

Conference Program & Abstracts

Providing a Competitive Edge

New Zealand Association of Cooperative Education Annual Conference, 14-16 April, 2010, Massey University, Sport & Rugby Institute, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Wednesday, 14 April 2010			
17:00-19:00	Registration and Mixer (Conference Room)		
Thursday, 15 April 2010			
9:30-10:00	Registration and Mixer (Conference Room)		
10:00-10:05	Opening Addresses	Welcome and Opening (Conference Room) INGRID DAY <i>Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) Massey University</i>	
10:05-10:25		GORDON T. SUDDABY <i>Director of Academic Development and e-Learning Massey University</i> Linking Faculty Professional Development and the Co-op/Work-Integrated Learning Community	
10:30-11:15	Keynote Address: CALVIN SMITH – <i>Griffith University</i> Discovering, Demonstrating and Developing Competitive Advantages From Work-Integrated Learning Curricula		
11:15-12:00	Keynote Discussion Groups		
12:00-1:30	Lunch Mike Chu – <i>New Zealand Rugby Union (Conference Room - Rear)</i>		
		Conference Room	Syndicate Room
1:30-1:55	Parallel Sessions	MATTHEW CAMPBELL <i>A Framework for Analysis of Learning in Professional Settings</i>	ANDREW J. MARTIN, JENNY FLEMING <i>Case Studies in Cooperative Education: Undertaking Quality Research</i>
2:00-2:25		KATHARINE HOSKYN, SALLY RAE <i>Would You Like Another Student? Yes, Please</i>	MURRAY CULLEN <i>The Student and the Supervisor: Perceptions of Learning, Experience and Performance During Cooperative Education</i>
2:30-2:55		TRICIA LUCAS, JENNY FLEMING <i>Critical Reflection on Critical Reflection</i>	FRASER BELL, SARAH LEBERMAN <i>Cooperative Education in Governance: A Small Business Case Study</i>
3:00-3:30	Afternoon Break (Conference Room - Rear)		
3:30-3:45	Panel Discussion & Workshop	ANDREW J. MARTIN: <i>Introduction & Overview</i> <i>Employers and Work-Integrated Learning: Avoiding Self-Congratulation - Responding Positively to Employer Feedback</i>	
3:45-4:30		Group A MARTIN BRADY, JULIE KEANE	Group B TROY THURSTON, MIKE DAISLEY
4:30-4:55		ANDREW J. MARTIN: <i>Summary & Wrap Up</i>	
5:00-6:00	Annual General Meeting & New Council Meeting (Conference Room/Board Room)		
7:00-10:30	Conference Dinner (Wharerata)		

Friday, 16 April 2010

9:00-9:25	Parallel Sessions	RAVI BHAT <i>A Conceptual Model Incorporating Work Integrated Learning and Organizational Feedback to Maintain Currency in Business Curriculum</i>	DIANA AYLING <i>Is the Village Common in a Cloud? Cooperative Education and Social Networking</i>
9:30-9:55		KATHRYN HAY <i>New Zealand Social Work Field Education: Cooperation and Collaboration in a Competitive Environment</i>	AARON STEELE, CATHERINE SNELL-SIDDLE, SANDRA CLELAND <i>An Apprenticeship-Based IT Degree</i>
10:00-10:25		DAVID SKELTON <i>Yes, But What Can They Do Now? Examining a Range of Degree Papers by Industry Readiness Criteria</i>	SHIU RAM <i>Competitive Advantage Through Curriculum</i>
10:30-11:00	Morning Break (Conference Room - Rear)		
		Conference Room	Syndicate Room
11:00-11:25	Parallel Sessions	LEVINIA PAKU, CRAIG ROBB, MARK LAY <i>Online Tool for Coordinating Work Placements and Facilitating Work Place Learning</i>	SUSAN MCCURDY, KARSTEN E. ZEGWAARD <i>Exploring Interventions to Enhance Faculty Involvement in Co-op</i>
11:30-11:55		NICK WEMPE <i>The Development of an IT Professional in the Post-industrial Age</i>	
12:00-1:00	Lunch (Conference Room – Rear)		
1:00-2:25	Workshop	NEIL I. WARD, ANDREA L. MARCILLA <i>Pre-Placement Personal and Professional Skills Development – Manual of Good Practice</i>	
2:30-3:30	Keynote Address: CHRIS EAMES – University of Waikato Working at the Edge: Where Are we at in Cooperative Education in New Zealand?		
3:30-3:45	Announcement of Allister McLay Best Paper Award (Conference Room) Conference Close		
3:45-4:15	End of Conference Mixer (Conference Room – Rear)		

