

# International WIL placements: Their influence on student professional development, personal growth and cultural competence

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In the increasingly global world, skills in cultural competence now form part of the minimum standards of practice required for allied health professionals. During an international work-integrated learning (WIL) placement, allied health students' cultural competence is expected to be enhanced. The present study scrutinized reflective journals of students who completed an international WIL placement to identify themes related to student learning. A retrospective content analysis identified three core themes with sub-themes: *Cultural Competence* with three subthemes: cultural egocentricity and cultural adjustment, cultural conflict in dealing with disability (not resolved over time) and, communication and language barriers; *Professional Development* with two subthemes: the evolution of evaluating success and impact on future practice, and *Personal Growth* with two subthemes: newfound reality – constant self-discovery and social responsibility. These themes provide guidance for academics in preparing students beforehand and the reflections during international WIL placements. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2014, 15(2), 107-117)

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With globalization drawing communities together, university curricula should aim to foster global citizenry in new graduates, ensuring they are equipped with enhanced cultural awareness and competency attributes. As a response, universities worldwide are mobilizing students to undertake a range of international learning experiences (Taylor, 2004). However, Thibeault (2006) states that:

...graduates' reality and knowledge might end with the boundaries of our (university) affluence, but their professional decisions have far reaching consequences, here and abroad. We are entering the globalization era, but do we truly prepare our students for the new world order, conceptually and ethically. (p. 159)

Cultural competence is defined as the cultural knowledge base, along with the ability to apply the knowledge in the practice context, "...to seek to challenge marginalization and discrimination" (Jirwe, Gerrish & Emami, 2006, p. 6). Cultural competence is an evolving, ongoing process, not a set of skills that can be learned in the university lecture hall (Maltby & Abrams, 2009). The challenge for allied health educators is to present students with opportunities to see the world from the perspective of their clients, stepping into their world and walking in their shoes, in effect becoming more of a global citizen rather than an ethnocentric practitioner with a one world view.

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Wittman and Velde (2002) argue that for explicit development of cultural competency skills, allied health curricula must therefore offer students an international experience. The skills required for entry-level practice are indeed not only learnt on campus through cognitive processes, but also through attention to the interrelationships between cultural competence, critical thinking, and intellectual development that occurs in an authentic international environment.

#### *International Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Placements*

Students view work-integrated learning (WIL) placements as the most significant influence on their future career (McKenna, Scholtes, Fleming, & Gilbert, 2001). The authors contend that fostering international placements as the centerpiece of a curricula's WIL program will have a significant impact of advancing the global citizenship of graduates. International work-integrated learning (WIL) placements immerse students in the social and health milieu of the host country, enabling growth that has implications for the students' future practice as allied health professionals (Maltby & Abrams, 2009). Universities around the globe have traditionally encouraged international student mobility in a variety of forms including semester or year-long exchange programs, volunteer work, undertaking a short course and WIL placements in another country (Australian Universities International Directors' Forum, 2007). In Canada, 54% of nursing programs report using international experiences. However, Australia has lagged behind other countries with only 6% of undergraduates completing an international experience before graduating. Less than 8% of the total international experiences were in the form of clinical education placements (Australian Universities International Directors' Forum, 2007).

Previous research has shown that internationally based WIL placements foster enhanced understanding of how the global nature of economic, political and cultural exchange impacts on an individual's cultural competence (Drain et al., 2007), personal and professional growth and practice as a health practitioner (Pawar, Hanna, & Sheridan, 2004; Whiteford & McAllister, 2006). Internationalized WIL programs provide an interface for students, with the cultural and health milieu of host countries extending the student's clinical reasoning skills into areas not offered in traditional WIL placements within their home country. This interface is valuable in assisting students to understand client history from a socio-cultural perspective.

Immersion of students into an international context distinctly different to their own also provides the opportunity for the students to foster culturally appropriate and holistic care (Maltby & Abrams, 2009). Rather than just visiting and observing, being immersed by undertaking an international WIL experience can increase students' self-awareness, and allow them to examine their own beliefs, practices, values and behaviors (Lipson & Desantis, 2007). Such experiences also allow students to learn how to consider factors that affect their client's ability to live their lives, experience health, and how living conditions affect well-being. By living within the culture, the students' self-reflections are likely to make them open to learn from clients and thereby how to provide enhanced culturally appropriate care and develop culturally appropriate intervention programs (Maltby & Abrams; Grusky, 2000).

