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TAILORED VIRTUAL WORK CULTURE CURRICULUM DESIGN FOR ENHANCED TRAINEE PRODUCTIVITY AND GLOBAL EMPLOYABILITY SCHEME

Sitlong, N. I.[1] & Chaka J. G.[2]

[1]*Department of Computer Science, Federal University of Education, Pankshin* ***iliya_sitlong@yahoo.com***.
[2]*Department of Computer Science, Federal University of Education, Pankshin* *chakajohn@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT
The research on higher education generally agrees that inclusive and equitable teaching and learning strategies are necessary. The concept of inclusiveness seems to be overlooked in the context of Electronic Work Integrated Learning (eWIL). This research proposes a framework for the creation of a eWIL curriculum by utilizing insights from multidisciplinary theories. Among its salient characteristics are a purposeful, inclusive strategy that unifies the teaching method (the "how") and content field (the "what") of technology-assisted delivery or teaching. Anticipating and adapting to the varied backgrounds, skills, goals, and requirements of students and principal partners the academics and employers are the framework's main concerns. The results of both "hard" and "soft" outcomes like student employability and involvement or inclusion in the actual job while still on training are part of the curriculum. The framework identifies specific challenges that students have when engaging in electronically mediated activities and learning. Employers may also face difficulties as they develop new strategies for operating in a digitized workplace. A solution is proposed in anticipation of certain conflicts in putting the envisaged eWIL curriculum into effect. All things considered, the eWIL framework provides a comprehensive strategy for the active discussion, execution, and assessment of eWIL initiatives. This is an important topic to think about now that remote employment and online learning have become so prevalent during and after COVID-19.

Keywords: eWIL, Online, Work, Curriculum

Introduction

Activities that consciously link theory to real-world working experiences within a curriculum are referred to as Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) (Patrick et al., 2009). A number of academic goals are made possible by WIL, most notably the growth of employability skills like communication, teamwork, and problem-solving (Thomson et al., 2017). Additional results include assisting students in their transition to professional practice (McManus & Rook, 2019), assisting them in creating a professional identity (Bowen, 2018), encouraging their confidence in their ability to learn and succeed in the workplace, and encouraging them to interact with the course materials (Cooper et al., 2010). Additionally, WIL supports graduate employability and work preparedness (Jackson, 2015) and is required to get certifications and industry memberships (e.g. in the fields of medicine/para medicine, psychology and social work)

WIL programs differ greatly from traditionally implemented curriculum because of its broad range of targeted outcomes comprising of the training location and the content in context. The location focuses on factors that affects industrial placements, field trips, and on-campus activities as part of job readiness programs and virtual projects (Rowe, 2017). The content aspect of the WIL program emphasis on various industry-specific skills, structure, educational purpose, curriculum, and pedagogic approaches (Siddoo et al., 2018). WIL may also differ in terms of the kind and extent of stakeholder participation in its implementation. Furthermore, WIL can also differ in terms of how much technology is deployed in its implementation (Schuster & Glavas, 2017). Another research showed that it was observed that there was a dearth of agreement regarding the optimal approach to integrate student employability into the WIL curriculum (Dollinger & Brown, 2019).

The integration of technology with work-integrated learning (WIL) has garnered more attention from researchers in recent times. This tendency has picked up steam after COVID-19 experience to prevent against being taken off-guard by similar sudden disaster in the future. Furthermore, eWill was developed typology based on two dimensions: the function of technology (whether it serves as an administrative or pedagogical tool) and the degree of technological involvement (Schuster & Glavas, 2017). They highlight the various terminology in the literature (blended WIL, virtual WIL, electronic WIL, or eWIL) in their systematic review. This EWIL was divide into four categories: technology-based, technology-facilitated, technology-supported, and technology-blended.

Possibly, the "degree of technological involvement" component put forth by Schuster & Glavas (2017) may be a moot discussion point that is no longer applicable in practice given the introduction of COVID-19 and the significant online changes in business and higher education activities. In order to make clear what is covered in this article, work-based learning activities that are only supported and delivered by technology will be referred to in this paper as "eWIL." This is due to the broad nature of WIL and the nomenclature that goes along with it. Conceptually, "eWIL" is a blend of technology-based and technology-facilitated WIL, drawing on the work of Schuster & Glavas (2017). Because the platform was "face-to-face" or have "low technological involvement," WIL activities that incorporate technology are not included.