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Keynote Address

Discovering, Demonstrating and Developing Competitive Advantages From Work-Integrated Learning Curricula

What kinds of competitive advantage are suggested by the conference theme this year? There are several possibilities. There is the competitive advantage that students may gain by their involvement in a co-op/WIL-infused curriculum. There is the advantage the institution may gain from closer ties with external communities. There is the advantage corporations, SMEs, not-for-profits and government agencies may gain from their involvement with an institution around a WIL curriculum. What the various advantages to be had from involvement with WIL, by the various stakeholders involved, and the competitive edge that each putatively may gain from their involvements? How might these manifest themselves and be measured and taken into account? These are questions that will be explored in this presentation. But competitive edge is a double edged blade. There are costs too associated with being a WIL stakeholder. How might one begin to ask questions about guaranteeing returns-on-investment? What will each stakeholder need or want to see demonstrated to keep the faith about the advantage they are being "sold". We need to critically explore the likely pre-conditions necessary to the maximization of the competitive advantages that might accrue from involvement with WIL. Thus, in this presentation I will be turn my attention to the idea of competitive advantage, not with a view to its destruction by deconstruction, but rather, with a view to its construction, speculating on what the future holds for the notion and for WIL curricula generally.



About the Speaker

Calvin Smith (PhD) is a Senior Lecturer in Higher Education and Associate Director of the Griffith Institute for Higher Education at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. His research interests include the measurement of learning environments for research, quality improvement and quality assurance purposes and the relationships between learning environments and both generic and discipline-specific student learning outcomes. He is presently conducting research on student learning outcomes from work-integrated learning. He has also developed an evaluation framework for WIL curricula. He recently concluded, with colleagues from two other Australian universities, a National investigation examining the approaches taken at different universities, and in different disciplines, to the integration and assessment of generic graduate capabilities.

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A Framework for Analysis of Learning in Professional Settings

MATTHEW CAMPBELL

School of Education, Australian Catholic University

Background/Program: This paper presents a theoretical framework which can be employed as a tool for the analysis of learning in professional settings. The model has been developed from a longitudinal study of police recruits as they have moved from university to workplace learning settings. Emerging from this research is a new way of understanding learning in professional settings understood as trajectories of learning within communities of practice.

Unique features/Issue: The framework of analysis was developed from the literature around communities of practice with a focus on the interplay between the individual and social, identity and knowledge. Emerging are four areas of identity in community culture, identity in professional field, knowledge of community culture and knowledge of professional practice. Learning in professional settings is presented as the negotiation and navigation through these fields shaping the trajectory of learning for the newcomer to the community of practice.

Discussion/Argument: The framework has been employed to analyze the experiences of participants in the longitudinal study. It is argued that the framework extends the under-developed concept of identity within communities of practice and relates this concept to the development of knowledge and professional practice. Such extension of these ideas allows for more comprehensive understanding of how individual dispositions and experiences shape learning experiences within professional settings which will be demonstrated through the analysis of cases drawn from the research study.

Conclusions/Implications: Individual learner trajectories within practice settings are shaped by their identity, which is developed from both existing dispositions and experiences. In developing cooperative education experiences it, therefore, presents as important to consider these facets through the provision of varieties of experiences and environments aiding shifts in identity and facilitating trajectories of learning. The employment of this framework suggests that strong partner / mentor relationships need to be supported over an extended period of time to enhance the opportunities for learning. Such relationships, though, need to challenge individual learners and be accommodating of individual histories and expectations.

Case Studies in Cooperative Education: Undertaking Quality Research

ANDREW J. MARTIN

Massey University

JENNY FLEMING

AUT University

Background: The nature of case study research is particularly applicable to cooperative education research, as it seeks to form a unique interpretation of events rather than produce generalizations. It is expected that these interpretive findings can then be transferred to other contexts (Bassey, 2003).

