is timely.

The activities of WIL can sit uneasily alongside university-based learning, a tension that has been noted in terms of metaphors for learning; learning as acquisition, learning as participation, and learning as becoming (Hager & Hodkinson, 2011; Sfard, 1998). Professional education benefits from the capacity to think flexibly in terms of more than one metaphor. Formal educational activities privilege the acquisition metaphor, with its emphasis on the teacher-learner relationship and on learning as an individual cognitive process (Hager, 2005; Sfard, 1998). WIL may be more fruitfully considered as a complex social process of participation in a professional practice, with both individual and extra-individual dimensions (Billett, 2009; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Scholz, Trede, & Raidal, 2013). Undergraduate students are involved in coming to understand what it is to be a professional practitioner through participation in many instances and settings of practice (Billett, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

## METHODS

The current study was undertaken to assess practitioner perspectives on factors that support sustainable participation in WIL. The School of Animal and Veterinary Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee approved the project as a minimal risk study (approval number 416/2013/09). A questionnaire was developed through a process of iterative review by the researchers, and piloted by a colleague with experience in both private veterinary practice and academic clinical education. The questionnaire was distributed by email ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) to all practitioners on the WIL database of the authors' institution following modifications on the basis of feedback from the pilot. Selection of participants who are engaged with undergraduate WIL represented both a convenient and purposive sample, as we believe the perspectives of those already involved in WIL are of high value (Creswell, 2009), and these practices are key to maintaining capacity for WIL. It was considered likely (and demonstrated by participant data) that practitioners thus recruited would be involved in WIL for multiple universities. Follow-up e-mails were sent 4, 7 and 18 weeks following the initial distribution; incentive to respond was provided by an optional opportunity to provide contact details to enter a draw for a small prize.

The questionnaire sought information on practice location, size and caseload, as well as the number of students hosted in the last year from Australian and international universities. Respondents were then presented with a series of statements associated with WIL, including motivations, benefits and challenges, with Likert-type responses and space for free-text comments. Data was downloaded from the online survey tool to Microsoft Excel, and descriptive statistics were derived. Free text comments were read by three of the researchers and were thematically analysed using a general inductive approach for qualitative data (Thomas, 2006). Particular care was taken to seek responses that raised themes not apparent elsewhere in the survey responses.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Of 369 questionnaires distributed, 142 valid responses were received (response rate 38.5%). Demographic information from respondents is summarised in Table 1.

TABLE 1 Workplace characteristics of survey respondents.

|                             | n  | %     |
|-----------------------------|----|-------|
| Practice size (n=142)       |    |       |
| 1-2                         | 33 | 23.2% |
| 3-4                         | 55 | 38.7% |
| 5-7                         | 31 | 21.8% |
| >8                          | 23 | 16.2% |
| Location (n=143)            |    |       |
| Town, population <2000      | 13 | 9.1%  |
| Town, population 2100-10000 | 43 | 30.1% |
| Town, 10100-30000           | 30 | 21.0% |
| Regional city               | 29 | 20.3% |
| Metropolitan city           | 28 | 19.6% |

Given that the population surveyed was derived from a database of practices hosting students, not surprisingly almost all workplaces had hosted students in the previous year. The estimated number of students ranged from 0-100, with a median of eight students. Of 134 responses, 109 (81.3%) had hosted between 1 and 20 students in the year, and 7 (5%) had hosted more than 50. Respondents were extremely aware of the importance of students having access to WIL outside university teaching hospitals, with the overwhelming majority ranking it as very important (82.3%, n=107) or important (15.4%, n=20). Only 1.5% (n=2) gave a neutral response and none disagreed. The majority of respondents (70%, n=94) reported no preference for students from specific institutions and most (76.5%, n=101) believed that the number of students they host per year is about the right number. A smaller number (20.5%, n=27) expressed a wish for more students, and only 3% (n=4) reported that fewer would be preferable. This finding suggests that responding workplaces are generally able to regulate student load to their satisfaction, and does not support notions that there is an impending crisis in short-term WIL capacity if undergraduate student numbers and workplace learning requirements are maintained at current levels.

The majority (n=74, 56.92%) of respondents indicated that they did not think payment for WIL was required. A smaller percentage (n=30, 23.08%) thought payment was appropriate, and 20.00% (n= 26) were uncertain as to whether practices should be paid for involvement in undergraduate WIL. Motivations for involvement in WIL were further explored by nominated responses (Table 2) and open-ended questions. The majority of respondents (83.6%, n=107) indicated that WIL was viewed as an opportunity to 'put back' into the profession. This consideration was reinforced by qualitative comments reflecting the experience they had been afforded as students:

All vets must not forget that our own professional education required experienced vets taking the time to help us gain confidence and competence. I feel strongly that we must give our time to the next crop of vets and should do so willingly and for free.

This philanthropic and pragmatic disposition to 'pay forward' the debt incurred from mentors and teachers during their own professional development, and to contribute to the growth and development of the next generation, reflects similar perspectives reported in the medical literature (Pichlhöfer, Tönies, Spiegel, Wilhelm-Mitterracker, & Maier, 2013; Shannon et al., 2006). However, unlike medicine, where ethical codes urge doctors to "honor your obligation to pass on your professional knowledge and skills to colleagues and students (Australian Medical Association, 2006)," no such explicit undertaking to nurture subsequent generations has to date been formally endorsed by the veterinary profession.

TABLE 2 Benefits of practice participation in WIL identified by respondents

|  | n   | %      |
|--|-----|--------|
| It is a chance to 'put back' into the profession.                              | 109 | 83.9%  |
| Source of potential employees.   | 87  | 66.9%  |
| Students bring new knowledge.  | 74  | 56.9%  |
| Opportunities for closer association with the university                       | 66  | 50.8%  |
| Students challenge our professional practice.                                  | 62  | 47.7%  |
| Students can research cases for us.  | 55  | 42.3%  |
| Students are an extra pair of hands.   | 55  | 42.3%  |
| Having students present, challenges us to do more complete diagnostic workups. | 31  | 23.9%  |
| Clients like it.   | 21  | 16.15% |
| We see benefits to our community.  | 20  | 15.38% |
| Economic advantage.  | 4   | 3.08%  |
|  | 130 |        |

As evident in Table 2, more pragmatic benefits, such as access to a supply of potential employees (66.4%, n= 85) and the help of an extra pair of hands (42.2%, n=54), were also recognised as deriving from participation in WIL. At the same time, a significant number of respondents cited benefits to their practice such as access to new knowledge, ability of students to research cases, opportunities for closer relationships with universities and the fact that the presence of students can challenge (positively) their practice:

By demonstrating our knowledge and encouraging the student's input we have to justify our thought processes and decision-making skills, this keeps us honest.

Such responses articulate social and cultural motivations, and suggest that not only can workplaces offer opportunities for development and benefit for students, but that advantages can also flow in the opposite direction, that is from the student to the workplace.

The most frequent challenge cited by employers (79.8%, n=91) was the time penalty involved in having students in the workplace, and 28.9% (n=34) found the paperwork to be burdensome. Social factors, such as difficulty with getting along with some students (54.4%, n=64) were also of importance. Fewer than 25% of respondents cited factors such as upsetting clients and staff, cost, assessment responsibilities or feeling taken for granted by universities as drawbacks to involvement in WIL. A number of free comments related to the negative effect of hosting students who were not interested and enthusiastic:

The biggest problems are students with no interest in our work, which decreases our vets' interest in teaching; in future other students suffer based on this experience.

The data relating to the challenges involved in student teaching, when explored alongside the responses relating to rewards (actual or desired) provided interesting illumination of the tensions and complexities that form part of the university/student/workplace relationship. Only 51% (n= 65) of respondents reported satisfaction with the support they received from the authors' institution in providing WIL for students, and 56%(n= 71) perceived that the universities valued their involvement. Some comments suggested a sense that, in an era of higher education funding constraint, veterinary employers believe that universities are cost shifting onto private veterinary businesses:

For some courses Universities are being paid for the student place while the student is in a private practice and yet there is no follow through to the clinics. While a payment method may be hard, allowing access to the university online library journals etc may be a good way to provide benefit to clinics hosting students, and also possibly access to CPD provided by University free of charge for say one staff member per student/ time period.

The current study has limitations, such as a small sample size derived from the database of one university, and the omission of input from veterinary employers who choose not to be involved in WIL. Purposive sampling of practitioners currently involved in WIL may introduce bias, as differences have been identified between community-based preceptors actively engaged in medical education compared

to those who were no longer participating in medical student placements (Ryan, Vanderbilt, Lewis, & Madden, 2013). However, while not claiming to be generalisable to the veterinary profession as a whole, nor directly transferable to other disciplines, we believe that valuable insights have emerged.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study suggest that, for veterinary employers, involvement in undergraduate WIL is embedded in their professional practice, and so has social, cultural and material/economic dimensions (Kemmis, 2011). There are potential rewards and challenges in all of those dimensions, which are experienced in particular ways in different practice settings at specific times. WIL programs involve students, workplaces and the university in complex interdependent relationships.

There is unlikely to be a turnaround in the demand for WIL in workplaces external to universities and our findings suggest that employers would not favour such a move. Fostering and sustaining mutually rewarding relationships between students, universities and workplaces as partners in professional education requires balancing of interests and priorities that may be in tension. The ethical imperative that provides an intrinsic motivation for practitioners to teach should not be taken for granted. The economic dimension remains an important part of human social life, and of veterinary practice. However bringing the dimensions beyond the economic into focus aligns with the interests of employers and provides rich opportunities for creative and innovative thinking about relationships between academic institutions and the practising profession.

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# Attempting to build graduates' capacity towards global employability

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Higher Education graduates have traditionally been highly sought after as employees. However, the current situation globally is that new graduates are finding it more difficult to obtain graduate level work, and often impossible to enter the sectors they were aiming at. Together with subject-specific skills all graduates need to be able to draw on generic, transferable skills such as those developed via work-based learning, skills like reflection, flexibility, adaptability, integrating and making connections.

This paper examines a Graduate Intern Programme in its third year at a UK university and attempts to measure its impact on the graduates' employability skills as well as the impact on the University's building and enhancement of its relationships with businesses. From the available data some tentative conclusions are drawn around how such schemes compare to having these opportunities embedded into degree programmes, prior to graduation.

The scheme aims to build capacity in at least 3 ways, by: facilitating students thriving in the workplace; supporting local companies with a 12 week paid placement and developing the skills of academic staff in new areas such as interviewing graduates, liaising with companies, running development sessions, and evaluating the scheme.

Keywords: graduate employability, graduate internships, experiential learning, workplace skills.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally higher education graduates have been employable due to their enhanced levels of knowledge and their well-rounded qualities; in the current global economy this seems no longer the case with many new graduates finding themselves underemployed. In the UK 18.9% of recent graduates are unemployed (ONS, 2012) with 47% accepting low-skilled employment (ONS, 2013). To address this higher education institutions are placing more employability-focused content in programmes of study; including embedded modules, 'bolt-on' modules and facilitated workplace experience via work-based projects, work placements, internships and similar arrangements with employers. Many higher education institutions offer internship opportunities during vacations, or at the programme's end. The value of work experience to graduates has long been established, via such mechanisms as sandwich courses in the UK and cooperative and work integrated learning in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand; this paper examines how learning through experience in the workplace can contribute to enhancing graduate employability, including some data from the evaluation of a university internship scheme in the north east of England (2012/13 intake).

## EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS

The phrase 'employability skills' is used to refer to job-seeking skills, such as interview and CV enhancement techniques, but also the broad, non-specific abilities and attributes making an individual a desirable employee, such as: teamwork; communication skills; time-management; confidence; self-discipline, and, additionally, subject/sector/profession specific abilities. In 2007 Yorke and Knight proposed a detailed list of attributes, '...a set of achievements, understanding and personal attributes that make individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation' (Yorke and Knight, 2007, p. 158). However, it has now become more difficult to enter that 'chosen occupation' due to factors including: a global recession; youth unemployment; an ageing workforce and many more students entering higher education. In the UK participation rates for individuals up to the age of 30, have risen from 12% in 1979 to 30% in the early 1990s and 39% by 1999–00 to 49% in 2011–12 (Parliament briefing papers, 2013) and graduate job applications have increased by between 9–25% (High Fliers, 2014, p. 3).

It is predicted that graduate vacancies in the UK will increase by about 10.2% in 2014 (Garner, 2014), however this will still be within a highly competitive employment market. Workers are living, and remaining in employment, longer; by 2020 one third of the UK workforce will be over 50 (Houses of Parliament, 2011; Helyer and Lee, 2012), furthermore, by 2018 12.8% of those aged 15–24, worldwide, could be unemployed (ILO, 2013). Graduates will need to stand out to gain employment; one option is to use the experiential learning they gain from in-course

workplace experiences; the majority of top graduate recruiters prioritise employing graduates with work experience (High Fliers, 2014). Simultaneously, the world is changing rapidly, employees need to cope with and adapt to change, '...having the skills, attitudes and belief necessary to win a job, succeed in that role, and move on to an even more fulfilling role in the future' (Adecco, 2012, p. 40). In *Boosting Employability Skills* the CBI (2012) report that, 'businesses want graduates who not only add value but who have the skills to help transform their organisation in the face of continuous and rapid economic and technological change' echoing Harvey with Green (1994) and Harvey *et al.* (1997), but now additionally emphasising the contemporary speed of economic and technological change. Benefiting from the opportunities on-going change brings demands certain kinds of individuals. Surveying employers in the North East of England about skills gaps and shortages (Helyer & Lee, 2010: 29) revealed they required graduates with technical, practical and sector-specific skills, as well as skills that cross sectors: customer handling, problem solving, team working, communication, critical thinking and leadership and management, together with timekeeping and work protocols.

## THE TEESIDE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME

Many employers now offer paid vacation internships and industrial placements and university intern schemes can help to prepare students for such opportunities. It is predicted (High Fliers, 2014) that as many as 37% of 2014's graduate-level jobs, at the top 100 graduate employers, will be offered to graduates known to the organisation, through already having worked there as an intern or placement student. In sectors like investment banking, up to 80% of graduate roles are given to graduates who had previously worked as an intern for the company (Briggs and Daly, 2012). A glance at the webpages of UK higher education institutions demonstrates the growing number now offering both students and graduates workplace experience schemes.

The Teesside University Graduate Internship Programme commenced in the academic year 2011/12 and comprises 12 weeks of paid workplace experience, together with a structured personal and professional development programme. Designed to help recent, unemployed graduates to learn from real-life work experience in a graduate level role, the programme aims to enhance employability skills and offer insights into business environments, etiquettes and crucial professional networks. The development days progress job-seeking skills, help with career choices and facilitate structured reflection. The internship programme also aims to generate local graduate-level jobs, helping with talent retention.

The University's business-facing staff promote the programme to their business contacts, plus an external consultant actively engages new host organisations. This activity has the added bonus of introducing the University to companies they have not previously worked with; these may be marginal companies and often small to medium enterprises (SMEs). In 2013, 44 of the 87 host companies were SMEs. Employers interested in the programme devise a project for the intern and a summary of the graduate level job role. 2012–13 saw 152 projects put forward by 109 employers; their sectors included manufacturing, engineering, information, communication and technology, the arts, entertainment and recreation. Most companies specify skills in business and marketing, reflecting a national trend (HECSU, 2013, p. 9), computing and web, and media and journalism. More than half (59%) of all submitted proposals did not specify a named degree. 87 graduates from a range of backgrounds were interviewed and recruited (more than a 50% increase from 2011–2012). Almost half of the interns held an upper-second-class degree; furthermore 17 out of the 87 held a first-class degree. In the past, similar schemes may have targeted graduates needing extra support. In the current strained jobs market every job seeker needs support.

## EVALUATING THE PROGRAMME

The research (March–April 2013) evaluated the experience of graduates and employers, as well as logistical issues. The methodology included: desk research; analysis of electronic records of student profiles; scrutiny of institutional Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool, to confirm company details and histories; a student self-audit, the 'Graduate Readiness Questionnaire'; an electronic survey to all host organisations; in-person employer interviews, and an evaluation day, including questionnaire, for all graduates. Quotations are numbered for anonymity.

## FINDINGS

The majority of graduates (57%) described the programme as “enjoyable” and “useful”; naming “the workplace” the best aspect, “I felt I learned a lot just by doing the job” (Intern, R16), and, “It was great learning from industry professionals” (Intern, R49).

Reasons for applying to be an intern included: “to gain work experience” and “to develop employability skills”. Graduates realize that workplace experience boosts their *curriculum vitae*. 81% of the interns claimed that the job was as they had expected, but often more was involved, and occasionally noticeably more ‘stretching’ than anticipated, “I got to manage my own project and helped to develop some long-term strategies” (Intern, R11), and, “I thought I would be doing customer service and basic admin work but I was actually given an interesting variety of tasks (...) which really tested and developed my abilities” (Intern, R31).

At the evaluation day many graduates celebrated the chance to work with practitioners, with those who were incorporated into teams in the workplace, the most vocal about how authentic their experience felt. The graduate interns had all experienced HE projects at university, but the switch to a real workplace was palpable, allowing them to use their academic learning, “What I did in the workplace really built on my degree” (Intern, R38).

The interns were positive about the induction day and development workshops that focused on career management skills; personal development; self-awareness; purposeful reflection and teambuilding:

At first I didn’t understand why we were doing teambuilding activities with the other interns, rather than with our teams at work, however the messages from the activities undertaken as part of the development sessions were actually really useful at work (Intern, R12).

Over half of employers interviewed (56%) stated that the development sessions back at the University had been useful, with some recognising that they had contributed to improved skills and confidence, “They seemed to boost the intern’s confidence” (Host R23).

All interns, anonymously, completed a self-audit, the ‘Graduate Readiness Questionnaire’, before and after the 12 week work placement. The areas the graduates felt least confident about were: “I know where to look for jobs that would suit me”; “I know how and where to find out information about graduate employers”; and “I know how to write applications that will be successful”. These same areas showed the most improvement at the end of the programme, suggesting that the graduates received help where most needed. The areas the interns felt more confident about at the start were: “I am able to reflect on and appraise my own performance”; “I am aware of my own strengths and weaknesses”; and “I am confident that I will be able to deliver what is asked of me in a graduate job” and these showed very little, if any, improvement, suggesting that the programme offered a timely reality check:

The development sessions and skills tracking exercises were really useful, they helped me develop an awareness of what I was good at; it wasn’t necessarily what I thought! (Intern, R18).

From the final evaluation questionnaire, graduates identified ‘skills’, ‘experience’ and ‘confidence’ as the top three benefits of participating, “I have developed new skills in a professional capacity” (Intern R34).

More than one quarter of interns secured full time employment (youth unemployment is 14.1% in Tees Valley; 7.2% nationally, TVU, 2014). More than half of these jobs were with the host organisation, with 9% gaining places on high profile graduate schemes with national companies: “the Teesside Internship launched my career”. The programme aims to advance the graduates’ profiles and market them to employers as ‘first choice’, “This is the first Teesside Graduate I have employed and I am very impressed. If all Teesside graduates are like this I would like to employ more” (Host organisation). 7% of the interns had their placement extended, 2% remained as volunteers, at voluntary sector organisations. Whilst recruiting graduates right across the spectrum some of the real success stories come from students with low entry tariff points and degree classifications, who secured permanent employment by the end of their internship. Student A entered the university with 100 tariff points and graduated with a ‘pass’ degree; through working as an intern on the programme, with the marketing team for a global company, the graduate was offered, and accepted, a full-time permanent position as a marketing analyst. The benefits of the experiential learning the graduate gained from the workplace was very apparent, “I learned such a lot by actually undertaking the role” (Intern R40)

## CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER SCHEMES

Higher education work-based learning programmes for employed students have been celebrating the benefits of experiential learning for some years. The students on these programmes, with titles like 'work-based studies' or 'work-based and negotiated learning', bring their experiential learning to university with them. Their prior and current learning can be articulated, evidenced and accredited via higher education. University learning is progressed by different learning methods; learning in the workplace is 'situated, participatory and socially mediated' (Eames and Bell, 2005) and shares new knowledge. Conventionally universities were regarded as knowledge repositories and associated with instructive teaching methods, however in the 21st century, graduates will need to apply their learning in increasingly complex ways. The Teesside programme emphasizes connections to the graduates, connections between their past, current and future learning; connections between their degree content and the 'real' world. Experiential learning connects learning to activity, 'learning and doing cannot be separated and therefore to use knowledge to its fullest potential it must be implemented, performed and enhanced as part of a synergy' (Helyer, 2010, p. 21). Higher education institutions need to be future-focused, aligning their learning opportunities to students' and employers' realities, 'the higher education experience should be a holistic one, embracing the widely varying contexts in which knowledge is produced, gained, built upon and used...' (Helyer 2011, p. 103).

Stephen Billett (2011) reiterates the power of experiential learning and emphasises the breadth of its application, to include, co-operative learning, work integrated learning, work-based learning, internships and work placements. The USA National Commission for Coop Education defines co-operative education as, 'structured educational strategy that integrates class studies with learning through productive work experience, related to the student's academic or career goals' (USA National Commission for Coop Education, 2010). Internships and co-operatives are well established in the United States higher education system. 'Institutions in the USA in particular show a strong belief in the benefit of internships with some institutions requiring students to complete a minimum of one internship during their studies to pass their course' (BIS 2011, p. 96). For example, students from Drexel University, USA, graduate with 18 months of professional experience, having spent half of each academic year of their three-year programme in the workplace. Canada, Australia and New Zealand also provide interesting examples of innovative co-operative education and work-integrated learning. Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand offer a Bachelor of Sport and Recreation degree that combines two days in industry (350 hours per year) simultaneously with two days of university attendance. The aim is to provide the right environment for students to 'learn through work in an authentic experience' (Fleming and Hickey, 2013). The comments made by the students in New Zealand are repeated by the findings of the Teesside evaluation, comments like, 'it felt challenging', 'thrown in at the deep end', 'supervising others', with good points, such as, 'being accepted', 'meeting people I would never have met', 'working alongside experts', 'learning professional behaviours and tricks of the trade', 'being accepted as a member of a professional community', and:

I learnt through moving outside my comfort zone and doing things I was not sure about. I also made myself do things, and attempt to do things, even though I sometimes wasn't sure of what I was doing, but I did do that. It helped me to learn from my mistakes and how I could do things better (Student from Auckland University of Technology).

