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Does work integrated learning better psychologically prepare British students for life and work?

Lisa Ward
Fiona Purdie
Today’s presentation

• **Background to the study**
  – Joining the international work integrated learning project
  – Placements at the University of Huddersfield
  – What we know from the literature about the psychological effect of WIL

• **Methodology**
  – Design
  – Measures
  – Sample

• **Results**
  – Does WIL influence students psychologically and in what way?

• **Implications**
  – For the academic community
  – For the University of Huddersfield
  – For HEIs nationally and internationally

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An international study...

- Originated at the University of Waterloo (Canada)
- Definition: Co-operative Education, Placements, internships
- The largest Co-operative Education Provider in Canada with 15,000 students.
- WatCACE
- Found out about research at WACE
An international study...

Project Partners:

- Assoc Prof Maureen Drysdale, University of Waterloo, Canada
- Dr Kristina Johansen, University West, Sweden
- Dr Sheri Dressler, University of Central Florida, USA
- Elena Zaitseva, Liverpool John Moores, UK
Placements at the University of Huddersfield

- 25,000 students
- 2011 fee ‘free’ placements, from 2012 - £500
- Sandwich Degrees
- Professional Placements
- Big Society Volunteering
- Simulation, Canalside Studios, Penfield

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The Background

Graduate employment challenges:

- Record numbers of graduates in the UK (Chevalier & Lindley, 2009)
- Increasing difficulty in securing employment post-university (Browne, 2010)
- Higher expectations as a result of tuition fee reforms (Browne, 2010)

Result: A challenge to design programs better equipped to enable students to acquire the skills, knowledge & experience that increase employability & lead to more satisfying careers.

A possible solution? WIL

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The documented benefits of Work Integrated Learning

**Occupational/academic benefits** (Powell *et al*., 2008; Bates, 2008):
- Better careers
- Better salaries
- Better degree outcomes

**Specific competencies:**
(Costley, 2007; Crebert *et al*., 2002, Dreuth & Deuth-Fewell, 2002; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; Rickard, 2002)
- Decision making
- Interpersonal and self-management skills
- The application of theoretical knowledge in workplace environments
- Professional networking and behaviour
- Leadership

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Psychological factors:

- A more positive view of chance of gaining employment over specific competencies or occupational advantage (Allen & van der Velden, 2007).

- Self esteem (Crebert et al., 2002)

- Self efficacy (Cuzzi et al., 1996).
Research question

Do students who pursue WIL have significantly higher self-concept, self-efficacy, hope, and motivation for study, and significantly lower procrastination, compared to students who pursue a more traditional degree programme?
Questions
Sample

• Self selected sample of undergraduate students, from all academic schools at the University of Huddersfield, UK (n=621)

• Placement: 33.3%/ non placement: 66.7%

• Males: 25% / Females: 75% (significantly more females undertake placements)

• Mean age (yrs): 26.5
Percentage of students per school, by placement participation

- Applied sciences placement: 13.4%
- Applied sciences no placement: 10.8%
- Art, Design & Architecture placement: 13.9%
- Art, Design & Architecture no placement: 3.6%
- Business placement: 30.9%
- Business no placement: 14.4%
- Computing & engineering placement: 13.1%
- Computing & engineering no placement: 3.6%
- Education & professional development placement: 13.9%
- Education & professional development no placement: 3.6%
- Human & health sciences placement: 14.4%
- Human & health sciences no placement: 3.6%
- Music humanities & media placement: 13.9%
- Music humanities & media no placement: 3.6%
Proportion of students undertaking work related activity

- Current part time work: 38% (62%)
- Placement: 33% (67%)
- Voluntary work: 29% (71%)
- Relevant previous work: 15% (85%)
- Internship: 4% (96%)
- Experiential learning: 9% (91%)

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Design

• Cross-sectional analysis

• Measures, demographic and educational data were collected from participants at the end of their academic year.

• Chosen to accommodate the varied placement programmes available at the University of Huddersfield
Measures

**Trait Hope Scale** *(THS: Snyder et al., 1991)*, which measures hopes and goals.

**Procrastination Assessment Scale – Students** *(PASS: Solomon & Rothblum, 1984)*, which measures the postponement of goals and tasks.

**Self-Description Questionnaire III** *(SDQ-III: Marsh & O’Neill, 1984)*, which measures a set of learned perceptions, beliefs and opinions that individuals hold about themselves.

**College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale** *(CASES: Owen & Froman, 1988)*, which measures the degree of competence participants believe they have in various academic settings.

**Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire** *(MSLQ: Pintrich et al., 1993)*, which assesses motivation and learning strategies by University students.

A range of demographic, educational and occupational information was also collected.
Questions
Academic achievement reported by placement and non-placement students

- 51% No placement
- 50% Placement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>No placement %</th>
<th>Placement %</th>
<th>Official figures for UoH 09/10 year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70%+/ 1st class</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69% / 2:1 class</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59% / 2:2 class</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49% / 3rd Class</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;40% / fail</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 60-69% 1st class
- 50-59% 2:1 class
- 40-49% 3rd Class
- <40% fail

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University of Huddersfield
Mean results by placement participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSLQ subscale: Test anxiety</th>
<th>Trait hope (THS)</th>
<th>THS subscale: agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t = 1.89, p &lt; 0.05</td>
<td>t = 1.70, p &lt; 0.05</td>
<td>t = 2.36, p &lt; 0.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Placement

No placement

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Theoretical implications

- Our findings suggest that cognitions & emotions are most affected by WIL.

- Findings are consistent with previous evidence to suggest that an improvement in confidence is a key outcome of WIL (Cope, 2000; Ward, 2009).

- Lack of significant differences in measures relating to learning behaviours, e.g. procrastination, learning strategies, or in academic achievement were found, contrary to existing literature (Powell et al., 2008).

  **Why might this be?**
  The specificity of the experiential differences between placement and non-placement students.
Practical implications
For the University of Huddersfield and beyond

• Models of graduate employability suggest that self-confidence and self esteem are key facilitators of later employment (Dacre Pool & Sewell 2007).

• Changes in HE landscape with higher fees from 2012
  – Will two year degrees become the norm?
  – How can work related elements be better integrated into courses?
  – Will student stake on even more part-time jobs to pay for education?
  – Will employers still expect work experience?
Limitations and directions for future research

• Main limitation: the use of a cross-sectional design.

• Precluded understanding whether differences are a result of WIL or whether students who participate in WIL are different prior to commencing placement.

• Future studies employing a pre-post design are indicated

• Longitudinal studies documenting occupational outcomes of WIL vs non WIL students
Next Steps

• Secured funding for qualitative research. ‘The more the merrier?: a qualitative examination of the contribution of multiple work integrated learning experiences to student learning, personal development and preparation for employment.’

• Looking for ongoing collaborations with our research partners.

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Conclusion

Our findings suggest that work integrated learning has a much more wide reaching influence than simply moulding better students.

It’s effect is one of a more hopeful and confident adult, better equipped emotionally to face the challenges of the employment market and life beyond.

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Up Coming Presentations

• Impact Upon Teaching and Learning – University of Huddersfield, Teaching and Learning Committee, September.

• ‘In the right placement at the right time? An investigation of the psychological outcomes of placement learning’ International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011), Istanbul, October.

• ‘Learning beyond the lecture room: Do placements help students learn about themselves and for themselves?’ Psychology of Education Conference, Preston, November.

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Thank you for your time and attention

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References