Issue: The traditional means of judging the quality or rigor of a research inquiry in education (Cohen, Manion & Morrison; Creswell, 2008) is by reference to the four criteria of internal validity, reliability, objectivity and generalization/ external validity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). However, for qualitative interpretive inquiries: *credibility* replaces internal validity; *dependability* replaces reliability, *confirmability* replaces objectivity, and *transferability* replaces generalization/external validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Credibility, in the case study, is enhanced by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and peer debriefing. Dependability is concerned with the stability of data over time- providing an audit trail is important. Confirmability seeks to ensure that the results of an inquiry have not been subject to influence by the investigators. Transferability is up to the reader to adjudge if the research findings are applicable in their own setting. This transferability is enhanced by the provision of a 'thick' description of the responses (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002).

Discussion: In cooperative education credibility and dependability of the research can also be enhanced by triangulating the data (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2003) across different stakeholder groups or different student cohorts along with involving relevant documentation (e.g., course/paper outlines, graduate profiles, etc.) and literature. 'Within case analysis' builds a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details (Yin, 2003). 'Cross-case analysis' then reviews processes and outcomes across many cases developing more sophisticated descriptions and explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994). 'Content analysis' attempts to 'quantify' qualitative data aiming for greater acceptability of the findings (Yin, 2003). The semi-structured interview, involving individuals or focus groups, is an appropriate method in cooperative education to understand respondent's opinions and beliefs (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Lowe, 1991). The responses from the focus group interviews are transcribed and then coded and then combined into themes.

Conclusions/Implications: A case study design permits researchers in cooperative education to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues of interest and to explore meaning from a number of angles and across different educational contexts (Merriam, 1998). The use of qualitative data analysis in the case study then aims to communicate understanding from the different stakeholders involved (Stake, 2008). The reporting of the descriptive responses in the case study report attempts to convey the holistic understanding and meaning of the phenomena under study (Merriam, 1998).

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Would You Like Another Student? Yes, Please

KATHARINE HOSKYN, SALLY RAE

AUT University of Technology

Background: The availability of workplaces to provide workplace experience for students is critical to the success of any co-op program.

Issue: In many sectors there is a small pool of available or suitable organizations and so it is critical that workplaces are retained and take students on a continuing basis or regular basis. Even in sectors with a significant number of potential workplaces, there are many benefits if organizations are retained as co-op partners or sponsors.

Discussion: This paper discusses literature related to the retention of organizations as co-op workplaces or co-op partners, with additional literature about retention from other disciplines. This is discussed in relation to specific ways in which academic institutions can increase the likelihood of an organization returning as a co-op workplace, partner or sponsor. Data and/or case studies relating to the retention of workplaces will be examined in the light of the literature, and issues raised.

Conclusions: There are quite specific practical ways in which co-op programs can encourage organizations to be retained, and to take additional students in the future, or on an ongoing basis.

Implications: This study has implications for all co-op programs. It is of particular interest to those operating in a sector with a small pool of potential placement organizations for which retention of co-op workplaces is critical.

The Student and the Supervisor: Perceptions of Learning, Experience and Performance During Cooperative Education

MURRAY CULLEN

Southern Cross University

Background: The importance of the role of workplace supervisors is well documented in the literature but perceptions of their importance may not be as apparent to the students participating in the cooperative education program, and students and workplace supervisors may have different perceptions of learning and performance.

Context: This is part of an on-going research project evaluating the effectiveness of cooperative education in an environmental science degree program.

Aims: To compare and evaluate perceptions of learning, experience and performance from surveys of students and their workplace supervisors.

Methods: Data from 83 students and their workplace supervisors were collected from a survey and responses to key questions rated using a 6-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistical analyses were carried out to determine frequencies, means and variability. Chi-square analysis was undertaken to examine the association between responses.

Results: All but one of the 83 (98.8%) students agreed or agreed strongly that they learned skills from their placement, and 76 of them (92.7%) agreed or agreed strongly that their workplace supervisor contributed to their learning. The majority of students (92.7%) recommended the program to other students though only 72% agreed or agreed strongly that the experience exceeded their expectations. A total of 52 students were placed in positions organized by the school whilst the remaining 31 students organized their own placements but there was no association between who organized the placement and the students learning of skills or their recommendation of the program to other students. Workplace supervisors were very satisfied with the performance of the students, with 82.7% rating it excellent, 13.6% rated it good and the remaining 3.7% rated it satisfactory. Two areas that supervisors did not rate as highly were the pre-internship planning by the students and their knowledge of the host organization. These were rated as good by 46.9% and 59.3% respectively. A number of other demographic results were obtained.