## LEARNING POINTS

In a changing world 'employability' inevitably evolves as businesses realise that they need an adaptable workforce to endure continual challenges; employees must demonstrate a combination of subject-specific, generic and personal skills. A global economy in recession leads to employers having less permanent staff, and consequently expecting more from each employee, 'I was surprised by the variety of tasks I was asked to undertake in the workplace' (Intern). The programme alerted graduates to the expectation of multi-tasking. Many of the host organisations requested a graduate from outside their own sector, part of the demand for broader skills.

Several graduate respondents said they wished they had experienced the workplace earlier and there is growing evidence that it is worthwhile embedding some workplace experience in all HE programmes. According to Higson (2012) 'internships should be seen as a way of gaining valuable employability skills while still at university', while Trought (2012) takes this further by stating 'the importance of gaining work experience at university has become a prerequisite for finding employment upon graduation'. The Teesside evaluation suggested that post-graduation schemes are useful too, again confirmed by Higson (2012), 'such support should

also continue after students have graduated (...) a one stop shop offering graduates the best local paid and voluntary internships, for up to a year'. In the current financial climate employers would need to, at the minimum, partly fund such initiatives; employers responding to the Teesside evaluation were reasonably happy with this idea, with 57.1% saying they would be ready to fund, or partly fund, future interns, depending on various provisos.

Facilitating students learning in the workplace helps develop them into graduates who can operate as a catalyst within a business, transferring and creating knowledge, '...combining workplace learning and study as a means of knowledge acquisition and skill formation' (Guile and Lahiff, 2013, p. 17). This happens via undergraduate and postgraduate study and, as with the Teesside graduate programme, can be enhanced by tailored development workshops. Both employers and graduates praised the workshops, in particular as they worked around reflection on action. It was felt that similar workshops could be offered in the vacation period so that more students could benefit from their content.

## CONCLUSION

Graduates should leave higher education able to analyse and innovate – top graduates have always been attractive to employers. Due to global changes, including many more students graduating, the employment market is very competitive. Working patterns are changing and more graduates will create their own businesses and be self-employed, work in small niche markets and work in a portfolio style, therefore needing more than ever to have some experience of the workplace before they leave university. The evaluation evidences that the combination of academic study and work practice offers a springboard to future progression. As more longitudinal data is collected in-depth comparisons will be made with student destinations and progression into graduate jobs. The differences occurring between academic subject areas require closer attention, and lessons should continue to be learned from innovative practice globally. Offering an authentic working experience to all undergraduates, as Wilson claims, 'helps students to be better in the context of their own lives and employment', (Wilson, 2013).

There is a powerful argument for embedding experiential learning opportunities into all degree programmes, by integrating employability modules, skills and work-experience placements, to help students to leave university job-ready.

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# Developing WIL leadership capacities and competencies: A distributed approach

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This paper reports on an Australian government funded study to develop, trial and validate a framework and guidelines to support work integrated learning (WIL) leadership capacity-building in university and industry, for national and international contexts. The study collected data from WIL leaders in six Australian universities across three States and from industry partners in seven broad fields of education. The project was premised on leadership being “a distribution of power through the collegial sharing of knowledge, practice and reflection within the social context of the university [and industry organisations]” (Lefoe & Parris, 2008, p. 2).

The resultant WIL Leadership Framework identifies five domains for WIL leadership: Shaping the vision; creating and sustaining WIL relationships; fostering WIL engagement, expertise and students learning; communicating and influencing; and driving organisational and joint industry/university outcomes. Following a validation process, which gathered advice, insights and guidance from university and industry WIL leaders and practitioners, advisory and reference groups, facilitators and evaluators, the Framework was identified to have multiple purposes: It is claimed to have uses as a support tool; a WIL vision tool; a promotional tool; and a leadership map.

Keywords: Distributed leadership, work integrated learning, framework, professional development, university staff, employers

## SIGNIFICANCE OF WIL LEADERSHIP

In Australia, Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a response to demonstrable and increasing demands for the tertiary education sector to provide graduates with improved employability skills through an industry relevant curriculum (AC Nielsen Research Services, 2000; Universities Australia, 2008, Australian Council for Educational Research [ACER], 2011, Smith *et al.*, 2009 and Patrick *et al.*, 2009).

Building a successful WIL program requires a wide range of expertise, and WIL staff consistently report that within the academic institution there appears to be little understanding of the multiple skills required to conduct effective WIL programs (Bates, 2010). Embedding WIL into mainstream curriculum and assessment activities requires strategic leadership at the institutional level, and the success of this collaborative enterprise is also reliant on effective leadership within the workplace.

This paper reports on an Australian government-funded study intended to support WIL leadership capacity building across universities and industry, for national and international contexts. The definition of WIL applied in the project was that used in the *WIL Report* (Patrick *et al.*, 2009, p.9) that defines WIL as “...an umbrella term used for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum.” WIL was therefore taken to include placements, projects, fieldwork, simulations, virtual or in-class experiences, and reflections on employment.

WIL leadership is expressed variously across the Australian tertiary education and employment sectors and its complexity is not always fully understood. Commonly, WIL leadership emerges as a dispersed and shared responsibility at many levels and across many areas. The work of the project was premised on leadership being “a distribution of power through the collegial sharing of knowledge, practice and reflection within the social context of the university [or employer organisation]” (Lefoe & Parris, 2008, p. 2). Importantly, therefore, the project was built on the notion that WIL leadership requires a distributed approach. The interpretation of distributed leadership used to underpin the project directions was that distributed leadership referred to both formal and *ad hoc* arrangements that divided leadership among multiple actors who supported others in achieving organisational goals.

#### AUSTRALIAN WIL LEADERSHIP STUDY

Funded by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching, the six-university study responded to the need to support WIL leadership capacity building in both universities and industry and set out to describe the characteristics of WIL leadership and conduct research which would develop a sustainable framework and guidelines through a collaboration with the key national WIL professional association, the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN).

The project drew upon the expertise of more than 100 experienced WIL leaders from across six Australian universities and their WIL industry and partner organisations. The study focused on seven broad fields of education: Allied Health, Business and Tourism, Creative Industries, Teacher Education, Engineering, IT and Sciences. Each university concentrated on a specific field of education and collected data from both university staff and partners across those fields. This single institutional focus on just one field of education allowed comments from university WIL leaders and employers to be aligned. It is interesting to note, however, that the data from the different fields of education produced very similar outcomes, and that the discipline did not impact on the findings.

Three studies of WIL Leadership were undertaken across more than one hundred experienced leaders of WIL in Australia:

- *The University study*: Facilitated focus groups and individual interviews were used to draw out information on the nature of WIL Leadership from forty-seven experienced university WIL leaders, academics and professional staff. Data were captured on WIL Leadership challenges, enablers, competencies and capabilities, and on capability development needs. Focus groups with members of the project team, all experienced WIL leaders, provided additional information.
- *The Employer Partner study*: An anonymous national online survey which included questions similar to those asked of university staff was conducted to capture similar data from organisations that have substantial experience of supporting WIL students in the targeted fields of education. Fifty-five employers representing widely diverse organisations contributed data.
- *The Narrative Study*: Individual reflections were provided by members of the Team, as representative WIL leaders within their universities, to examine the structure, characteristics, behaviours and directions of WIL, and to document their understandings of how and where WIL leadership is situated in five Australian universities, and to consider the institutional models, policies and practices that support and recognise WIL staff leadership.

The findings from these three studies were subjected to intense scrutiny by Team members, to establish five primary domains of WIL Leadership, scope the capabilities needed in each, and record strategies for their development. The key findings were developed into a summary matrix out of which a draft WIL Leadership Framework was developed, as a concise and usable instrument. Five final facilitated workshops were undertaken with university staff in five of the partner universities, to evaluate this framework and provide an understanding of the possible uses. Before finalising, the findings and Framework were presented to national and international audiences for input, and triangulated with prior work in the field.

#### WIL LEADERSHIP IN AUSTRALIA

The study pointed to ten broad areas of responsibility which were identified as being crucial to WIL leaders.

These areas were:

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| policy                               | staff capabilities and development         |
| resourcing                           | pedagogy and curriculum                    |
| institutional culture                | access and equity                          |
| institutional structures and systems | research and scholarship                   |
| external engagement                  | partner organisational culture and systems |

Notably, the data identified that collaboration around WIL appeared to stem from two wider perceptions:

- Sharing and collaboration is the pragmatic way to achieve efficiencies in the facilitation of WIL.
- Participating in WIL networks and communities of practice enable staff to build their WIL knowledge and expertise.

The findings drawn from these observations identified important and indicative approaches to WIL leadership. The data identified key challenges to WIL leaders, key strategies for enabling WIL and its leadership in both strategic and operational areas, and the capacities, competencies and capabilities needed by existing and emerging WIL leaders. This data was validated by inviting responses on the key findings by email, or online, from WIL leaders in the six partner universities and from the project's Reference and Advisory groups.

Several key themes emerged from the data collected from industry and partner organisations. The dominant themes identified by these organisations were:

- WIL enabled organisations to have access to students, thereby identifying future employees.
- Operational and resourcing issues impacted heavily on the ability of organisations to offer WIL.
- The suitability of student skills and attributes were important factors for industry and their level of engagement in WIL.

These key issues were identified as both enablers *and* barriers to involvement in WIL. This was similar to the university data where the same issues were often identified as both enablers and barriers depending on the outcomes afforded the institution.

While the findings revealed that some organisations were well resourced, organised and skilled in their management of WIL, the data highlighted a general need for better resourcing and support for WIL. The responses of WIL leaders in these organisations pointed in particular to the potential value of universities engaging organisations by providing:

- clear information about WIL
- streamlined processes for engaging and communicating with host organisations
- resources to support staff who managed WIL in organisations, and
- student preparation prior to WIL and monitoring of student progress while undertaking WIL.

These findings pointed to the potential value to universities of providing wider and increased support and collaboration with organisations in the management and leadership of WIL, to raise WIL outcomes for all stakeholders.

The study confirmed that WIL leadership was often enacted in the absence of, or despite, a hierarchical structure because of the dedicated approach taken by WIL leaders. The distributed context of WIL practitioners across roles and settings meant that WIL leadership developed from need and purpose rather than by appointment. Therefore, to develop the culture and practice of WIL, leaders needed to lead by working collaboratively across their organisation, between organisations, and out into their communities.