#### *The 'Go Global' Program*

Curtin University in Western Australia, has embraced the concept of internationalization as being an important factor in developing culturally competent allied health professionals. The Curtin University's Health Sciences international WIL program, 'Go Global' involves inter-professional groups of students from occupational therapy, nursing, physiotherapy, pharmacy, speech therapy, social work, dietetics and health promotion. 'Go Global' commenced in 2001 and the

program has expanded each year since then. In 2013, 120 students from the various health professions will complete a five week international WIL placement at a host site in India, Ukraine, Cambodia, Philippines or China. The 'Go Global' program embraces a service-learning philosophy. The characteristics of the 'Go Global' service-learning model include the placement being relatively self-directed with a strong student focus, the formation of reciprocal partnerships with the host sites, reflective practice and action oriented projects (Kenworthy-U'ren & Peterson, 2005). Each year multiple student groups travel to and work at the host sites so that there is some continuity of care and progression towards the host site becoming self-sustaining in its ability to provide quality care for the clients it serves.

'Go Global' students are provided frequent opportunities for reflective practice primarily through daily journaling and debriefing sessions with supervisors. In service-learning the primacy of experience is the source of learning. Structured reflective journals are used to explore the 'Go Global' student's progression in developing skills, knowledge and competencies required by the relevant disciplines. They are completed almost daily with core themes and topics provided to guide the student's reflection. Reflective thinking is a significant factor influencing the development of cultural competence and a learning tool used as part of a student's participation in the international service-learning program (Odawara, 2005). Hence, the aim of the present study was to scrutinize reflective journals of students completing a 'Go Global' international WIL placement to identify themes related to student learning that emerged as a result of the placement.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### *Participants*

Participants were approached through email and mail regarding the aim of the present study. They were informed about the confidential way data were to be handled and asked whether or not they wanted to participate in the study with their reflective journals as the source of data. The reflective journals of graduated students who completed the 'Go Global' program WIL in the period 2008 – 2011 in Ukraine, South Africa, China and India and who gave their written informed consent were collected. The reflective journals were submitted in hard copy or electronically. The present study was approved by The Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee in Western Australia (OTSW-18-2011).

### *Data*

In total, 31 reflective journals were reviewed until no new themes emerged, whereupon saturation was reached. The 31 reviewed journals comprised a minimum of 30 pages each. From Ukraine, 24 reflective journals were scrutinized, covering the years 2009-2011. From South Africa the corresponding figures were four journals, all from the year 2011. From China one journal, from 2011 was reviewed, and from India two journals, both from 2010 were reviewed.

### *Analysis*

Retrospective content analysis (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) was applied through collecting, coding and analyzing data from the reflective journals. This approach is appropriate to use for poorly explored multi-faceted phenomena in healthcare and educational research (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Meaning units, defined as "...the constellation of words or statements that relate to the same central meaning..." (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106), were identified, condensed, abstracted and coded. The coded meaning units were then compared based on differences and similarities and sorted into sub-themes and exhaustive and mutually exclusive themes

(Krippendorff, 2004). These tentative themes were reviewed by co-authors and revised until consensus was reached. Quotations were identified to illustrate the themes. Throughout the results section, quotes from the reflective journals are labeled with the country where the student completed their international placement and the year.

To increase credibility and dependability, member checking was carried out through an on-line ‘wiki site’, where participants were presented with the consensus based results and five questions, viz.: “Do you:

- 1) recognize the three main themes from your own experiences?
- 2) find them mutually exclusive?
- 3) recognize the seven sub-themes from your own experiences?
- 4) find them mutually exclusive?
- 5) find the quotes illustrative?

Four students were recruited and provided feedback on these questions by answers ranging from 1-4 pages. The participants recognized the themes, sub-themes and confirmed the choice of quotes, none of them being from their own reflective journals. However, all four of them were pointing out the close relationship between the three themes in response to question 2) whereas the responses to question 4) were more confirmatory. Based on their feedback the initially presented results were not changed, but the interrelationships are addressed in the discussion section.