Conclusions/Implications: Responses from students and workplace supervisors indicate the program is operating very successfully and students are gaining important skills from their experience. The role of the supervisor is a key element in ensuring learning and student satisfaction. Additional emphasis must be given to prepare the students for their placements, especially in regard to their knowledge of the host organization, and their expectations about the experience.

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Critical Reflection on Critical Reflection

TRICIA LUCAS, JENNY FLEMING

AUT University

Program: The Bachelor of Sport and Recreation includes two cooperative education papers where students undertake work integrated learning experiences for the equivalent of two days per week over an academic year.

Issue: Included as part of the cooperative education experience are several exercises and assessments based on the reflective process. Some students comment that they feel there is too much reflection and they do not see why it is important. Research evidence suggests that reflection is an essential and valuable part of the learning process within the cooperative education program.

Discussion/Argument: We believe the reflection within the program allows students to critically analyze their work based experiences, be more proactive within the workplace and learn to manage similar situations in the future. However, our own reflection on the cooperative education program shows that critical reflection is often done poorly by the students. Why is this? Is this a reflection of lack of buy in of the value of critical reflection? How can we as practitioners improve reflective practice?

Conclusion/Implications: We would like to identify key strategies that practitioners use/could use to facilitate reflective process to ensure that reflection has value for the students.

Cooperative Education in Governance: A Small Business Case Study

FRASER BELL, SARAH LEBERMAN

Massey University

Background: Although developing across many sectors, little, if any, research has been conducted on the utility of cooperative education in the field of governance.

Context: Research presented is developed from a pilot project in co-op involving a group of MBA students taking governance roles in small business. Two companies were provided for the purpose by entrepreneurs.

Aims: To establish whether co-op governance education has beneficial outcomes for students, what structures are necessary for success, and identifying the benefits and risks for organizations

Methods: A six-month pilot project was the basis for a case study. Context-rich data were collected from structured interviews, archival data and participant observation. Interview data were textually analyzed and grouped thematically.

Results: The pilot project had limited effectiveness. The intention was to provide a 'real-world' experience in governance education for students. Although the businesses involved were real and trading, the governance structure was 'manufactured' for the purposes of the pilot. Students formed a majority of a newly formed board. The SME environment resulted in multi-level conflict including the blurring of governance and management roles, the speed of entrepreneurial decision-making versus student expectations and unilateral decision-making by the owners. Students reported that their understanding of governance increased as a result of participation in the pilot project through self-directed study of governance rather than observation of, and participation in, a best-practice governance exemplar.

Conclusions: The development governance skills and interest in governance roles can be enhanced by co-op learning experiences and is endorsed by practitioners. The pilot project lacked the structures necessary for success. The artificial nature of the board, and lack of extant experienced members reduced the opportunity for learning. Organization and institutional support was inadequate for the pilot.

Implications: Governance education can be enhanced through co-op projects. An alternative to the pilot structure is proposed through the use of models using extant boards with students as either observers or participant-observers. A range of experiences are possible from SME environments, to larger family firms, to not-for profit organizations. A thorough support structure is required and the model proposed for the Massey Internship paper is proposed; a double semester program including pre-work, clarification of expectations, experiential learning and triangulated de-brief.

A Conceptual Model Incorporating Work Integrated Learning and Organizational Feedback to Maintain Currency in Business Curriculum

RAVI BHAT

Unitec New Zealand

Background/Context: It is necessary to understand the processes of curriculum development in business schools. Equally important is the identification of all parties involved in curriculum development. Are students customers, or are they the products of education? Are the organizations that employ graduates the primary customers and therefore an important party to providing input into curricula? Do the faculty and administrators of business schools control curriculum development or do students and organizations also have a role to play? It is important that these issues are raised and addressed.

Aims: A conceptual model adapted from Lovelock, Patterson and Walker (2001) is developed and presented to identify all critical participants in the process of business curriculum development and how WIL can be a useful source for organizations and students to provide feedback on maintenance of currency in the curriculum.