The following are the key findings of the project:

1. WIL leadership occurs in, and is distributed across, diverse roles and settings in tertiary institutions and industry.
2. The distinctive nature and complexity of WIL benefits from the type of shared and collaborative relationships offered by distributed leadership.
3. The challenges WIL leaders face in tertiary institutions, disciplines and industry are broadly similar.
4. The capabilities required by WIL leaders are similar across tertiary institutions, disciplines and industry, and can be grouped into five domains, to form the WIL Leadership Framework:
  - shaping vision and policy
  - communicating and influencing WIL
  - creating sustainable WIL relationships to strengthen WIL culture

- fostering engagement, expertise and learning in WIL, and
  - driving outcomes that serve the needs of WIL stakeholders.
5. Industry and partner organisations seek enhanced collaboration and support from tertiary institutions in order to implement and maintain effective WIL activity and to build staff WIL capabilities.
  6. WIL vision and strategic intent are important drivers of WIL practice, irrespective of whether the institution has, or does not have, a formal WIL policy.
  7. Resourcing and acknowledging the work of WIL leaders is a recognised need for all sectors of WIL practitioners.

Along with these findings, the project reconfirmed a number of existing perspectives around WIL and WIL leadership. This project reconfirmed:

- the critical importance of strong leadership in WIL in achieving good WIL outcomes in the sectors
- the power of an integrated whole-of-organisation approach
- the importance of grassroots commitment which has generated an upsurge and renewed interest in understanding WIL leadership
- the challenges and barriers that need to be managed in the delivery of WIL in both industry and educational sectors.

Strategically, WIL was found to operate in universities that had formal and centralised policy and support as well as in those that did not have such policies and support. What was interesting, however, was that WIL leaders from both types of institutions desired formal and centralised policy around WIL. Two views were postulated to explain this. First, WIL leaders were looking for formal and centralised policy to provide institutional support for their work and to legitimise the development of WIL in universities. Second, WIL leaders were seeking support to develop and consolidate the relationships they have with WIL partners and organisations. An important factor in both of these views is the implication that with centralised policy comes resourcing. WIL leaders in all universities studied were able to secure some resourcing, but all universities considered they needed more.

#### WIL LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

A significant outcome of the study was the development of the WIL Leadership Framework, which was drawn from the key findings and an interpretation of the data. The Framework identified five domains for WIL leadership: Shaping the vision; Creating and sustaining WIL relationships; Fostering WIL engagement, expertise and students learning; Communicating and influencing; and Driving organisational and joint industry/university outcomes.

The WIL Leadership Framework (Figure 1) is a conceptualisation of how WIL leadership can be enabled and enacted. The five domains draw together and describe the key capabilities evidenced by WIL leaders across both university and employer settings. The distributed nature of WIL leaders across these settings and the many WIL roles that sit within universities and partner organisations emphasise the requirement to blend distributed leadership into the Framework. It is not that WIL leaders consciously use a distributed leadership approach, but that leadership is distributed across the many roles and settings in which WIL occurs.

The domain *Shaping the WIL Vision* was found to align with other leadership models (McInnis, Ramsden & Maconachie, 2012) and appears in the centre of the Framework because it linked the other four domains together. To shape the WIL vision, WIL leaders must create relationships, communicate and influence, foster engagement and drive outcomes. The multi-dimensional nature of the WIL Leadership Framework had layered each domain into its scope, and to indicative approaches that enable and enact WIL.

The WIL Leadership Framework has been identified to have multiple purposes: it can act as a support tool, a WIL vision tool, a promotional tool and a leadership map. The scrutiny and analysis of the Framework in these contexts have the potential to add to its practical significance and could therefore suggest an important direction for future research.

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FIGURE 1. WIL Leadership Framework

Within the WIL context, a number of dimensions are observed which define the roles and settings for WIL. These dimensions provide a spectrum of perspectives which must be considered within the WIL context and include

- the balance between WIL in universities and WIL in industry
- WIL delivery in large and small industry and community partner organisations
- WIL practice in universities, disciplines and organisations with a long history of engaging WIL, compared to those that have adopted WIL as a more recent initiative
- the level of organisational focus on WIL, including policy augmentation, resource allocation, pedagogical development and structural support for WIL, and
- the role descriptions and responsibilities of WIL practitioners and leaders, including professional/academic responsibilities and in university/industry settings.

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# The delivery of university and VET fully integrated degree programs

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The University of New England (UNE) and TAFE New England (TNE) commenced delivery of an innovative integrated degrees program in community health in trimester 1, 2014. The degrees will allow students to engage in simultaneous, integrated Vocational Education and Training (VET) and university study leading to both VET and degree qualifications. The outcome of the study program allows students to integrate their study and WIL experience by supporting a sequential, embedded accomplishment of qualifications. The differences in processes and philosophies between VET and Higher Education institutions in relation to WIL have kept the delivery of this kind of study separated, but integration has now become more achievable due to the extension of AQF compliance to the higher education sector. Students in the dual-sector degrees have welcomed the skill-based practical work involved with VET education while learning the theoretical concepts of their university education with a single enrolment. The need for a more seamless engagement with VET and university study is becoming more urgent and there are a large number of possibilities to explore. This paper identifies some of the key issues and proposes some solutions.

Keywords: WIL, work integrated learning, dual-sector degree, AQF

## INTRODUCTION

The UNE School of Health in conjunction with TNE, has developed a number of dual-sector degree programs that allow students to simultaneously study VET qualifications and a university degree with a single enrolment. Three different enrolments are possible: Bachelor of Health Practice with the choice of majors in Diversional Therapy or Case Work, a Bachelor of Community Services with majors in Services Coordination or Case Management and a combined degree comprising the Bachelor of Health Practice and Bachelor of Community Services with a double major.

The dual-sector degrees were developed in response to data indicating that there was a current and future need for degree-qualified individuals in the area of health management. The increase in the demand for highly qualified workers in the fields addressed by the new degrees will be driven in the immediate future by the introduction by the Federal Government of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and the ageing profile of the Australian population. The Federal Department of Employment, in its 2014 report, supported this coming future demand, identifying health care and social assistance as the largest employer in regional Australia and predicting an increase in employment figures in the five years to November 2018 of up to 16.3% (Australian Jobs 2014, Department of Employment).

The new degrees align with current Government policy, which seeks to increase participation by students from low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds, and to increase the proportion of the overall population who have completed tertiary education by 2025. In a review of Australian higher education, Bradley, Noonan, Nugent and Scales (2008) proposed the need for reform in higher education, proposing a much closer alignment between the VET and university sectors including “content [that] is more strongly driven by the advice of industry” (p. ix).

Training pathways between the VET and university sectors in the past have utilised different models such as concurrent, but separate institution enrolment, and articulation from a VET institution to university to connect both learning domains. The UNE dual-sector degrees are some of the first fully integrated versions of the two domains working together that are delivered via one institution and a single enrolment. These degrees support seamless WIL and facilitate lifelong learning.

Current Australian studies have noted ‘connections between VET and higher education need to be strengthened to deliver successful outcomes for students’ (Langworthy & Johns, 2012, p. 118). Langworthy and Johns (2012) stated that ‘one of the future directions of VET and higher education is development of concurrent and embedded awards in skill priority areas that result in dual qualifications and better WIL opportunities’. Billet (2009) states ‘higher education research supports the need to explore practical learning in a workplace setting

and join this with the conceptual learning in a university study program to allow for a smooth transition into a WIL and employment outcome'. Billet also proposes that 'higher education institutions need to develop approaches to facilitate integration of practice-based learning with learning in an academic setting'. The new integrated degrees available at UNE meet these requirements and allow students to progressively gain VET qualifications that lead seamlessly to a bachelor degree in three years of full-time study.

#### HOW THE DEGREE IS STRUCTURED

There are three sets of units in the new degrees, designated by the prefix code HD, HS or HL. The HS and HL units are all AQF level 7 and have been designed as degree-level units. The HD units were developed specifically for the new degrees and are a combination of National Training Package mandated AQF level 4-5 competencies, associated with assessment tasks such as online quizzes and workplace skills checklists (WSC), and AQF level 7 Learning Outcomes associated with assessment tasks such as written essays or reports of 2000-3000 words integrating critical thinking, research and referencing skills. It is the HD-coded units that are the unique feature of the UNE model; the strategic combination of NTP competencies within single units of study creates a powerful learning synergy and the framework for development of higher-order learning outcomes.

At the completion of the degree program students will have successfully completed three different qualifications, two at the VET level and a university degree. Successful completion of the full degree program will result in a student being awarded a Certificate IV at the end of the first year of study, a Diploma at the end of the second year, while the degree qualification is completed at the end of three years. Students are able to exit the program at any time after the end of the first year with a recognised qualification.

#### TRIMESTER 1 2014 ENROLMENTS AND ATTRITION

A total of 48 students were enrolled in the dual-sector degrees on the first day of the trimester, with most electing part time study plans. Table 1 shows the trimester 1 2014 enrolment statistics for the dual-degree programs.

Table 1. Trimester 1 2014 enrolment data for dual-sector degree programs

| Date    | Health Practice | Community Services | Health Services | Practice/Community | Total |
|---------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------|
| Week 1  | 14              | 8                  | 26              |                    | 48    |
| Week 5  | 13              | 8                  | 27              |                    | 51    |
| Week 12 | 21              | 10                 | 31              |                    | 62    |

An examination of the assessment items submitted by students in two core units indicated about 60% of students enrolled in week 2 of the trimester would successfully pass these units. New enrolments in the degree programs for trimester 2 2014 are at a similar level to those in trimester 1.

#### STAFF CHALLENGES

Individual teachers' philosophies of the meaning of online learning and distance learning were confronting on certain levels. The extent and frequency of the challenge reported by the two TNE teachers (identified as DI and HT) involved in the delivery of the HD units varied according to their previous exposure to work in the dual-sector initiative. DI identified a lack of understanding of the project demands on the part of the TAFE hierarchy as contributing to the problem. A specific example cited was the need to combine the existing TAFE work-allocation and the new duties associated with the dual-sector project, where only two hours per week were allocated to the project.

The principal challenge experienced by the TNE teachers from a practical perspective was negotiating the different approach to online learning in the UNE Moodle environment. This included problems of accessibility to Moodle from behind the TAFE firewalls. Professional development and ongoing support by UNE staff had overcome many of these challenges by the end of the first trimester.

A difference in nomenclature between VET and Higher education was one of the most challenging aspects of this project for academics, senior executive and administrative staff alike. The content for the dual-sector units had been prepared by HT, from TNE, and the language used to identify components within the content differed from

that used within the University. For example, a component of a Moodle unit was called both a Learner Resource and a Module. When the content was loaded into Moodle, this dual naming caused a great deal of navigation difficulties. These language issues, while causing some confusion for both staff and students, were corrected through the course of the first trimester and a common language set devised and incorporated into the trimester 2 content.

Devising, validating, delivery and marking of assessment items presented substantial challenges and this remains a work in progress after the first trimester. HT expressed challenges in relation to reconciling the marking of assessment under the competency-based VET system and the criterion-based university system. Further professional development is being organised that will specifically look into assessment design, the integration of VET and higher education assessment and the meeting of all new standards. This will complement detailed examination of learning outcomes, assessment quality and the mapping of training packages, graduate attributes and employability skills.

## WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Defining the term 'work-integrated learning' (WIL) is often challenging. WIL is often used to describe a range of educational activities that incorporate learning within an academic institution along with practical applications in a workplace setting relevant to each individual student's study program or career goals. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) broadly defines WIL as learning by doing in realistic work situations, where the central practices of industry and community professionals are authentically reflected.