## RESULTS

Three primary themes were generated from the 31 reflective journals, which were underpinned by seven sub-themes. To demonstrate the interrelationships, the themes and sub-themes are presented as a pictorial in Figure 1.

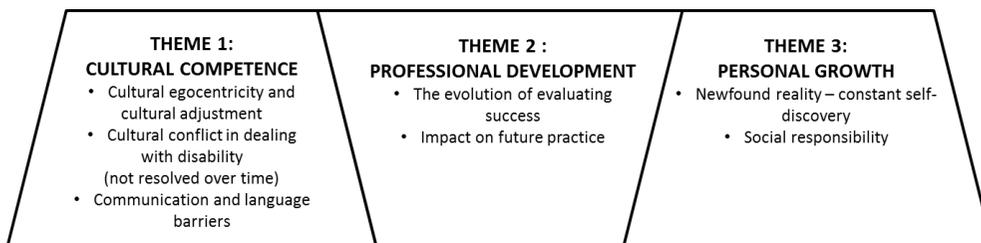


FIGURE 1. The three themes of the reflective journals and their seven sub-themes

### *Theme 1: Cultural Competence*

Students reflected on their emerging capacity to work in a new culture. They reported enhancing their own personal and professional skills towards being able to practice and deliver therapy services in a culturally competent manner. Three sub-themes emerged: (i) cultural egocentricity and cultural adjustment, (ii) cultural conflict in dealing with disability (not resolved over time) and (iii) communication and language barriers; all of them having clear implications on cultural competence.

Cultural egocentricity and cultural adjustment was first recorded during the initial days in the host agency as a sense of feeling culturally superior. Students reflected that the services delivered and the ‘ways things are done’ in Australia appeared more effective than the services that were observed in the host agency. Students recorded a sense of novelty in relation to the host site practices sometimes seemingly referring to host site practices as ‘quaint’. This was

frequently journalled using patronizing or condescending language directed towards the host site. "When we arrived at the orphanage we had to take our temperatures with old thermometers under the arm. This is such an old fashioned technique and really shows just how behind the times this orphanage is." (Ukraine, 2011)

After spending more time in the host country, students recorded a shifting perspective. Students began to realize that the issues in the host country were different, not worse than, or inferior, to Australia. Over time, they enunciated a greater appreciation of the culture itself, the value of the country's history and how traditions and beliefs came about. For example, students who worked in South Africa started to integrate an understanding of the years of apartheid on the current South African health issues:

We discussed the different perception of time and attitude to work...jobs in South Africa are paid very low compared to what we are used to...so we discussed if this contributes to their seemingly low motivation to work...and the tasks we add on to their normal jobs, may actually have been perceived as a burden. (South Africa, 2010)

Cultural conflict in dealing with disability (not resolved over time) was the second sub-theme. Therapy students in Australia are exposed to the concepts of social inclusion and non-discrimination early in their university education. Rights and equity for people with disabilities in society are values that are consistently instilled in allied health students. From the students' perspective, there was an apparent lack of care, compassion and respect from the staff for the children and adults living or receiving services in the host sites:

I am concerned by what I have seen of the CP [cerebral palsy] interventions used.....I feel it is not even effective as treatment... it is not play focused but work focused....however, the staff were not very receptive and insisted hard work is what the activity should be. (China, 2009)

Students reported that the carers and nurses appeared to be more focused on the efficiency and logistics of looking after the children and adults, rather than pursuing the goals of therapy. Students vented their frustration because they felt they were 'in the way' of the carers:

One of the physio[therapy] students and myself have been ranging, massaging and singing to this boy who is 4 and a half years old who has severe cerebral palsy,...and who spends all day every day in bed in the most horrible looking foetal position. Every time I touch him his face lights up and he gives me the world's biggest smile. But yesterday the doctor told us that we should not waste our time with him as he has toxoplasmosis and will die very soon even when last year's team told her that this diagnosis may be incorrect. She still won't listen and no matter what we said she won't listen! (Ukraine, 2011)