Methods: An extant literature review resulted in the development of the conceptual model and content analysis was used to identify key themes in the reflective journals written and sent in weekly by students majoring in Accounting, Management and Marketing.

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Results: The conceptual model emphasizes the need to draw on feedback from placement employers/sponsors and the students too. Content analysis of reflective journals from business students majoring in the three degree majors of Accounting, Management and Marketing, provide a rich source of information on key areas and themes relating to the adequacy of theoretical concepts learned in the classroom and new challenges faced in the workplace relating to for example, communication skills. They realized the importance of teamwork and the value of gaining soft skills while in placement and a more critical understanding of the business culture specific to the sector their firm belonged to. They felt they learned from a variety of people both on and off campus and emphasized the need for better integration of learning between the specific business curricula that they studied and the workplace and implying that too much of the curricula focus and relate to theory that has little relation to practice. By the end of the placement, critical reflection was seen as a key learning strategy, and there was strong support for the portfolio model for assessment as used at Unitec, including collaborative assessment and feedback from sponsors and the use of learning journals.

Conclusions/Implications: The placements appears to have exposed students to the needs of real clients and customers that required students to be customer focused and deliver value. This factor needs to be assessed and TLA strategies formulated to bring to the classroom "real world learning" in curriculum development. Increasingly, new technologies including web 2 will need to be used to interface with students in a triangular interactivity that includes potential employers/organizations.

Is the Village Common in a Cloud? Cooperative Education and Social Networking

DIANA AYLING

Unitec New Zealand

Background: In this paper communication and content issues which arise in cooperative communication courses are identified from a discussion of recent literature.

Issue: Often administrators and managers of cooperative education courses struggle to manage the complex interactions of students, staff and hosts. In recent years, email, learning management systems, such as Moodle and Blackboard, and Internet Sites have provided mechanisms for communication and sharing of information. However, as Web 2.0 becomes Web 3.0, and there are more online applications which allow increased user participation and collaboration are social networking applications such as Ning and SocialGo more appropriate in a cooperative education environment? Could online social networking sites enhance a practice based learning course? Could social networking in cooperative education provide a competitive advantage for institutions?

Discussion: Social networking concepts and ideas are explored in relation to cooperative education. The advantages and disadvantages of social networking are identified from the perspectives of students, staff and hosts. Information and communication technology enhanced teaching and learning (ICTELT) is introduced as a model. The added value opportunities for tertiary education institutions from social networking activity are discussed.

Conclusions: More research is needed into the use of social networking applications, the effectiveness of ICTELT and possible additional advantages for tertiary education institutions.

Implications: The results of research into social networking use in cooperative education courses will provide valuable insights for course managers.

New Zealand Social Work Field Education: Cooperation and Collaboration in a Competitive Environment

KATHRYN HAY

Massey University

Background: The current tertiary environment in New Zealand, in regard to teaching, research and student enrolments, is based on competition. In 2006, a group of social work field education coordinators met during a practicum conference and realized that while the institutional environment was competitive, the issues they faced in their area of work were very similar. Under the umbrella of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work Educators (ANZSWE) a Field Education Subcommittee, comprised of field education coordinators from 16 tertiary institutions, was established to support cooperation, collaboration and best practice in field education. Research on cross-institutional collaborative groups is limited.

Issue: The issue addressed in this paper is the tension for field education coordinators between the competitive tertiary environment, and a desire to cooperate and collaborate with colleagues across institutions to promote and encourage best practice in social work field education. The collaborative model is an uneasy fit within the competitive environment. Protection of institutional knowledge, intellectual property and issues of time and resources impinge on potential positive outcomes of a cross-institutional committee.

Discussion: This paper presents an evaluation of the work of the ANZSWE Field Education Subcommittee, established to promote cooperation, collaboration and best practice in field education across social work programs in New Zealand tertiary institutions. The author identifies several innovative outcomes from the work of the Subcommittee that have enhanced best

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practice in individual social work programs, and the wider social work discipline. Limitations of the group are identified as well as possibilities for future endeavors within the Subcommittee.

Conclusions: The innovation of the cross-institutional Subcommittee provides a model of collaboration and cooperation that might have relevance for other applied professional disciplines. The outcomes from the work of this Subcommittee indicate that in spite of a competitive tertiary environment, cooperation and collaboration across institutions can be effective in enhancing the teaching, research and development of social work field education within individual programs and the wider social work discipline.