The following is the reasoning behind this idea of "eWIL." Organizations now depend more than ever on creative and adaptable knowledge workers who can navigate changing environmental conditions, thanks to the digitalization of the global economy and the emergence of new business models. As a result, workers who can work remotely and digitally and are not limited by "where, when, and how to work" now dominate the labor market (Thite, 2019). Workforce digitalization is happening tenfold faster now than it did before the COVID-19 pandemic. Worldwide lockdowns and social distancing regulations have compelled companies of all sizes and sectors to develop work-from-home plans and other sustainable business practices.

Considering the increasing prevalence and probable normalcy of remote work, it is logical to propose that digital work environments and interactions are here to stay. In keeping with this logic, it is maintained that WIL can only be effective if it is in accordance with modern realities and equips students to react to and adjust to a rapidly digitizing world and fast-paced work environment. In order to better prepare students for the realities of the job market, have presented a compelling case for bringing communication e-platforms from the corporate world into professional education (Ngai et al., 2019). It is obvious that analyzing eWIL programs through a technological perspective is very valuable, especially given the paucity of "WIL-online technology" research in the literature.

In light of this, this paper presents a novel, multidisciplinary framework for eWIL that combines important theoretical tenets from the literatures on management and education, including the evaluation model, community of inquiry, signaling theory, and transition pedagogy (Connelly et al., 2011). The eWIL framework offers a set of guidelines for creating an intentional, inclusive eWIL curriculum. In order to mitigate any conflicts when implementing the desired eWIL curriculum, a "transition prism" is also suggested.

The eWIL Framework's Theoretical Foundations

A fundamental principle of the framework is the differentiation between the substance of eWIL and the method by which its execution conveys "messages" to relevant parties. Bowen & Ostroff (2004) distinguished between "content" and "process," basing their findings on signaling theory (Bowen, 2018). Signaling theory, which has historically focused on reducing information asymmetry between parties, has been used in anthropology, marketing, economics, and management, among other academic domains. According to Connelly et al. (2011), "signals" or messages coming from signalers managers, workers, recruiters, and businesses must be received and processed by receivers individuals or groups in order to create shared perspectives. This is the perspective of the management discipline. A human resource management systems was proposed, for instance, ought to aim to incorporate both content (the "what") and process (the "how") elements in order to convey consistent and robust "messages" to staff members (Dollinger & Brown, 2019).

The rationale behind this is that a unique and coherent approach to eWIL can aid in "signaling" to stakeholder groups the kinds of behaviors that are expected and rewarded in an eWIL program. Based on eWIL content (i.e., the design of the curriculum) and process (i.e., the

implementation of the curriculum), key stakeholders form perceptions of what is expected of them and what they can anticipate in return (Billett, 2011). When stakeholders develop a uniform interpretation of eWIL and share common perceptions, eWIL programs have a higher likelihood of eliciting the proper behaviors and attitudes necessary to achieve program objectives. Consequently, creating and implementing eWIL processes and material that promotes common stakeholder knowledge is the aim. The idea that establishing a shared language and understanding among all parties involved in WIL might pave the road for successful WIL is not new (Ajjawi et al., 2020). The prospects of decision-making in organizing learning experiences, how they are enacted and experienced are most likely to be consonant when there is common understanding among workplace practitioners and supervisors, teachers in higher education, and students about the purposes, processes, and desired outcomes of these experiences (Bowen, 2018)." Although reaching this consensus could be unachievable, the eWIL framework appears to be a prerequisite for any consonance.

Identification of the transition pedagogy was presented as another important tenet of the eWIL framework. In the context of Australian higher education, transition pedagogy is frequently employed as a theoretical framework for creating inclusive first-year experiences (Kift, 2009). The work highlighted the different obstacles that university-bound students must overcome and lays forth several important guidelines for developing a first-year curriculum. Among these is a deliberate curriculum that provides contextualized, embedded support for all student groups, but particularly for those with limited time. Additional tenets include just-for-me and just-in-time interventions implemented over the course of students' lives via partnerships between academic and professional staff, as well as comprehensive, integrated, and coordinated whole-of-institution methods (Kift S. , 2015).

While transition pedagogy is typically associated with first-year experiences, its guiding concepts of inclusivity, teamwork, and tailored support can also be applied to the creation of a deliberate, inclusive curriculum for students making the move into the workforce. It can be applied, for instance, to a deliberate strategy that emphasizes knowledge integration, introspection, and the development of skills appropriate for the workplace (Thomson et al., 2017). Likewise, it can be utilized for interventions tailored to individual students' situations, like language support systems and visa-related matters for international students and students learning English as a second language, as well as assistance for students with learning disabilities, lack of work experience, or inadequate digital literacy. It can also be used to multi-level alliances such as those between academic institutions and businesses or between universities and students. One could argue that each of these tasks is essential to WIL/eWIL.