Assessment is considered to be the most important aspect of the WIL activity (RMIT, 2008). An important aspect of the dual-sector degrees is the incorporation of WIL as a mandatory requirement of all HD units. The capacity for students enrolled in the degrees to gain the two VET qualifications during their study required them to undertake mandatory WIL, which was assessed by the use of workplace skills checklists and online quizzes. The workplace skills checklist was required to be checked by a workplace practitioner who possessed qualifications above that relevant to the unit being completed.

The primary challenge in relation to WIL was the capacity of students who were not currently employed in an appropriate workplace to be able to gain the work experience and access to an appropriately qualified practitioner to confirm that the necessary skills were evident. Students who were not employed in the field were expected to gain the necessary experience through volunteering. However, this presented additional problems for those students in rural and remote areas, where these opportunities were limited.

Two possible solutions were identified to meet the VET WIL requirements. These were for students to complete a Senior First Aid Certificate or the New England Award offered by UNE. The New England Award offered students the opportunity to engage in a range of social, cultural, life skills and sporting activities in both paid and voluntary capacities that would satisfy the VET requirements. While this approach met the educational requirements, it does not support a principle aim of WIL, where the overarching concept is to provide students with the work place and practical experience that will support their future employment.

The distance delivery mode of this course means that students may be located in regional and rural areas where accessing WIL is problematic. The need to provide support staff to facilitate WIL for a widely dispersed student body and to have this process well established prior to commencement of the program is essential. This is considered to be one principal shortcoming of the dual-sector program during its infancy and is still in need of development. These WIL issues and development of employability skills are being addressed. The design and application of the work skills checklist is undergoing continuous improvement with the aim of identifying a diversity of opportunities for students currently not in employment, and living in rural and remote areas, to be able to gain the necessary work experience to support their study. The potential for using intensive schools already running in a range of units at UNE as an option for students to cover WSC requirements in communications, teamwork and physical status assessment is also being considered.

## CONCLUSION

The dual-sector degrees are moving forward into trimester 2 and 3 2014 with solid enrolments, having both continuing and new students enrolling. Student engagement is paramount and constant work is being done to

keep the content delivery through Moodle and the WIL both dynamic and responsive to feedback and suggested improvements from both students and teachers. There are opportunities to create additional teaching tools to support student learning and development. There is considerable scope to grow these degrees, introduce new majors, explore variations of the current model and apply the model elsewhere at UNE. There is also a high level of enthusiasm and optimism for the potential of these degrees to make a significant and ongoing contribution to the job-readiness of the future health workforce.

This degree program demonstrates that a student who is keen to develop both theoretical and practical skills to be 'work ready' now has options in the health field. WIL is and has always been necessary for employees and employers, but often detached from theoretical degrees. Theory is important, but the application of that theory is how a qualification evolves into a career. The world of tertiary education is changing and the integration of practical skills in the higher education sector through WIL will support employers around the country who will be looking to cutting-edge degrees such as this.

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# Roundtable sessions

## Undertaking publishable research: Roundtable discussion for emerging researchers

MAUREEN DRYSDALE

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This session is an interactive roundtable discussion aimed at emerging researchers.

Bartkus and Stull (1997) described the cooperative education (co-op) and work-integrated learning (WIL) research as sketchy, limited and uncertain, with a focus mostly on programme development and practice. However, Bartkus and Higgs (2011), in their objective overview on research of co-op/WIL research, noted that the state of the published research is now stronger than when assessed in 2004 (Bartkus & Stull, 2004), with a greater focus on theoretical framework development.

It is our view that the state of research has advanced due to a greater educational focus on WIL, particularly in Australia. With this, a new generation of researchers are entering this field of research; however, require some guidance and direction on how they can contribute significantly to the established knowledge in the literature. Thus, the presenters will discuss some key aspects of undertaking research, drawing from their own experiences, and then engage with discussion driven by questions from the session attendees. The discussion will be guided by the following themes:

- How to design a valid research project
- How to form this research into a published outcome
- Discuss fundamental aspects of research design, such as validity and reliability, the types of data and methods of collection, and their limitations

The interactive discussions will be supported by examples provided by the presenters and, where possible, examples of research plans provided by attendees. There will be interactive exercises analysing the rationales and validity of qualitative research questions. The final 20 minutes will be set aside to discuss the publishing process, including advice on what reviewers look for in papers and common reasons for paper rejection. Some resources will be made available for attendees to assist them with their research.

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## **Grading for a Purpose: Defining clear academic standards for work-integrated learning.**

KAREN ROBINSON

GREGORY REDDAN

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A work integrated learning (WIL) curriculum includes academic standards, assessment and grading practices including a pass/fail or criterion/symbol expected to link with graduate attributes and learning outcomes. Grades are expressed as the most salient form through which a student can receive performance feedback and correspond to the quality, breadth and depth of a student's academic achievement. Grades are purposeful; highlight an individual student's sense of achievement and subsequent learning and may affect a student's grade point average, and their employment, career and life prospects as a graduate.

During the roundtable discussion current types of assessment and the individual grading practices will be the primary focus. Attendees will examine the implications of different grading practices for assessment items and the associated learning outcomes, as well as the perceived effects on a student's university experience. Outcomes of the roundtable will involve attendees working towards identifying clear equitable academic standards for WIL courses nationally and will provide participants with different perspectives of the issue of grading to assist in their future decision-making. Interested members willing to continue this work further will be identified during the roundtable.

Keywords: WIL, Academic Standards, Grades, GPA, Academic Achievement

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## **Re-aligning Strategic Capacity to deliver Teaching and Learning and Work Integrated Learning Outcomes**

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Institutions are continually challenged to innovate. In 2013 the University of Huddersfield reshaped its Strategy Map to take the university from 2013-18. Feeding into this overarching strategy are six strategies including a Teaching and Learning (T&L) Strategy, which is central to the delivery of Work Integrated Learning (WIL).

This roundtable will focus on the change management process that was undertaken to ensure that the T&L strategy and particularly the WIL elements could be implemented effectively across the institution. Utilising existing resources and networks, a radical redesign of T&L support was undertaken; primarily a change from individual T&L Innovation Projects into cross university Strategic T&L Projects.

Each strategic project is matched against an enabling strand of the T&L strategy. Each project is headed up by a National Teaching Fellow, with a research assistant drawn from the Teaching and Learning Institute, a student on WIL placement working as a project assistant; together with Associates from across the university.

Example projects include: developing a student journal, embedding enterprise in the curriculum, using WIL as a peer mentoring approach and preparing students for a world where sustainability sits high on the agenda.

The roundtable will explain the design and implementation process of the projects, together with some challenges from the first year of implementation.

Delegates will then have time to discuss how universities can use their existing resources more effectively to deliver change and more effective WIL outcomes.

Keywords: Strategic alignment, change management, work integrated learning, national teaching fellows, peer mentoring

## What are the critical success factors for effective university-community engagement?

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With increased interest in the topic of university-community engagement, the issue of *how* key stakeholders respond to the ensuing challenges involved finds prominence in discourses about collaboration and partnerships (Patrick *et al.* 2009). One approach to the question of what constitutes critical success factors for such engagement arose from discussions by researchers /practitioners at Macquarie University involving the design, implementation and evaluation of the PACE (Professional and Community Engagement) program, now into its third year.

Drawing upon this experience, this workshop offers participants the opportunity to discuss the different challenges and benefits of university-community engagement in relation to their particular context, and identify and explore the critical success factors that contribute to an effective framework of engagement (See Arden *et al.*, 2009; Garlic & Langworthy, 2004; Kilpatrick *et al.*, 2006; Woolcock & Brown, 2005). MQ researchers will facilitate a process of developmental dialogue and action inquiry, to engage participants in small groups to discuss four main themes: governing values, action strategies, relationship consequences and learning outcomes (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Gergen and Gergen (2008), claim, “in stark contrast to the individualist orientation to research, action inquiry has from its very inception laid stress on processes of collaboration” (p. 165). This makes it an ideal tool through which to explore the challenges and benefits of university-community engagement and partnerships.

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## ROUNDTABLE

# **Principles, guidelines and strategies to support inclusive WIL: Evidence from the disciplines of business, health and built environment**

DEBORAH PEACH

*Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia*

THERESA WINCHESTER-SEETO

JACQUELINE MACKAWAY

*Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia*

MATTHEW CAMPBELL

*Griffith University, Mt. Gravatt, Queensland, Australia*

SONIA FERNS

*Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia*

KERI MOORE

*Southern Cross University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia*

Your participation in this Roundtable discussion will contribute to work underway through an Office of Learning and Teaching project. The project aim is to identify and critique inclusive approaches and resources that enhance the WIL learning experience for students from diverse backgrounds. The facilitated discussion will consider draft principles, guidelines, and implementation strategies that have emerged from the literature and earlier consultations. This interactive session will include an overview of the project and literature review. Results from interviews, focus groups, and testing in the five pilot sites in business, health and built environment will be explored and emerging themes discussed. Your feedback will also be sought on the relevance and applicability of a proposed self-assessment mapping tool that institutions can use to review alignment between curriculum practices and inclusive WIL principles.

Keywords: WIL, inclusive practice, principles, guidelines, self-assessment, alignment

## ROUNDTABLE

# Strengthening University and Business partnerships for WIL: A Work in Progress

JUDIE KAY

*RMIT University, ACEN*

JENNY LAMBERT

*Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry*

ALLAN GOTH

*Universities Australia*

MARION TERRILL

*Business Council of Australia*

SAMPAN SILAPANAD

*Western Digital, Thailand*

NORAH MCRAE

*University of Victoria, Canada*

Early in 2014 peak industry groups the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business Council of Australia , Australian Industry Group together with Universities Australian and ACEN signed a historic Statement of Intent to develop a national plan to enhance the depth, breadth and quality of WIL across the country. <http://acen.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/WIL-statement-of-intent.pdf>

This Statement acknowledges the important role WIL plays in enhancing the work readiness of our graduates and their contribution to the Australian economy. In addition it underscores the pivotal role partnerships between universities, industry and community play in achieving these outcomes as well as the importance of implementing strategies to further strengthen these partnerships.

This roundtable will overview the aims of the Statement of Intent and outline progress and key priorities moving forward from the perspectives of ACEN, Universities Australia and Industry groups involved. Through facilitated group discussions, attendees will be invited to provide feedback on the priorities presented and suggest key strategies for incorporation into the action plan to achieve the aims of the Statement. Brief reflections from two other national perspectives, Thailand and Canada will conclude the session.

## **Quality preparation and supervision for a collaborative WIL experience: Challenges and strategies**

LEONI RUSSELL

JUDIE KAY

*RMIT, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

SONIA FERNS

*Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia*

This roundtable discussion will explore a range of WIL preparation and supervision strategies used by both workplaces and universities to maximise student learning outcomes throughout their WIL experiences. The discussion will be informed by recent findings from two national Office for Learning and Teaching WIL projects. In the 'Assessing the impact of WIL on student work-readiness' project, supervision clearly emerged as a key component that impacted the quality of the placement and in turn, the student experience. The "Leading WIL: a distributed leadership approach to work integrated learning" project identified the importance of encouraging and recognising expertise in WIL supervision.