Implications: While effective cooperation and collaboration across tertiary institutions is possible in spite of the current competitive environment, a tension exists. A cross-institutional group may have practical benefits for field education coordinators, students and individual social work programs as well as the wider social work profession. Several limitations, however, need to be addressed to ensure maximum benefit from a cross-institutional committee.

An Apprenticeship-Based IT Degree

AARON STEELE, CATHERINE SNELL-SIDDLE, SANDRA CLELAND

UCOL New Zealand

Background: The majority of New Zealand tertiary institutes that offer IT related bachelor degrees include an industry project or work experience type component in the final stages of the qualification. This cooperative educational component generally aims to prepare students for a career in the IT industry.

Program: The School of Business & Computing at UCOL currently offers a Bachelor of Information & Communications Technology (BICT) degree. This is a three year program with students being required to undertake a 45 credit (approximately one semester) industry project in their final year of study (a structure common to many New Zealand IT degrees).

Issue: The industry project is the pinnacle of New Zealand IT degrees and is regarded as an essential component of the course by staff, students and industry stakeholders. Building on the known benefits of industry involvement, this paper asks the following question: could cooperative education start earlier on in New Zealand IT degrees?

Discussion: This paper explores the possibility of implementing an apprenticeship based IT degree within a New Zealand context. The authors propose a potential degree structure (based on the BICT degree) and discuss the probable implications, benefits and issues that would likely surround the delivery and validity of such a qualification.

Conclusion: The initial exploration into the idea of an apprenticeship based IT degree indicates that the proposed program could be a viable course of study within a New Zealand context. However, the successfulness of such a program would rely significantly on the caliber of student, the credibility and validity of workplace evaluations, and the long term commitment of the host industry organization.

Yes, But What Can They Do Now? Examining a Range of Degree Papers by Industry Readiness

Criteria

DAVID SKELTON

Eastern Institute of Technology

Background: The main focus for the Eastern Institute of Technology Bachelor of Computing Systems (BCS) cooperative experience has been the capstone industry project or internship. This paper investigates a range of courses/papers across all levels of the BCS degree for their contribution towards preparing the student for industry readiness. It was thought that such an examination may lead to a sharpening of IT skills and knowledge by students and better preparation towards the capstone industry project/internship and onwards into fulltime employment.

Issue: One of the underlying issues addressed in this paper is the value of some academic activity particularly in pre-requisite papers which are traditionally used as preparation for more industry-relevant and focused subjects. Some papers may have the potential to be changed to become more practical, and directly relevant to industry skills required by graduates whilst still meeting preparatory requirements.

Discussion: This paper presents an overview of a range of papers/courses at levels 5, 6 and 7 and evaluates each in terms of student, lecturer and industry effectiveness for entry-level IT/business employment. The papers are also evaluated for effectiveness in terms of preparation for the capstone industry project/internship. Without this holistic focus some students may approach the completion of a degree and the industry cooperative experience with limited immediate skills.

Conclusions: Initially, it appears that some papers would benefit from minor changes even if only to the assessment artefacts, e.g. changing a traditional written essay/assignment to a case study based scenario evaluated with real IT systems. After the review, it is hoped that each paper/course is able to 'stand-alone' in terms of enabling and skilling the student in an area of IT rather than existing only as a foundation for another later more relevant paper.

Implications: Hopefully, the initial findings will be generalizable for a range of different degree programs and lead to entire programs preparing students with marketable skills from year one of their studies. Students are becoming less tolerant of learning material that cannot be proven to be relevant to their industry readiness. Where foundational papers are essential then clear explanations need to be made to students for the necessity of these papers (e.g. maths, data). Some criticism of this cooperative oriented 'spring-cleaning' of programs may be expected from advocates of holistic education however this debate may still be helpful if each paper on a program is either successfully defended or changed for greater industry relevance.

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Competitive Advantage Through Curriculum

SHIU RAM

Unitec New Zealand

Background: Curriculum lies at the heart of an educational institution. Such an institution can gain competitive advantage over its competitors through innovative design, development and implementation of its curricula. Industry based learning (IBL) has a special significance in the curriculum design. It is well known that the a graduate who has undertaken IBL stands better chances of finding an employment than another who has not. It would be interesting to analyze and evaluate the different aspects of curriculum to see how it impacts on the success of an educational institution.