Common Requirements and Participation from eWIL Stakeholders

According to Annala and Mäkinen (2013), the curriculum is typically a purposeful and dynamic process that discloses values, beliefs, and principles related to knowledge and learning (Annala & Marita, 2013). Anticipating and adapting to the varied backgrounds of students is a key component of a purposeful, inclusive curriculum (Kift S. , 2015). An inclusive curriculum must

inevitably be broadened to meet the needs of a larger range of stakeholders in the context of eWIL. In general, WIL stakeholders can be divided into two categories: primary partners, which are individuals who work directly with student internships, such as academics, learners, and coworkers, or secondary partners. Government and society, for example, who encourage WIL management (Siddoo et al., 2018). Employers, professors, and students are the main targets of the eWIL framework.

Engaging and meeting the demands of eWIL stakeholders is the main focus of this paper, with the express goal being to best meet the eWIL transition objectives. The literature identifies a number of stakeholder reasons for participating in WIL, including academics' pursuit of labor market benefits for students and university-industry linkages, employers' focus on attracting and retaining talent, and students' desire for employment opportunities (Rowe, 2017). Furthermore, everyone rates the improvement of employable skills and industry experience highly (Fleming & Haigh, 2017).

It is suggested that WIL/eWIL stakeholders equally value less visible traits like involvement, inclusion, empowerment, communication, and fairness, in addition to the "hard" focus on outcomes connected with student employability and competitiveness in the labor market. These characteristics are more in line with a "soft" outcomes focus. Recent research has identified these "soft" components, such as fostering two-way communication between WIL students and employers (Fleming & Pretti, The Impact of Work-Integrated Learning Students on Workplace Dynamics, 2019), establishing inclusive WIL workplaces for students (Mallozzi & Drewery, 2019), and supporting student dignity during WIL (Davis et al., 2020) . The eWIL framework, in summary, supports an emphasis on "soft" outcomes, which are defined by industry and student participation and eWIL readiness. The subsequent subsections delve into greater detail about these attributes.

Interaction with Pupils

Genuine student engagement and collaborations are essential components of an inclusive needs assessment. A working curriculum needs to meet the demands of the students as future professionals, as noted by Budd (n.d.). Furthermore, Thomson et al. (2017) suggest increasing student participation in WIL curriculum design and research, redefining students as active participants and change agents, and fostering authenticity in student involvement with WIL since they value student voice.

In order to involve students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, in the development and implementation of eWIL, the eWIL framework builds on the inclusive transition pedagogy principles (Kift, 2015). Student engagement with eWIL can take many different forms. For example, when consulting with students, use inclusive language and translation options; create flexible processes and timelines to allow student communities who are "vulnerable" and/or time-poor (e.g., Aboriginal students, refugees, students with disabilities, mature students, international students, and students with family responsibilities) to understand their perspectives on what respecting their preferences; and taking into account the range of ways in which students would

like to participate (e.g., group versus individual eWIL consultations, short-term versus long-term involvement, visible versus anonymous student contributions, or involvement at a personal unit-level versus a broader institutional-level involvement).

It takes an environment of open communication, honesty, respect, and transparency to engage students as partners. If students feel their voices are ignored or undervalued, the structures and procedures for involvement could be weakened. This conflict can be seen in instances where student voice mechanisms resemble compliance exercises more than dialogue-based activities (i.e., when student input is utilized to forward institutional objectives) (Connelly et al., 2011).

Communication with employers

Engagement between employers and inclusive eWIL is another essential component. The research emphasizes how important employers are to curriculum creation (Williamson et al., 2020) and to offering real industry placements (Smith & Worsfold, 2015). A curriculum that encourages the development of skills and labor- Industry participation is a prerequisite for preparedness (Williamson et al., 2020). Nonetheless, a number of obstacles to industry participation have been identified. These include employer job ambiguity, time and expense constraints, and a lack of employer resources (Ferns et al., 2016).

Engagement with employers should ideally take specific sector demands into account. For instance, eWIL is probably not the same in a multibillion-dollar multinational corporation with an abundance of resources and cutting-edge technological capabilities as it is in a values-driven not-for-profit organization or in a profit-making enterprise, depending on the context (Kay et al., 2019). Furthermore, a cultural fit between companies and academia may help to promote industry engagement. Universities and employers may have problems commonly linked to a breakdown in partnership agreements, such as culture clash, conflict, and obstacles to cooperative working practices, if their beliefs and philosophies diverge significantly (Jackson, 2015). Simply put, if academics and employers have different frames of reference from the beginning, it could be challenging to build trustworthy partnerships between them. Moreover, it seems that a needs assessment could help eWIL administrators match industry partners based on cultural compatibility right away. This is a crucial factor to take into account, as suggested by Davis et al. (2020), since colleges shouldn't send students to work for companies that have less-than-ideal cultures (full of mistrust, contempt, exclusion, and abuse).