Through facilitated group discussions, participants will consider the challenges of WIL preparation and quality supervision and share strategies to ensure WIL experiences provide rich learning opportunities for all stakeholders.

Questions that will be considered include: What does quality WIL preparation and supervision look like? How important is WIL preparation and supervision? How does the quality of WIL preparation and supervision impact student learning outcomes during WIL activities? How do we know? Do university and industry staff have the expertise to undertake strategies for building student capacity through learning in a workplace? How can universities support/mentor industry workplace supervisors?

## ROUNDTABLE

# Conducting Virtual Global WIL Across 3 Time Zones

GRAHAM AIREY

SALLY PARROTT,

*RMIT University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia*

The objective of this roundtable discussion is to share an innovative pedagogical model or 'pattern' for conducting a hybrid virtual global WIL project across three time zones that culminates in a study tour. To maximise interaction and engagement during the roundtable discussion, participants will be given 'high level' details of an actual virtual global WIL that was conducted last semester and will then be asked to try and anticipate some of the pedagogical and logistical challenges that might be encountered with such a project. Participants will then be given the opportunity to collaborate and share their anticipated challenges. Given the majority of Universities have graduate attributes as part of global employability, this innovative pedagogical model will help illustrate the connection between a virtual global WIL project and students being able to function effectively and constructively in an inter-cultural or global working environment. The session will conclude with some insight into how the international partners were sourced and managed, and some tips on what to look out for when selecting an international partner.

## ROUNDTABLE

# **The New Colombo Plan – Australian Undergraduates Gaining Regional Experience**

KATE DUFF

*Assistant Secretary, New Colombo Plan Secretariat, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade*

SARAH TODD

ANDREW DAVEY

JEANNE MCCONACHIE

*Griffith University, Gold Coast & Brisbane, Queensland, Australia*

The New Colombo Plan is a signature initiative of the Australian Government which aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific in Australia by supporting Australian undergraduates to study and undertake internships in the region. Internships and mentorships are a key component of the program to support the creation of regionally capable and work ready Australian graduates.

The New Colombo Plan is encouraging Australian universities to develop innovative and creative international experiences for their students in the Indo-Pacific region for credit, or as mandatory components of their degrees.

The New Colombo Plan Secretariat is working with businesses in Australia and the region, to identify internship opportunities and link them with universities and students.

This roundtable will:

- Provide an overview of the New Colombo Plan (NCP);
- Identify innovative internships, work and learning experiences that Australian universities have developed for their students under NCP to date; and
- Explore the challenges and opportunities universities identify in developing these experiences in an international context.

The Roundtable will provide 40 minutes for speakers to present some background. This will be followed by 30 minutes of Q&A during which participants will share their experience of the challenges and best practice in international work integrated learning.

Key Words: International, internships, New Colombo Plan



# Showcase sessions

## **Something old, something new, something borrowed; what works for you?**

### **Researching multi-disciplinary attitudes towards WIL to inform a strategic approach to policy implementation**

HEATHER SMIGIEL

CERI MACLEOD

*Flinders University, Adelaide, SA, Australia*

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is becoming an increasingly fundamental component of higher education. As a result of growing demands from industry to produce work-ready graduates, many universities are aiming to ensure their students have the opportunity to link theory and practice at some point within their studies. Whilst WIL has been embedded into teaching for many years in some disciplines, it is a relatively new concept in others, requiring the development of alternative approaches to established teaching practices including curriculum design and assessment, with associated implications on workload allocations and resourcing.

This paper considers the implications of overseeing the implementation of WIL from a strategic, organisational perspective within a multi-disciplinary environment at a specific university. It focuses on difficulties being faced by academic areas where WIL is emerging as a new practice, and discusses these within a university-wide context.

The paper draws on information obtained from interviews with Deans of Schools at a specific university, on steps required within their schools in preparing work-ready graduates through WIL. It considers current practice and implications for the future, particularly from a university-wide policy context. It also considers some of the key factors which enable or, in turn, restrict the effective implementation of WIL.

## **Evaluation of student practicum placement activities and skills**

ROBERT CROWTHER

REBECCA SEALEY

*James Cook University, Townsville, Australia*

WARWICK SPINKS

*Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia*

Currently students within a clinical exercise physiology degree program undertake up to 500 hours of practicum, with these hours recorded in paper-based logbooks. The practicum hours must meet strict accreditation requirements regarding the task-based category of all hours (i.e. 65% category A: face-to-face exercise service delivery). Due to the cumbersome and retrospective nature of the current logbooks and the minimal guidance provided by the accreditation body for intended learning outcomes, logbooks, and therefore the practicum experiences, are typically assessed on the basis of ensuring that the requisite hours are met, with little consideration of the embedded experience. Pilot reviewing of a small sample of completed logbooks indicates that hours are often inaccurately logged across the practicum categories, and this may impact on the student learning experience as there is no opportunity for remedial action. The proposed project will retrospectively map two years of logged practicum hours against the course learning outcomes and accreditation requirements in order to identify gaps between expected practicum outcomes and the actual student learning experience. The outcomes will provide the critical groundwork for the development and implementation of an interactive, real-time online placement learning system to monitor actual student placement experiences.

Keywords: practicum, log-books, learning outcomes, accreditation

## Showcasing University-wide Initiatives of Non-Placement WIL

RACHAEL HAINS-WESSON

FRIEDERIKA KAIDER

KAREN YOUNG

*Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia*

The quest to provide WIL experiences to increasing numbers of students is the aspiration of most universities in recognition of demand by employers for work-ready graduates. Co-op years, internships, or other types of placements which have been the hallmark of traditional WIL experiences are increasingly difficult to secure. Therefore other types of WIL have come to the fore as alternative work-related experiential learning activities. At Deakin University, a major course renewal process has provided the impetus and resources to develop a course-wide range of such alternative, but equally rich, WIL learning activities and assessments.

A case in point is a course in humanitarian assistance in which students begin their WIL activity by developing a response plan to an *online* simulated emergency humanitarian scenario. This is then followed by a *live* simulation of a different scenario in which students and sector representatives role-play operational and strategic functions. Students also interview personnel, conduct a press conference, facilitate funder and response team meetings and reflect on the development of their graduate and leadership capabilities.

This example, among others at Deakin, offers students authentic, professionally-based, integrated and scaffolded WIL learning experiences that are an alternative and complement to placements. The sharing of these initiatives may serve as a stimulus for expanding WIL offerings.

Keywords: simulation, role-play, alternative WIL experiences

## SHOWCASE

### **Meeting expectations: Get ready for new trends**

NHI BUI

*RMIT University Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

RMIT Vietnam is a branch campus of RMIT University (Melbourne, Australia), in which the Internship Program constitutes the major WIL activity of the curricula. Offered three times a year, the program is run by the Career Development and Employment unit (CD&E), whereas Academic Programs are responsible for assessing students' performance. CD&E have established a system to handle the administrative tasks and developed supporting activities to successfully connect 3800 students with 1300 organisations for internship placement over the past 10 years. The goal is to provide students with meaningful internship experiences and smooth transition into official employment.

However, in programs where an internship is not compulsory, the number of students choosing to do an internship over other elective courses has dropped remarkably from 51% in 2011 to 29% in 2013. Some other data collected from recent cycles also suggests that there seems to be some changes in demand.

This presentation focuses on whether or not our service still meets the expectations of stakeholders, especially our students. We will explore some possible reasons behind the changes and potential implications, as well as suggest how CD&E can address the issues and adapt to the new trends.

Keywords: Internship, employment, expectation, trend, adaptation

## Impact of 'away from home' on students' workplace learning

RON KERR

BRIAN HEMMINGS

RUSSELL KAY

*Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia*

This project examined the extent to which social contingency factors affect learning of undergraduate nursing/paramedic and teacher education students sent 'away' for workplace learning. Research has mostly concentrated on learning during work hours, virtually ignoring social contingencies. Students imbue social contingencies. These can include: additional expenses, relationships, transportation, accommodation, health, safety, culture, religion, carer, sports and employment commitments. How students' lived experiences outside the workplace impact on their curricular learning and their coping with additional demands were explored. Survey data (n=244 UG nurses/paramedics + 84 UG teachers) were analysed using SPSS. Two focus groups were also held. Results showed that students' social contingencies are clearly impacting on workplace learning.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Universities facilitate workplace learning policies encompassing social contingencies related to an 'away' placement.
- Students and their significant others' personal and health concerns assessed before undertaking extended 'away' workplace learning.
- Understand students' work-home life balance while on placement regarding assignment work.
- Construct repositories of available short-term accommodation, health services, eateries, communication, transport and social activities within communities utilised.
- Offer timely financial incentives enticing students to rural communities.
- Explore social contingencies and student attrition.
- Evaluate students' lived experiences of their whole practicum, not just the workplace.

Keywords: social contingencies, attrition, undergraduates, nurses, teachers

## **Building capacity for WIL through knowledge of graduate workforce characteristics**

ELENI BACOPANOS

SUSAN EDGAR

*The University of Notre Dame Australia, Perth, Australia*

**Background:** The Australian physiotherapy workforce is changing. The ability to build capacity in WIL must be based on relevant up-to-date knowledge of this changing workforce. Knowledge of employment patterns is essential to direct planning of WIL in the undergraduate curriculum.

**Aim:** The aim of this study was to determine workforce characteristics and job satisfaction for graduates from the School of Physiotherapy, The University of Notre Dame Australia.

**Method:** An online survey was conducted of all contactable graduates from 2006-2012 with a 50% response rate (n=157).

**Results:** The analysis of survey results demonstrated the clinical areas, settings, workload, remuneration and job satisfaction of Notre Dame graduates and compared this data to the Australian physiotherapy workforce.

The results identified the links between curriculum, clinical placements and workforce characteristics, highlighting the spread of workforce directly linked to focuses in the undergraduate curriculum. Findings also revealed the areas of job satisfaction linked to clinical streams in the workforce.

**Summary:** This study highlighted the role of WIL in building capacity in areas in workforce need. The findings will direct the planning of WIL in the undergraduate curriculum with the aim to produce better-equipped graduates with realistic career expectations.

**Keywords:** WIL, curriculum, physiotherapy, career expectations

## **Working together to achieve better WIL outcomes in WA: Improving productivity through more effective employer capacity**

DENISE JACKSON

*Edith Cowan University, Perth, WA, Australia*

MEGAN LE CLUS

*Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia*

PAMELA STRUTHERS

*Murdoch University, Perth, WA, Australia*

SONIA FERNS

*Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia*

DIANE MCLAREN

*UWA, Perth, WA, Australia*

Many issues impact the implementation of WIL, including difficulties in effectively engaging with employers when organising WIL opportunities and achieving high student productivity during the WIL experience.

This project is designed to develop and trial effective approaches that will increase employers' understanding of, and engagement in, WIL opportunities in WA Business Schools. In partnership with WA universities, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia (CCIWA) will explore, approaches to improve employer engagement in WIL, effective support requirements to improve WIL outcomes for all stakeholders and ways of enhancing productive and mutually beneficial partnerships between industry and universities.