Issue: Curriculum drives all other activities at an educational institution. As such it needs careful planning, design, development and delivery; and the subsequent assessment of the learning outcomes.

Discussion: This paper attempts to highlight the central and vital importance of curriculum for an educational institution. Curriculum initiates the gathering of all the resources, defining all the activities and products, and ultimately determines the survival and success of the educational institution.

Conclusions: Curriculum determines the resources, activities, and quality of graduates of an educational institution. As such it demands greatest attention and care in its design, development and delivery.

Implications: An educational institution can create a competitive advantage over its competitors by giving due attention to the innovative design, development and delivery of its curricula.

Online Tool for Coordinating Work Placements and Facilitating Work Place Learning

LEVINIA PAKU, CRAIG ROBB, MARK LAY

University of Waikato

Background/Program: In co-op programs dealing with increasing student numbers, mechanisms are sought to help placement coordinators be more effective in their roles of managing and maintaining regular contact with students, employers and academics. Students and employers are 'technology savvy' and it is important that we keep up with technology as a means of upholding communication with all stakeholders involved. Our previous research has led us to create our online database to help facilitate the placement process and therefore maintain efficiency.

Unique Features/Issue: All information relevant to the placement, such as CV, student information and work placement descriptions will be within the one database. This will allow us to generate electronic spreadsheets of information which we use frequently throughout the co-op placement process. It will be a point of contact for students to seek and apply for work placements and a place for employers to advertise work placements on.

Discussion/Argument: As there is a lot of paperwork and information generated during the co-op process, we believe that an online database will reduce this and save us from time-consuming administration work. With an online system, this will be the starting point for developing a more advanced system for educational purposes as well.

Conclusions/Implications: The developed website will be trialed in 2010 on a cohort of engineering students. We intend to further develop the site so that it becomes an educational tool (e.g. online portfolio) for learning objectives and reflective learning.

Exploring Interventions to Enhance Faculty Involvement in Co-op

SUSAN MCCURDY, KARSTEN E. ZEGWAARD

University of Waikato

Background: Faculty are one of the fundamental stakeholders in the tri-partite relationship in cooperative education. This relationship is particularly important in the NZ context where co-op is often driven by educational institutions. Much research has been carried out on the perceptions of, and benefits to the other stakeholders like students and employers, however, faculty perceptions that have been reported have mostly been restricted to anecdotal experiences. Recently, exploration of science and engineering faculty perceptions at Waikato University found, despite having rather mixed views on some issues, that generally co-op was perceived as beneficial to the university and students. However, the research also uncovered that faculty hold some misconceptions and confusion about the purpose of co-op and how the benefits occur for students, staff and the university.

Issue: Investigation into faculty views indicated a lack of understanding of what the purposes of co-op programs are, how co-op 'works' in university environments, how they may benefit current tertiary students and how universities (and staff individually) can get added benefits from a well supported co-op program. Input from participants will be requested on how best to address the misconceptions and develop robust and clear interventions, and to assess tentative future plans.

Discussion: Since in NZ co-op is largely driven by educational institutions, and that faculty support is vital for a co-op programs success, the lack of knowledge and the misconceptions need to be addressed. It is proposed that research is undertaken to develop interventions that address areas where faculty appear to lack comprehensive understanding and knowledge, e.g. education theory, the theory and practicalities of work integrated learning, how co-op student experiences can be incorporated into tertiary courses more, how faculty can be included in the co-op experience, how that experience can be fostered to build relationships with external supervisors and researchers.

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Conclusion: To maximize the potential of cooperative education courses within tertiary institutions interventions are being investigated and planned. These will cover areas such as inclusion in an induction program for new faculty, development of Professional Development module for existing staff who wish to increase their knowledge of cooperative education and education theory. Planning includes professional development tutorials to enhance and enrich teaching by inclusion of co-op student experiences.

Implications: It is likely that outcomes from this research will be useful to other co-op practitioners and programs both within the New Zealand context and internationally. The development of interventions and professional development modules, faculty teaching modules/tutorial will be accessible and easily modified to apply to most institutions and co-op programs.