eWIL Readiness and Preparedness

The preparation of students for WIL is a recurring issue in the literature. Most academics concur that students should be prepared for WIL on an intellectual and psychological level (Zegwaard & Rowe, 2019). This is necessary, as stated by others, to create sensible goals and expectations, maximize engagement and results, and create long-lasting, enduring connections (Patrick et al., 2009; Fleming & Pretti, 2019; Davis et al., 2020; Billett, 2015; Zegwaard & Rowe, 2019). It's interesting to note that certain studies also support teaching students how to develop social intelligence and take charge of interacting with coworkers and superiors. Students may be

inspired to leave industry partnerships in better shape if they observe how their actions and attitudes at work affect businesses' intentions to provide future WIL chances (Patrick et al., 2009). The eWIL framework supports students' pre-eWIL guidance, according to this literature, especially since eWIL students may be expected to complete tasks related to unfamiliar jobs, deal with unexpected workplace scenarios and cultures, master foreign technologies, and navigate a virtual world where social interactions and organizational socialization become more complex.

It may be argued that although the educational goals of eWIL are commendable, not all students are prepared for experiences and learning that are electronically mediated. Access to the right technology tools, familiarity with and comfort level with utilizing them, learning preferences, individual characteristics, study habits and skills, and lifestyle considerations are some of the obstacles that stand in the way of online student engagement and success (Schuster & Glavas, 2017). For example, non-native English-speaking overseas students may find it difficult to establish rapport and be misunderstood in the workplace. To help them with their language proficiency and cultural fit, they may choose real-world industry and native English interactions. Because of this, individuals could think that eWIL is a poor experience that falls short of their expectations. The necessity of contextualized student support, such as workplace mentoring (Billett, 2015), counseling, digital support, and resilience training (Zegwaard & Rowe, 2019), is emphasized by obstacles to online engagement.

Furthermore, academics and businesses are equally in need of eWIL preparedness. Previous research appears to have mostly ignored the idea of pre-WIL advice for academics and employers, with the exception of (Horstmanshof & Moore, 2016) mention of clinical educators' WIL preparation. Pre-eWIL preparation is intended by the eWIL framework to be a crucial part of shared stakeholder understanding for all parties involved. Following the logic of signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), effective eWIL necessitates that all stakeholder groups comprehend and embrace their respective roles and obligations as a group. In the event that stakeholders believe their roles are unclear, they might interpret their involvement through the lenses of their own cognitive processes. This could therefore lead to the development of a dysfunctional eWIL ecosystem in which participants have divergent expectations and interpretations. All parties involved can reduce role ambiguity by preparing for eWIL beforehand.

In order to investigate the ideas of stakeholder participation, needs, and readiness as fundamental tenets of eWIL inclusivity, this section has drawn on transition pedagogy (Kift, 2015) and signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011). Stakeholders have a good chance to "make sense of" things when an inclusive eWIL approach is used. When students have a voice, they could comment on how accepting the program is of risk-free speech. Employers may also have favorable opinions of the relationship when they are consulted. The deliberate eWIL curriculum design incorporates these ideas, as explained in the next section.

Working Together to Create the eWIL Curriculum with Stakeholders

The eWIL framework places significant emphasis on stakeholder cooperation in the creation of the curriculum. This is examined from the perspectives of transition pedagogy (Kift, 2015), signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), and the community of inquiry. The Community of Inquiry lens (COI) is an online learning environment that aids in defining the actions and procedures necessary for "critical inquiry and the collaborative construction of personal meaningful and shared understanding (Garrison, 2016). Deep and valuable learning experiences are made possible by these actions. There are three components to the COI approach: teaching presence, which involves a teacher designing and facilitating the learning process in the role of "architect" and "facilitator", According to Garrison (2016), social presence refers to students' capacity to project themselves socially and emotionally as real individuals, whereas cognitive presence measures how well students are able to negotiate meaning through ongoing engagement and reflection. The community of inquiry methodology has been used mostly in blended and online learning environments. The community of inquiry being an online learning platform that complements the operations of the electronic work integrated learning curriculum, have distinct meanings within the framework of electronic work integrated learning. This is not just because of the classroom experience it ensures, but for eWIL ability to combine both the educational experience and workplace experience (Siebert & Costley, 2013). The COI dimensions in relation to eWIL are examined in the next subsections.