A survey of CCIWA members will gather feedback on their experiences in WIL. Focus groups will further explore employer needs and innovative approaches to delivering WIL in different businesses. Data analysis will determine key issues in improving employer engagement in WIL, partnership models that facilitate employer participation and inform the design of an employer support/advisory service, trialled by CCIWA for one semester.

Data on the volume and nature of support provided to employers, and a final survey among participants, will gauge the impact and usefulness of the service for improving the WIL process. Strategies on setting up an employer support service to improve WIL outcomes will be identified.

Keywords: WIL, employer needs, employer engagement

## Towards a Collaborative Partner Best Practice Approach to WIL

MAXINE BRADSHAW

TERRI JOINER

Federation University, Gippsland campus, Victoria, Australia

### CONTEXT

Common impediments identified in all WIL programs include cost, time and effort (Abeysekera, 2006). Therefore given the resource and time-intensive aspects of WIL programs consideration needs to be given to effective, sustainable program designs. The presentation is given by Naomi Dunn the HR Relationship Manager for ASIC Australian Securities and Investment Commission at Traralgon and academic Maxine Bradshaw Academic Coordinator for the Industry Placement Program and Director of Regional Engagement Faculty of Business, Federation University Australia. This showcases a regional case study between ASIC based at Traralgon, Victoria Australia and the School of Business and Economics, Gippsland Campus now Federation University Australia, building partner capacity for WIL opportunities.

This case study is part of a stakeholder study in order to inform changes to assessment, evaluation and best practices.

### METHOD

Multi-modal approach to data collection was used. A structured online survey was used including semi-structured interviews and focus groups involving students, industry partners, educators, program administrators. Open questions were analysed using inductive coding and thematic analysis at individual response level, following Mishler's (1990) basic principles of qualitative research.

Identified themes were interpreted within the broader theoretical framework of principles and practices in WIL design.

Issue being showcased derived from the industry practitioner's perspective, such as factors that are critical for success, quality assurance and:

1. Assessment Consideration

Evidence from this study shows that learning and skill development happens at the work placement and that industry practitioner's evaluation should be given greater weighting.

2. Practices and building capacity

Greater collaboration between the academic (educator) supervising the placement, the university and the industry practitioner. Amongst the factors that industry practitioners identify as important to success, include; considerable advance planning within their own organisation, to match students, allocating teams and supervisors, managing expectations, feedback, reflective practices, mentoring.

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## Exploring the complementary roles of academics and host supervisors in debriefing for student learning

ANNA ROWE

THERESA WINCHESTER-SEETO

*Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia*

Unlike 'traditional' courses, work integrated learning (WIL) requires the involvement of both academics and a supervisor from a partner organisation to promote student learning. Its success relies on the effective interaction between universities and partner organisations (Orrell, 2011), underpinned by a shared understanding of the meaning and purpose of WIL (Peach *et al.*, 2012). Recent research shows academics and host supervisors undertake complementary and differing roles in WIL (Winchester-Seeto *et al.*, 2013).

Debriefing is considered 'critical' to WIL experiences (Shinnick *et al.*, 2011) as it helps students create links between the classroom and real world settings, and improves their employability skills (Coll *et al.*, 2009). Research on its use in WIL is, however, limited. Little is known about what approaches to debriefing are most effective for particular learning outcomes or the potential value to learning when academics and host supervisors employ complementary approaches.

This Showcase will explore complementary and differing roles of academics and host supervisors in debriefing. Specific questions include: What is the purpose of debriefing in WIL? When is debriefing used? What are the most effective approaches to debriefing for particular learning outcomes? How can academics and hosts most effectively and collaboratively work together to maximise student learning outcomes?

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## **Student competency in the workplace: the remuneration bias of industry supervisors**

JULIA CALDICOTT

LISA MILNE

*Southern Cross University, Coffs Harbour, Australia*

WIL programs are embedded in an ever-growing proportion of the tertiary courses offered in contemporary Australian universities. Often workplace supervisors are charged with the responsibility of assessing student competency in discipline-specific contexts. Whilst assessment practices in WIL have been well documented, there is a paucity of research regarding the biases held by workplace supervisors and the resultant impact in the assessment process. This initial stage of an action research project examined the supervisor evaluations of tourism and hospitality management students who were undertaking their mandatory capstone internship to identify bias related to remuneration of the placement. Data used in the analysis was derived from workplace supervisor evaluation forms which assessed students on fifteen competencies in terms of skill level and importance of skill. Minimal supervisor bias was evident in the ratings between students undertaking paid placements or those on unpaid placements. The results indicate that the use of the selected supervisor evaluation assessment item enhances the capacity of the WIL program to gain authentic feedback from industry partners on students' developing capabilities, irrespective of placement remuneration. The study highlighted the benefits of assessment strategy review in fostering a continuous improvement culture in WIL curriculum design and program development.

Keywords: Work integrated learning, competencies, workplace assessor bias, paid/unpaid placement

## **Are we all on the same page? Partner conceptions of equity, diversity and inclusion – implications for inclusive WIL.**

JACQUELINE MACKAWAY

*Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) cannot be realised unilaterally by any one stakeholder and its success relies on collaborative relationships between universities and partner organisations (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010), built upon a shared understanding of and purpose for WIL (Peach, Larkin & Ruinard, 2012). Recent research indicates that when stakeholder motives for WIL are misaligned there may be significant equity and access issues for students (Koppi et al., 2013; Mackaway, Winchester-Seeto & Rowe, 2013). So do WIL stakeholders need to be 'on the same page' regarding equity and access for inclusive WIL to be achieved? This presentation shares findings from a study which explores the basis and nature of engagement by institutional WIL stakeholders with issues of equity, diversity and inclusion, and considers how 'conceptions' of these matters may affect the ways in which WIL is thought about and practised. Using NVivo 10, over 50 publically available documents were reviewed from nearly 30 partner organisations, professional bodies and universities. Surprisingly, compliance motives appear to have less influence over the ways stakeholders understand and engage with issues of equity, inclusion and diversity than expected. Instead, the purpose and identity of an organisation plays a much greater role. Implications for inclusive WIL are discussed.

Key words: inclusive WIL; partners; diversity

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## **Authentic WIL in action: Building capacity of children, communities and the future health work force via an interprofessional health practice model**

KRISTY TOMLINSON

MARGO BREWER

*Curtin University, Perth, WA, Australia*

### BACKGROUND

Challis Early Childhood Education Centre is located in Armadale, Western Australia. Since 2011, this setting has provided interprofessional practice placements for over 249 Curtin University students from speech pathology, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, social work, psychology, dietetics and nursing, making it one of Curtin University's most recognised, authentic work-integrated fieldwork programs.

### INITIATIVE

This innovative approach combines clinical education with student-led service delivery. Students work in interprofessional teams to plan, implement and evaluate much needed health services to young children and build the capacity of the school community through parent and teacher education. The Challis Interprofessional Practice Program has had a notable impact on student learning and has contributed significantly to the development of interprofessional practice capabilities required to meet the needs of the health system locally, nationally and internationally.

### METHODOLOGY

Curtin's Interprofessional Capability Assessment Tool (ICAT) measures students' behaviour change on core practice capabilities. Students, academic staff and primary school staff complete online questionnaires to obtain qualitative feedback on the program.

### EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Comparison of student's practice capabilities from mid to end of placement indicate significant improvement across all four ICAT subscales. Feedback from parents, teachers and supervisors indicate wide-ranging benefits to the community, while pre- and post-intervention outcome measures indicate significant child health improvements.

### THEMES ADDRESSED

- Teaching and learning capacity for Work Integrated Learning programs
- Developing partnership or partner capacity for Work Integrated Learning opportunities
- Staff and student capacity building for Work Integrated Learning

## **Resources for successful work integrated learning in health science placements: A qualitative study of student experiences**

LIZ ABERY

CLAIRE DRUMMOND

NADIA BEVAN

*Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia*

### BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Flinders University Health Sciences students represent varying health majors and undertake Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in their final year of study. Mostly the WIL experience is of a health promotion nature and aims to deliver an invaluable experience. Whilst a core topic to the degree, clinical or industry specific competencies are not required. According to Billett (2011) WIL opportunities can be provided to students; however is that enough to meet needs, expectations and future career aspirations? This project investigated what resources, whether practical or theoretical, are required by students to ensure a positive WIL outcome.

### INITIATIVE/PRACTICE

This presentation will showcase research examining the management of a Flinders University Health Sciences WIL program and how it has been altered to accommodate the changing needs of the student cohort.

### METHOD (S) OF EVALUATIVE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Von Treuer *et al.*, (2011), have identified a lack of evaluation of the benefits of WIL seen through the eyes of the student. This project extrapolated the "lived experience" of students who completed a Health Sciences WIL placement. Qualitative research and analysis methods (Patton, 2002) were used to determine the facilitators and challenges that differentiate a successful WIL experience from simply completing another degree topic.

### EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

The outcomes of this research will inform and support capacity building of those who partake and facilitate WIL programs particularly where clinical or industry specific competencies are not required.

### THEMES ADDRESSED

- Building institutional capacity
- Teaching and learning capacity for Work Integrated Learning programs
- Staff and student capacity building for Work Integrated Learning

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## Applying networked learning theory to examine work integrated learning (WIL) in a successful grant project team

PAUL SIJPKES

*The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia*

Networked learning theory decentralises learning and emphasises the examination of learning through connections with other learners and through access to resources. For the purpose of this study, WIL is understood more broadly as the learning that occurs through activity at work by examining a community of practice (CoP) constituted by a grant project team developing learning technology. Adult learning is examined using a triangulated method derived from Networked Learning theory. 14 members of a grant project team over 7 Australian Universities and 1 rural health services were surveyed using a social network survey tool asking about (a) the frequency and medium of communication with other team members during the course of the project and (b) colleagues' perceived level of expertise in key areas regarding the project. 6 team members responded to the survey and 3 were interviewed in regard to their experience with the project. Analysis of resulting network graphs showed a high level of frequency and face-to-face contact between core team members, interviews revealed that some felt they had learned from the project, particularly about the possibilities of web technology use. Using the mixed methods of combining interview data and social network survey data may provide researchers with a richer empirical lens for examining WIL.

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## SHOWCASE

# Creating capacity for authentic learning in professional Graphic & Advertising design studios

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LEE INGRAM

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Students in graphic design and creative advertising need industry exposure and inclusion in their final year of degree study. Many design studios are relatively small, employing 10-20 people. Supporting student experience becomes a serious drain on the professional studios' resources.

The problem was how to create a working environment that would allow relatively large numbers of students to engage in a working studio and engage in 'live' professional briefs with real clients.

A programme was developed in conjunction with design studios in Perth, Western Australia. The programme uses a rotation system to engage twenty-one students in groups of seven, in an authentic studio-based integrated learning experience. This takes place over fourteen weeks, has minimal impact on the professional working studio and reduces the impact on agency resources.

Interaction between professional designers, academics and students in a 'live working studio' creates a strong Work Integrated Learning experience.

The programme is currently being executed and the first round of results will become a part of the conference presentation.

The presentation addresses the inclusive learning experience, the address of WIL impacting on the professional working studio and industry feedback within an academic assessment framework. This creates capacity in small studio environments.