Communication and language barriers were often recorded by the students. In all host sites translators were used to facilitate communication. Problems occurred frequently because the message was lost in translation. For example, it could be a translator being unable to accurately decode the student's justification for a change in staff practice or the reason a student was completing a specific intervention. The majority of students did not speak the host country language resulting in gestures being the primary form of communication when translators were not available. Because of the communication breakdown students perceived that the chances of change occurring on a sustainable basis in the host site was significantly reduced. For example, one student wrote "previous (Go Global) teams have put a lot of effort into creating...these are nowhere to be seen in...and they spent time educating about positioning for feeding yet this has not been adopted" (Ukraine, 2011), while another wrote:

“the hardest thing I have encountered was the language barrier, I was previously aware of how I would go about this barrier, but once being in the situation, I felt quite hopeless with communicating”. (Ukraine, 2011)

*Theme 2: Professional Development*

The reflective journals demonstrated that significant development of the student as a professional occurs during international WIL placements. Two sub-themes emerged: (i) the evolution of evaluating success and (ii) the impact on future practice.

The evolution of evaluating success was demonstrated with a shift in the concept of success and the students’ understanding of how they would evaluate success. Initially, the students felt that working individually with children was an important focus, as described in this student’s statement from the end of the first week: “The goal now for therapy is to start getting the children to a pre-primary level, by having them up in chairs with a desk/table and doing interactive fun activities where they can start doing more age-appropriate activities.” (Ukraine, 2011).

Over time, students began to integrate their awareness of the context and form a bigger-picture view of the role therapy played. Alongside this were changes in the students’ notion of what success entailed. As this happened, students frequently shifted their focus of the ‘client’ being the individual person, to the ‘client’ being the organization where the person received services or lived. One of the students wrote: “I realised that this placement is more about sustainable interventions, and I shouldn’t feel bad that there may not be many therapeutic gains in the individual sessions.” (Ukraine, 2011).

Similarly, the realization those individual sessions with single clients may have limited long term impact, and the need to consider therapy not just in terms of the actual time spent with each individual, but with a more consultative model of delivery. One student wrote: “We decided that we wanted to continue what we had been doing, but move to J’s classroom, so that we could model it to the teachers.” (South Africa, 2011). Another student summed it up this way:

Our interventions although very useful are not appropriate if the staff do not understand the needs of these children. I think that we need to focus on changing their perceptions of these children so that they see the relevance of our work and the importance of engaging the children and creating a stimulating and interactive environment. (Ukraine, 2009)

Impact on future practice was frequently discussed by students in relation to their future as a clinician. There was often an explicit awareness of developing enhanced practice and interpersonal skills during the international placement that would be useful in their future practice. There was frequent reference to the increased realization of communication being a vital skill for future clinical practice:

I realise how much I rely on information gathered from other health professionals and the client’s family. Having this information allows me to make informed decisions about therapy and I can ensure I’m not going to cause harm to the client...This highlighted the importance of communicating. (Ukraine, 2010)

The journals included multiple statements demonstrating the value that students placed on working in an inter-professional student team:

It was a great inter-professional experience. It felt good that I was able to pass on my knowledge to the other students and staff, and that they were so interested in this aspect of the OT role. This was especially so since at the team meeting that evening, the physios

seemed excited to pass on what they had learnt to the rest of the students. It was also really good to put some of the theory that I have learnt into practice. (South Africa, 2011)

Students also discussed how valuable their newly developed teamwork skills and inter-professional skills will be in their future clinical roles:

When I begin working in the next few months, there are a variety of skills and experiences that will undoubtedly enrich my clinical practice. Firstly I have further developed my inter-professional and teamwork skills through working with students from other disciplines... (Ukraine 2011)

### *Theme 3: Personal Growth*

The reflective journals provided evidence that significant personal development of the student occurs during international WIL placements especially in the early parts of the immersive experience. Two sub-themes emerged: (i) newfound reality – constant self-discovery and (ii) social responsibility.

