An Investigation into the Efficiency of Work Integrated Learning for the Bachelor of Communication at the Namibia University of Science and Technology

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NUST
Overview

- Introduction and background
- Limitations
- Literature Review
- Overview of Investigation
- Organization of WIL
- Stakeholders
- Industry visits
- Analysis and discussion (quantitative, qualitative)
- Conclusion
Keywords

- Work integrated learning
- Cooperative education
- Internship
- Applied learning (learning by doing)
Introduction and background

- Bachelor of Communication was developed 17 years after independence from 2007 to 2008 and implemented in 2009 (Polytechnic of Namibia).
- Evaluation - sharing knowledge
- One-semester Work Integrated Learning course (final year)
- 2011 - Implementation
- 2011 - 2016: 258 enrollments for WIL
- Challenges (introductory sessions, finding placement, student commitment)
- The study intends to take toll and investigate the efficiency and success of this course.
Limitations

- Bachelor of Communication programme at PoN, 2001 - 2016.
- Total research population: 258
- Organisation of WIL for BACO students, Course documents, provided by the institution, stakeholder roles and workload of the academic supervisor.
- Industry supervisor feedback
  - enrolment numbers
  - pass/failure rates,
  - male/female ratio,
  - enrolment modes and
- age groups of the enrolled students.

- Exclusion of this study:
  - Investigation into whether the students were employed at the same organisation at the time of the internship
  - Employment after completing WIL or the BACO programme.
- Reasons why students did not successfully complete the course.
## Investigation

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Document icon]</td>
<td>WIL documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![People icon]</td>
<td>Students and supervisors roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Check icon]</td>
<td>Organization of the course (WIL Guide)</td>
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<tr>
<td>![Clock icon]</td>
<td>WIL schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Pencil icon]</td>
<td>Observation during visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>![Bar chart icon]</td>
<td>Quantitative data: enrolment, pass/failure rates, male/female ratio, etc.</td>
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Literature review

- Work integrated learning, experiential learning, co-operative education
- Terminology: WIL – includes *increasing diversity in methodologies* and approaches to vocational education, used globally (Reeders, 2000)
- Literature review includes studies from South Africa, U.K., Australia, Canada, U. S., Germany
- Canadian study showed that WIL boosts students’ confidence regarding problem-solving skills, positive views regarding future employment, specific skills, influence on self-esteem and self-efficacy, higher levels of confidence; but lower levels of procrastination (Drysdalet & McBeath, 2012).
Undergraduate curricula, part of a holistic strategy in education in order to produce **graduate ready for the working world**.

- Importance of **involvement of all stakeholders** - educational institution, industry supervisor and student (Barkhuizen and Schutte, 2014; Edgar, 2012; Groenewald 2004)

- Workplace assessment not done in all countries; Germany and other central European countries - organizations take WIL up as their social responsibility (Nicolaides, 2014)

- **Southern African context** - educational institutions have the responsibility to prepare student for work readiness (Nicolaides, 2014)
Literature review cont’d

- WIL/co-operative learning should be structured educational strategy; should encourage scaffolding of learning in an environment that fosters creative work experience in the field related to a student’s career (Cates and Jones, 1999)

- Concept of excellence should be applied - student ‘not to be regarded as cheap, free labour’; emphasis to be on skills and knowledge relating to the industry; integration of competence building to gain competitive advantage (Nicolaides, 2014)

- Widely assumed to boost employability skill outcomes in undergraduate programmes (Wilton, 2012)

- Skills include: teamwork, communication, self-management, critical thinking and problem-solving (Australian Association of Graduate Employers, 2013; Confederation of British Industry, 2011; Coll and Zedwaard, 2006); as well as time-management, multi-tasking, and working autonomously (Jackson, 2010)
Literature review cont’d

Recurring themes in the literature:

- Skills and competencies, realistic experiences
- Drivers of WIL, structured approach
- Stakeholder involvement and communication

(Nicolaides, 2014; Barkhuisen and Schutte, 2014; Purdie et al., 2013)
Analysis and Discussion Overview

Organization of Work-integrated learning

- Course documents
- Stakeholders and industry visits
- Engagement of academic supervisor
- Enrolment and pass rates
- Enrolment male/female ratio
- Enrolment according to study mode
- Pass rates according to study mode
- Age groups and enrollment
- Age groups and pass rates

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How is WIL For Bachelor of Communication organized?