This work follows on from the ACEN presentation in 2012, © *Industry assessment of third year creative advertising students potential employability*. (Showcase / Best practice / Topical issues).

Keywords: design studios, rotation system, WIL

## **Building a capstone WIL experience one pebble at a time - Using an E-portfolio to demonstrate development of WIL related competencies**

MANDY SHIRCORE

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The Faculty of Law, Business and the Creative Arts at James Cook University has introduced three common WIL capstone subjects of which students must choose (and be accepted into), one in their final year of study. The subjects include a professional internship, multi-disciplinary industry / community project and independent project. Assessment in each of the capstone subjects requires students to compile job applications addressing the selection criteria (internship) or tender (projects) to demonstrate that the student has acquired the necessary competencies and knowledge throughout their degree to undertake the job or project. In order to prepare for this final year WIL experience, students are introduced to an ePortfolio in their first year of the degree requiring them to collect, reflect and select evidence as they progress through their degree that can be used both in the assessment in the final year WIL subjects and beyond into the world of work. Preparation for these final year WIL experiences therefore begins in a student's first semester of university. This paper will discuss the development, challenges and implementation of the ePortfolio platform for use in a whole of degree WIL program that enables students to engage in and manage their own learning from transition into and out of university.

## **It's a WRAP: A WIL-placement Reflection Assessment Paradigm**

KAREN YOUNG

JAMES KIMBERLEY

SUE NOY

*Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria, Australia*

Reflective practice has long been recognised as having significant impact on deep learning. In recent years generalised reflection frameworks that have arisen in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) include: schemes based on a prescribed set of levels of engagement with reflective practice (the 5R's, the 6A's, four category scheme), models and applications to improve practice, and rubrics designed for CDL pathways in courses.

Varied approaches to reflection across disciplines and the difficulty of including sufficient detail without prescription may have contributed to the paucity of tested formative and summative assessment templates designed for WIL placement reflections. A new framework entitled the 'WIL-placement Assessment Reflection Paradigm' (WRAP) provides an amalgamation of key models and frameworks and utilises Borton's 'What? So What? and Now What?' model (1970) as well as adopting the principles of instructional rubrics that aim to address criteria across a range of experience-based reflections.

This paper will reflect on the WRAP framework: its development, trials, operationalisation to date, and further empirical studies planned to test the framework and whether reflective practice has a positive impact that can be equated with transformative learning.

Key Words: Work integrated learning, reflection, rubric, frameworks

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## **Enabling WIL through International Intensive Units**

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In June 2014 a study tour (two week intensive unit) will run in New York City. The tour is for postgraduate communication students and forms the assessment for their work integrated learning (WIL) unit – Professional Practice. The students will be immersed in the New York startup scene while they are working on their projects, 'a documentary of the new'.

A pilot program will run alongside the study tour. A Diploma of Photoimaging student will accompany the tour as a documentary photographer. The work that they do on the tour is an assessable WIL component of their program. If successful the pilot program will be expanded across RMIT.

This presentation will showcase:

- The highlights of the student projects and experience
- Presentation of student perception: before, during and after the tour
- A commentary on how to provide work integrated learning opportunities to students across different education levels
- The value of providing an international WIL experience through intensive programs
- A discussion about the delivery of an integrated international and WIL experience
- Preparing students to communicate the value of their experience

## **Building capacity in professional placement of Australian diagnostic radiographers**

JOHN TESSIER

*The University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia*

### BACKGROUND

Increased student intake in recent years due to workforce demand has necessitated use of placement sites at great distances from the University site. This has resulted in reduced opportunity for students to obtain individually preferred placements and may possibly have affected student clinical performance.

### INITIATIVE

The aim of this research is to evaluate an alternative method of professional placement targeting increased flexibility in delivery.

### METHOD

Cyclical implementation and evaluation of changes has influenced the undergraduate program at the University of Newcastle. With universities utilising clinical sites throughout Australia any improvements are advantageous to the profession of radiography through the training of its future members.

Questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews have been designed, implemented and evaluated to obtain input from students and supervising radiographers involved in the professional placement element of the program.

### RESULTS

The implementation of part-time placements has resulted in benefits to both students and supervising radiographers.

Increased choices for students have resulted in placement performance unimpeded by factors such as financial and personal limitations.

Creation of placement formats suitable to a variety of workplace designs has assisted in maintaining the involvement of sites, their feedback central to the continuation of part time placement formats.

### CONCLUSION

By increasing flexibility for placement sites and reducing inhibitors to student performance high standards of professional placement have been maintained during a time period in which substantial increases in student numbers have occurred.

## **Enhancing WIL @ RMIT**

ROBBIE AUSTIN

SUSAN MATE

*RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia*

Work integrated learning (WIL) is a strategic priority for RMIT University, which aims to position itself as the first choice provider of work and industry-relevant learning. In 2012 RMIT embarked on a number of interlinking initiatives focused on enhancing support structures for WIL. This presentation will provide an overview of the major challenges and initiatives. A key priority is to implement a university-wide software system and standardised WIL processes across RMIT's global campuses to support administration and industry partnership development, promoting a more consistent WIL experience for all stakeholders. The WIL software system will be used to manage WIL activities, reduce risks and improve efficiency.

In 2013 standardised WIL processes and online resources were developed for students and staff and in 2014 planning, discovery and deployment of the WIL system commenced, the system is being implemented across all disciplines along with policy and procedural changes. Significant drivers for the success of the initiatives include top down vision and support and the creation of executive advisory groups, working parties, communities of practice and local champions.

This showcase presentation will provide an opportunity for participants to discuss and consider the value of system implementation including consideration for overseeing the evaluation of effectiveness of the initiatives brought about by implementation.

Keywords: WIL software, online resources

## SHOWCASE

# **An innovative programme to build capacity in Physiotherapy WIL**

JOANNE CONNAUGHTON

*The University of Notre Dame, Freemantle, Australia*

Physiotherapy students in Australia complete mandatory 'core' clinical placements in WIL. Health facilities are at capacity providing these placements. New Physiotherapy programmes and increasing numbers of students are presenting challenges for facilities to meet the growing demand for 'core' placements. New ways need to be explored to build capacity without compromising Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) accreditation requirements.

An innovative programme, 'Imbedding simulation into clinical training', funded by HWA is being implemented in sixteen Physiotherapy Programmes across Australia. All are using the same standardised scenarios with role-play actors and medium fidelity mannequins. A simulated ward and physiotherapy outpatient area (SLE) has been built for this project at The University of Notre Dame Australia, School of Physiotherapy.

To build capacity, the School has imbedded simulation into WIL facilities that cannot always fulfil APC requirements for a 'core' placement due to inconsistent numbers of patients presenting with specific medical conditions. Students attend the SLE once a week throughout their five-week placement. Using targeted scenarios to supplement and enhance the WIL experience these facilities can now consistently meet APC requirements for a 'core' placement.

This presentation will showcase the programme being implemented at the School of Physiotherapy, University of Notre Dame.

## **Dipping your toe in the water to help students get their feet in the door – lessons learned in developing a successful Arts Internship Program**

ROBERT EWERS

*The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia*

Although there has been growing support for student internships and work placements in the past 10 years, questions relating to their academic merit, their sustainability and resourcing still remain. Management are understandably wary about committing to a program requiring considerable input from academic and administrative staff and academics have concerns about taking on additional workload in the context of demands to improve L&T and research outcomes. This is particularly the case for an internship program for students in generic degrees such as the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Social Sciences, where there has not been the drive from industry to provide internships and where there is no specific professional body to provide support in setting up such a program.

This presentation addresses the above concerns and puts forward a model which provides positive outcomes for each of the key stakeholders: students, host organisations and academic mentors.

It highlights several key ingredients for a successful Arts internship program:

- getting the structure right and keeping it simple
- maintaining integrity and balance in the 'triangle of responsibility'
- adding value and capacity to the student experience
- maximising opportunities for the Faculty through engagement with industry

## **Developing clinical capacity and strengthening community engagement**

ELEANOR HORTON  
MANDY MORGAN  
BRONWYN DOYLE  
MARIANNE WALLIS

*University of the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia*

Many clinics develop as student placements, across a variety of disciplines, on university campuses, usually run by students and facilitated by staff. This showcase describes a different process of placement development and engagement. It describes how one community, non-government, clinical partner (Blue Care) engaged a university school (School of Nursing and Midwifery) in conversations to develop a successful partnership venture. The objectives were to: increase the number of nursing and allied health student placements in the community; provide high quality learning experiences in a supportive inter-professional environment; improve patient outcomes; and contribute to the University commitment to community engagement. So far, the clinic, staffed by Blue Care interdisciplinary staff, within University grounds, provides clinical placements for nursing, occupational therapy, and dietetic students. Data examples for this showcase have been collected from client and student feedback. The effectiveness of true interdisciplinary student placement at the clinic, providing high quality wound care for clients, has been evidenced by the student feedback comments and the successful healing of some very long term wounds. Other positive effects from the clinic include: the development of partnerships with medical specialists offering services for patients, developing a maintenance clinic and from other wound care research collaborative networks.

Keywords: capacity, interprofessional, learning, engagement, partnerships.

## **Practice-integrated learning (PIL): Adapted physical education program**

SONJA KIERNAN

*Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

At Victoria University (VU) Work Integrated Learning is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies, including Practice Integrated Learning (PIL) and Problem Based Learning (PBL), that integrate theory with practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum. The learning activities present a rich range of experiences and environments that enable students to engage with practitioners, industry professionals and workplace and community settings.

The Adapted Physical Education Program is an exciting games and activities program led by Physical Education students. Children accessing the program are from Special and Specialist Schools in the West and North of Melbourne and have a fun time exploring a range of modified sports each week with emphasis on skill and motor development. All sessions are supervised by experienced staff and VU students are trained in delivery of specialised programs that cater for the individual needs of participants. The Adapted PE Program has grown significantly over the past 3 years with the addition of significant partnerships, programs and employment opportunities for VU Students. Adapted Physical Education is a specialised teaching profession to which VU can cater for this demand in the marketplace thus creating more employment opportunities for our students.

Keywords: Practice-Integrated Learning (PIL), Adapted Physical Education Program, Victoria University (VU)

## **Practice-integrated learning (PIL): Strategic partnerships and engagement**

SONJA KIERNAN

*Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*

PIL is an umbrella term which includes a range of approaches and strategies that integrate classroom-learned knowledge with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum.

VU students involved in PIL have a percentage of their course content assessed in a real or simulated industry or community workplace prior to graduation. This means that when students graduate, they have both theoretical and practical graduate capabilities.

The University's Partnerships and Collaboration with industry and the community provide 'real life' PIL Opportunities. Every PIL program involves partnering industry or community based organisations. Some of the organisations who are involved in Practice Integrated Learning Program at the College of Sport and Exercise Science:

- *Western Bulldogs*
- *Melbourne Vixens*
- *Western Jets*
- *Special Schools*
- *School Sport Victoria – which covers 68 schools in the Western Metropolitan Region*
- *Western English Language School – All Campus's*
- *Overnewton Anglican Community College*
- *St.Leonards College*
- *Lowther Hall Grammar*

Keywords: Practice-Integrated Learning (PIL), Partnerships, Victoria University (VU)