The first of these sub-themes, newfound reality – constant self-discovery was reported in the early days and weeks of the international placement. Students wrote in their journals about the lack of preparation for being immersed in this different work environment where there was much less structure and predictability than they were accustomed to in Australia. Despite being informed of the differences in work practices during briefing sessions before departing Australia, students were still unprepared for the scheduling differences, the unknown related to what would happen next and having few resources to prepare for the new reality in which they were immersed. The challenges they faced, and the reflections completed provided an opportunity for the students to learn about themselves in ways they did not expect

[I am] afraid of being pushed out of my comfort zone and not being in control or prepared for what I may be asked to perform or that I will not be able to meet expectations held by others of my skills/knowledge/ability. (China, 2010)

Another journalled: "I've learnt that I don't cope well without structure, I always tell myself "go with the flow", but on the inside I'm always anxious or slightly stressed about the unknown." (China, 2011)

As time progressed, students discovered that working within a less predictable work environment became much easier for them and rather than feeling overwhelmed with the related stress, learnt and accepted that they actually had the ability to cope well under these circumstances. A student stated "I didn't expect to find schedules changing at the last minute challenging but I feel that...I am coping well with the need to be flexible. (Ukraine, 2011)

Initially, students went on placement perhaps with a mentality of wanting to "...change the world..." (China, 2010) and upon arrival become frustrated and overwhelmed with the complexity and size of the issues facing many of the clients with whom they were working. Over time they learned to focus on smaller achievements and gained an acceptance that sustainable change is about implementing a small program, or an idea about the small things that that they can impact on, all of which add up to a greater change over time. Students expressed "I feel miniscule in the big scale of things." (India, 2010); and "I know that we are not supposed to come in here and try to 'change the world' but I do want to do something that means something". (China, 2010). Another stated "As much as I feel like a very small fish in a(n)...ocean, I know that what we do will impact these children for the time we are here and hopefully in the future." (Ukraine, 2009)

Social responsibility was seemingly enhanced over time as students realize that with knowledge, skills and resources came a responsibility to act, particularly when they were challenged around issues related to social justice. One student stated: "I feel guilty for living the privileged life I lead" (India, 2010), while another wrote, "I am extremely passionate about equality and social inclusion." (final entry in an India journal 2010) while yet another student expressed their feelings by saying:

It's amazing really to see just how much your political system shapes the way your country is run...when you step back to think about it; the political leaders in your country, whether you are apathetic towards it or not shape your future, your country, your society - your life. Red tape, bribery and corruption run deep and blatantly through this country - even the locals admit this...so maybe next year...I should take ADVANTAGE of the [Australian] stable political system. Shake it up, get them to listen to this graduate OT [occupational therapist], bring up new ideas without fear of being fired, make some noise and advocate for wrongdoings and correct some wrongs. Every little step counts because that is one step closer to a healthier community. (Ukraine, 2009)

This insight became manifested within the student as they reflected on what they will do differently when they return home with this increased awareness of their role as global citizen. This is what they had to say:

It makes me think that perhaps more people should spend more time thinking about bigger issues that the world is facing, rather than simple domestic matters. I think that my time in India has definitely opened my eyes to a much bigger world out there. (India, 2010)

## DISCUSSION

International WIL placements have a significant role in developing key personal, professional and cultural competency characteristics of allied health graduates. The present study adds to the body of knowledge that evaluates the immediate impact of international WIL placements on allied health students. Analysis of the reflective journal themes identified three core themes and seven underpinning sub-themes that could be addressed by WIL academics and supervisors when planning and implementing international WIL placements for allied health students. These findings concurs with Barlow's statements (2007, p. 243), that international WIL placements are a "...powerful learning tool..." that offers new perspectives for students on human behavior, opportunities to learn different systems and new methods of remediating problems. Whereas Barlow's study analyzed social work students, the present study offers new insights into the learning that allied health students of multiple professions are exposed to during an international WIL placement.