1ST FEBRUARY OF EACH YEAR (FLEXIBLE STARTING TIME)

600 HOURS (40-HOUR WEEK, TOTAL NUMBER OF 15 WEEKS,

80% ATTENDANCE RULE APPLIES

ATTENDANCE AND ACTIVITY RECORD

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS

2 REFLECTION ESSAYS

COLLECT WORK DOCUMENTS

PORTFOLIO

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Challenges

- Finding placements
- Understanding the need for communication practitioners
- Lack of Communication/PR departments/sections in certain organizations
- Transition classroom to workplace
- Administration
- Geographical distances
- Availability of transport for visits
Course documents

- **WIL Guide**
  - guidelines for student and industry supervisor,
  - templates of attendance sheet
  - activity sheet,
  - supervisor’s reports,
  - marking scheme

- **WIL Schedule**
  list of requirements and due dates for the semester

- **Contract**
WIL Guide

- Description
- Syllabus and learning outcomes
- Internship placement
- The role of NUST
- The role of the host organization
- The role of the ac. Supervisor

- Assessment
  - Attendance sheets, Activity and Reflection sheets (10%)
  - 2 reflective essays (10%)
  - 2 supervisor’s reports (30%)
  - Portfolio (50%)

- Forms
WIL Schedule and Contract

- **WIL Schedule**
  - Preparation and approval dates (year before)
  - Orientation session (November)
  - Due dates and Visits during the semester
  - Submissions/visits are signed by academic supervisor for record purposes

- **Contract**
  - between organization and NUST
Stakeholder roles and communication
Engagement of academic supervisor - ALL YEAR ROUND

- Preparation and liaison with industry partners
- Internship placement
- Orientation sessions
- Approving placements
- Contracts
- Supervision
- Assessment
Industry visits

Purpose
- encourage successful completion,
- deal with challenges,
- Intervention

Nature
- industry supervisor, student and academic supervisor
- monitor the progress of the student
- student to present work done - evidence
- opportunity for questions, clarifications and concerns
- Should challenges and difficulties arise they can be dealt with during such visits to ensure smooth and successful continuation of the internship, or, if inevitable/unavoidable, a new internship place be recommended.
Feedback from industry supervisors

- Positive comments
  - positive attitude of students
  - willingness to learn
  - preparedness
  - Organization
  - Punctuality

- Areas of improvement
  - Language skills
  - Taking initiative

- Suggestions
  - Communication and management of websites and social media
## Enrolment and pass rates

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<th>Year</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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<td>Enrolment numbers</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>No exam yet</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7%</td>
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Enrollment and pass rates

![Graph showing enrollment and pass rates from 2011 to 2016. The number of enrolments, pass rates, and fail rates are plotted over the years.](chart.png)

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## Enrolment male/female ratio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total %</th>
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<tr>
<td>Male/female ratio</td>
<td>12:24</td>
<td>12:18</td>
<td>17:28</td>
<td>17:33</td>
<td>16:36</td>
<td>16:29</td>
<td>90:168</td>
<td>35%:65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fail/no exam</td>
<td>0:3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8:2</td>
<td>4:5</td>
<td>5:5</td>
<td>2:4</td>
<td>19:16</td>
<td>17%</td>
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Study mode and pass rates

Pass rates study mode %

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<tr>
<td>FM</td>
<td>92.59</td>
<td>86.67</td>
<td>85.00</td>
<td>77.78</td>
<td>85.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>88.89</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>94.12</td>
<td>90.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>DM</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>83.33</td>
<td>83.33</td>
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## Age groups and pass rates

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<tr>
<td>18 - 20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>4:0</td>
<td>10:3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 25</td>
<td>16:1</td>
<td>8:2</td>
<td>17:2</td>
<td>16:5</td>
<td>12:1</td>
<td>22:0</td>
<td>91:11</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 - 30</td>
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<td>4:2</td>
<td>9:2</td>
<td>6:1</td>
<td>8:3</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>41:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>4:0</td>
<td>7:0</td>
<td>3:1</td>
<td>8:3</td>
<td>7:0</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>35:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>3:0</td>
<td>3:2</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>6:0</td>
<td>3:3</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>19:7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 45</td>
<td>0:1</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>5:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46 +</td>
<td>2:1</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>1:0</td>
<td>6:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>257</td>
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</tbody>
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Learning outcomes

- Planning and organizing
- Sharpen speaking and writing skills
- Gaining confidence in spoken and written communication in the working environment
- Time management, punctuality
- Meeting deadlines
- Taking improvement comments
- Reflecting on one’s own learning
- Monitoring one’s learning progress
- Exposure to a variety of workplace scenarios
Conclusion and recommendation

It can be concluded that WIL for Bachelor of Communication is successful as it ensures the following:

- **WIL preparation** (orientation session, industry partner list, documents).
- Guidance in writing (for the student and industry supervisor).
- **Guidance and advice** are provided throughout the semester by the university (academic supervisor).
- **Activities** pertaining to the Communication Degree in the organization as well as the academic programme.
- **High pass rates**
- Students obtain **adequate exposure to the workplace environment**.
- Students feel they have the **optimum learning experience** possible (sometimes beyond their expectations).
- **Industry supervisors appreciation** of the Bachelor of Communication programme and prefer to provide internships to NUST students.
- It can further be stated that the minimal failure rate can be attributed to the **continuous improvement** of the WIL course and **excellent relationships with the industry partners**.

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