Instructor and Supervisor Interaction

The roles of "architect" and "facilitator" for teaching presence—also referred to as "teaching/supervisor presence" in this paper are shared by employers and academics rather than being exclusively dependent on academics. This distinctive shared trait calls attention to the contradictory challenge of developing a eWIL curriculum. There may be a disconnect between academic goals and workplace realities because the eWIL curriculum is primarily created by academics but executed in collaboration with businesses. This discrepancy is known as the "rhetoric" of eWIL and the "reality" of workplace eWIL. Employers can help close this knowledge gap and create a common understanding by participating in the design process.

Closer collaboration between employers and academics may reduce the amount of contradictory demands placed on students, according to empirical research (Siebert & Costley 2013). However, it takes a delicate balance to involve industrial partners in eWIL creation. Including employers in the curriculum design process and giving them a voice may be seen as a cooperative approach. However, academics must avoid the pitfall of depending too much on employers for guidance and support, since this may be viewed as excessively burdensome and may result in the loss of opportunities and competitive industry support. According to Kay et al. (2019), industry interaction shouldn't be unduly burdensome for sustainable WIL models. The timing, method, and extent to which employers should contribute to the content of eWIL are decisions that eWIL designers must make in order to achieve the ideal balance. On the other hand, it is also helpful to allow for some flexibility in later practice; unplanned events and tight deadlines present

a priceless learning opportunity. This opportunistic response can be facilitated by expectations and criteria for industry partners that are clear but flexible.

A crucial aspect of teaching and supervisor presence is the active participation of students in the development of the eWIL curriculum. An inclusive eWIL curriculum is created with students in mind, not merely for them, as was indicated in section 3.1. Students' suggestions on what to do and how to do it in eWIL suggest that they are involved in the design of eWIL. However, it is important to strike a balance when it comes to student empowerment in curriculum design. For example, students run the danger of creating an easy eWIL experience, which would lower the standard of instruction (French et al., 2013). Essentially, in the process of creating eWIL, employers, students, and academics may all play a part in the role of "architect," but employers and academics jointly bear responsibility for the function of "facilitator."

Social Presence

According to research by Billett (2015), people who interact online may need to compensate for the lack of in-person interaction by evoking more immediacy behaviors, which convey warmth and psychological closeness. Multifaceted in nature, immediate communication encompasses non-verbal cues such as body orientation, gestures, and facial expressions (including emoticons) that convey concern, adaptability, and humor. Since social presence is maintained by online learners through the communication medium that is available to them, the quality of the medium has an impact on social presence.

Cognitive Presence

WIL represents the ideal setting for fostering such higher order thinking processes. When students apply declarative knowledge the "know-that" found in books and journal articles to real world situations, they develop procedural knowledge, or "know-how," which is individualized and primarily tacit in nature and permits the strategic completion of tasks. Participants in any configuration of a community of inquiry must be able to construct meaning through sustained communication. This requires a triggering event, such as a task or problem statement, along with knowledge construction, exploration, integration, and application (Garrison, 2016).

eWIL's collaborative techniques

It is crucial that implementation closely resemble design goals given the potential "rhetoric-reality" mismatch in eWIL that arises from different parties creating and executing eWIL (Davis et al., 2020). This alignment necessitates cooperation and a clear understanding between employers and academics, in line with the previously mentioned shared facilitative function of the two groups. In order to embrace a common language and set of principles that will sustain the required behaviors and attitudes, they must have a shared understanding in order to implement eWIL. When academics and employers present a unified front, it helps convey the same message about the goals and use of eWIL.

Conclusion

The eWIL framework developed in this research unifies the technological delivery process (the "how") and content (the "what") through the application of multidisciplinary principles. Its inclusive, deliberate approach that prioritizes knowledge integration, reflection, and the development of career-ready skills in order to accomplish the curriculum's explicit transition objectives is one of its core characteristics. The framework's main concerns are recognizing and catering to the various backgrounds, skills, goals, and requirements of students as well as their main partners, who are the academic and business communities who have direct contact with student internships. This calls for the necessity of sending clear, consistent "messages" to every participant. Both "hard" and "soft" outcomes student employability and involvement and inclusion are sought after by the curriculum.

Recommendations

COVID-19 has compelled businesses to reevaluate their operations and how to give workers safe, fulfilling jobs. In order to enable doing things differently, eWIL may also need to be reconsidered in this regard. Universities are expected to lead this new phase of the digital revolution through best eWIL practices like reciprocity and trust-based collaborations, inclusivity, applied learning, innovative interactions (beyond Zoom), monitoring, and evaluation. Universities are centers of research and knowledge creation. One promising effort to include these approaches is the eWIL framework. It is hoped that more research will focus on this area of study in the future.

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