The current study's findings align with similar studies that analyzed journal or interview data of students who had undertaken international WIL placements. Previous studies (Barker, Kinsella & Bossers, 2010; Callister & Cox, 2006) concur that personal, professional and cultural competency characteristics are enhanced. The present study offers new insights into the themes by describing an alternate set of sub-themes. The Barker, Kinsella, and Bossers (2010) study combined the 'personal' and 'professional development' themes, whilst 'cultural sensitivity' was placed as a sub-set of the 'personal/professional development' category. These authors suggested a range of sub-themes including 'thinking outside the box', 'adaptability/flexibility' and 'gaining confidence'. Another study, (Ng, Goddard, Gribble, & Pickard, 2012), focused on development of cultural competence skills. They identified 'increased vigilance and adaption to the

environment', 'uncertainty and anticipation', and 'recognizing and appreciating differences'. Similarities between the two studies are found in relation to issues with 'grappling with supremacy' and 'cultural immersion and development'.

As other studies have suggested, the three themes identified in the present study are interrelated, whereby growth or change in one area influences change in other areas. The strength of the inter-relationship varies between the themes. The reflective journals suggest that the strongest inter-relationship was between 'personal growth' and 'professional development'. For example, when students recorded a development in professional skills e.g., increasing confidence in communicating using non-verbal skills with people with no English language, they also recorded a concurrent positive impact in 'personal growth'. The relationship between cultural competence and the other categories was, however, context specific. Development in cultural skills would enhance the professional skills of the student when interacting with a client or staff member from the host site. However, development in some aspects of the professional domain, for example, an improvement in organizational skills, would not automatically enhance cultural competence.

The journals identified that students were developing core competencies also demanded by allied health accreditation organizations. For example, the Australian Minimum Competency Standards for New Graduate Occupational Therapists (Occupational Therapy Australia, 2010, p. 19 & 42) demands entry level occupational therapists "...practice in a culturally safe professional manner" and "...adopts a communication approach appropriate to the working environment". The journals presented evidence of learning and growth against these two criteria. The development of accreditation competencies during international WIL placements is a field of research yet to be explored.

A significant source of recorded frustration was the students' inability to come to terms with host sites' staff differing values and beliefs related to people with disabilities, which lead to the initial perceptions of cultural superiority. Supervisors of international WIL placements should ensure student cohorts are briefed on the countries' general attitudes towards people with disabilities. Preparatory reading about how people are treated and discussion held about what might be some of the underpinnings of this belief system could be keys to success.

However, despite the inclusion of information sessions on cultural differences prior to departing Australia, which is included in the 'Go Global' program, students reported being overwhelmed by the differences in work practices. Supervisors therefore need to be aware of the impact the new environment has on students by checking with each student and providing time for the group to debrief – especially in the early days and weeks of the immersion.

Students appeared to arrive in the host country with a belief they could "...change the world..." but were soon made aware of the enormity of the issues and the minimal impact they can have individually and as a group. Supervisors are therefore encouraged to focus planning sessions on the sustainable change that can be made by the group, and to realize that the students must go through a change process themselves – from "I can change the world" to "This small change will eventually make a difference".

The findings of the present study should assist academic WIL coordinators involved in developing international WIL placements to structure various aspects of the program to ensure enhanced outcomes for student participants. The findings will also assist the development of students' orientation sessions before departing the home country, and guide individual and group debriefing sessions during the placement and on their return home. Debriefing sessions

could focus on the three core themes presented in this study, their interrelationship and the impact on their future practice.

## LIMITATIONS

The present study was limited by the number and spread of reflective journals reviewed. The 31 journals reviewed demonstrated repeated themes and these themes became exhaustive during the review process. As mentioned, within this sample, 24 journals were from students who had completed their placement in the Ukraine. The results therefore could be skewed by the experiences of those students. It was therefore imperative during the review process to ensure that any themes identified in the Ukraine journals were also identified in the few journals from each of the other countries before considering them to be common themes of the 'Go Global' experience.

For practical reasons the confirmatory member checking process was done as an online wiki, rather than a face-to-face review of the results and had a low number of students providing feedback. On the one hand, this limits the credibility and the dependability of the study, but on the other hand, the rest of the data for the entire study were provided as written material. Consequently, the written format was not likely to limit the credibility of the study, nor the dependability. However, the low number of participants who contributed does limit both. In addition, the transferability of the study results is limited to Westernized contexts, and on purpose the students were not described in detail, since the experiences described in their journals were found to be neither gender dependent, nor professional training dependent. As a matter of fact, they were not even placement dependent, with respect to the included four countries. However, this should be understood with the notion that 75% of the journals came from placements in one single country.

## CONCLUSION

Three themes were identified, which all have sub-themes. *Cultural Competence* was noted to firstly include the sub-theme of cultural egocentricity and cultural adjustment, where the students demonstrated a development from a sense of cultural supremacy to that of simply cultural difference, and valuing this difference. Secondly, a sense of cultural conflict in dealing with disability was described by the students. This was not resolved over time. The third sub-theme related to issues regarding communication and language barriers.

The second theme identified was *Professional Development*. This included firstly the evolution and development of the students' sense of evaluating success. Student descriptions of what constituted success changed from initially having a small, individual focus, to a broader level, where engaging the organization was also understood to constitute success. The second sub-theme relating to professional development was the students' awareness of the experience on their future practice.

The third theme, *Personal Growth*, comprised sub-themes of newfound reality through a constant discovery of self and through a sense of social responsibility. Students became increasingly self-aware through journaling and reflection during the placement. This was particularly evident when they were challenged in some way, and as a result appeared to become more aware of their own traits which impact their lives, their professional practice, in addition to the greater impact they have, and can have, on the world around them.

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## About the Journal

The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

In this Journal, Co-op/WIL is defined as an educational approach that uses relevant work-based projects that form an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study (e.g., work placements, internships, practicum). These programs should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program. These programs can be described by a variety of names, such as work-based learning, workplace learning, professional training, industry-based learning, engaged industry learning, career and technical education, internships, experiential education, experiential learning, vocational education and training, fieldwork education, and service learning.

The Journal's main aim is to allow specialists working in these areas to disseminate their findings and share their knowledge for the benefit of institutions, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that will lead to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of co-op/WIL, and promote further research.

## Submitting Manuscripts

Before submitting a manuscript, please ensure that the 'instructions for authors' has been followed ([www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors](http://www.apjce.org/instructions-for-authors)). All manuscripts are to be submitted for blind review directly to the Editor-in-Chief ([editor@apjce.org](mailto:editor@apjce.org)) by way of email attachment. All submissions of manuscripts must be in MS Word format, with manuscript word counts between 3,000 and 5,000 words (excluding references).

All manuscripts, if deemed relevant to the Journal's audience, will be double blind reviewed by two reviewers or more. Manuscripts submitted to the Journal with authors names included will have the authors' names removed by the Editor-in-Chief before being reviewed to ensure anonymity.

Typically, authors receive the reviewers' comments about a month after the submission of the manuscript. The Journal uses a constructive process for review and preparation of the manuscript, and encourages its reviewers to give supportive and extensive feedback on the requirements for improving the manuscript as well as guidance on how to make the amendments.

If the manuscript is deemed acceptable for publication, and reviewers' comments have been satisfactorily addressed, the manuscript is prepared for publication by the Copy Editor. The Copy Editor may correspond with the authors to check details, if required. Final publication is by discretion of the Editor-in-Chief. Final published form of the manuscript is via the Journal website ([www.apjce.org](http://www.apjce.org)), authors will be notified and sent a PDF copy of the final manuscript. There is no charge for publishing in APJCE and the Journal allows free open access for its readers.

## Types of Manuscripts Sought by the Journal

Types of manuscripts the Journal accepts are primarily of two forms; *research reports* describing research into aspects of Cooperative Education and Work Integrated Learning/Education, and *topical discussion* articles that review relevant literature and give critical explorative discussion around a topical issue.

The Journal does also accept *best practice* papers but only if it present a unique or innovative practice of a Co-op/WIL program that is likely to be of interest to the broader Co-op/WIL community. The Journal also accepts a limited number of *Book Reviews* of relevant and recently published books.

*Research reports* should contain; an introduction that describes relevant literature and sets the context of the inquiry, a description and justification for the methodology employed, a description of the research findings-tabulated as appropriate, a discussion of the importance of the findings including their significance for practitioners, and a conclusion preferably incorporating suggestions for further research.

*Topical discussion* articles should contain a clear statement of the topic or issue under discussion, reference to relevant literature, critical discussion of the importance of the issues, and implications for other researchers and practitioners.



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