The Development of an IT Professional in the Post-industrial Age

NICK WEMPE

Whitireia Community Polytechnic

Background: As society develops and adopts new ways of utilizing information technology, the requirement for people to develop and support such technologies increases. For several years the IT sector has found it difficult to recruit and retain staff. Initially this shortfall was managed by recruitment from overseas lower ranked economies, however as these economies grow the use of IT themselves this recruitment becomes increasingly difficult.

Issue: In larger economies IT internships have served to develop the quality of skills required. New Zealand's economy however consists of small to medium enterprises that do not have the capability to develop internship programs. The ITP sector has been charged with the responsibility by Government to develop work ready graduates able to proceed directly into the workplace with the minimum of retraining. While IT programs have been successful in developing capstone projects to develop IT skills these projects are at best a marginal example of cooperation with industry. It falls to both the sector and ITPs to work together to develop a more sustainable post industrial method of cooperative education to develop the IT professionals of the future.

Discussion: This paper highlights research into capstone projects and the development of IT professionals and has lead to the development of models designed specifically for economies largely made up of small to medium enterprises such as New Zealand.

Pre-Placement Personal and Professional Skills Development: Manual of Good Practice

NEIL I. WARD

University of Surrey

ANDREA L. MARCILLA

Patagonia PBS

The cooperative education or work-integrated learning placement is often thought of as the critical period for the development of personal and professional skills in a degree program. In order for the student to maximize their opportunities in the world of work to learn about themselves and the workplace environment, it is essential that they are 'trained' throughout the pre-placement period so as to be able to fully engage in skills development. This is also an essential learning component of their degree and should be integrated as credit bearing modules at all levels before the placement period. The main theme of this workshop is to exchange knowledge about what pre-placement skills training courses are offered in New Zealand universities (and at the University of Surrey in the United Kingdom), and to evaluate whether they are just 'bolt-on' or pre-placement briefing discussions. Moreover, a main aim of the workshop is to prepare a possible Manual of Good Practice through sharing what active/student participant pre-placement activities are being used to 'train' students in this essential area. At the University of Surrey, as an example, we actively involve chemistry students in freelance journalism (The New Chemist Journal), Moon Landing, Stocks and Shares, Lego Bridge and Tower Building, Orienteering, debating, Chemistry of the Microwave, etc. at levels 1 and 2 in 10-credit scientific communication modules. The good news about this workshop is that it might include learning outcomes, detailed activity descriptors, reflection, experiential learning models, etc. So be prepared to share, create and enjoy developing future material for enhancing skills development at your university.

Conference Program & Abstracts

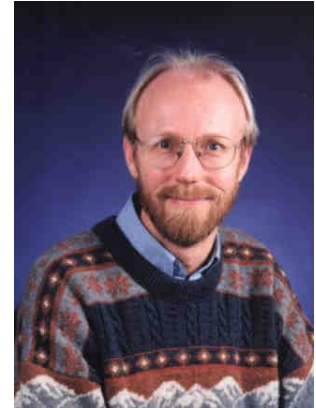
Providing a Competitive Edge

New Zealand Association of Cooperative Education Annual Conference, 14-16 April, 2010
Massey University, Sport & Rugby Institute, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Keynote Address

Working at the Edge: Where Are we at in Cooperative Education in New Zealand?

Cooperative education (co-op) has long been considered an educational endeavor at the margins, off to one side of the mainstream. Various thought of as vocational, non-academic and trade-oriented, co-op has historically struggled somewhat for legitimacy as a learning program. Yet, more recent imperatives globally and nationally, which have emphasized connections between learning and work, knowledge development and learning pathways, have opened the door for greater recognition of strategies such as co-op. At the same time, as co-op educators we are developing greater understanding of teaching, learning and assessment in co-op programs, which gives us more confidence that what we are doing deserves a place at the heart of education, not out on a limb. This presentation will attempt to review where we are at, at least in New Zealand, and will draw on the messages of this conference to examine ways in which we could move from the peripheral edge to the cutting edge.



About the Speaker

Dr Chris Eames has worked in cooperative education since 1993. He has worked on the BSc(Tech) program at the University of Waikato as a placement coordinator for 16 years, and for the last two years as convener and faculty adviser in biological sciences. Chris completed a PhD in cooperative education in 2003, looking at theoretical perspectives on learning through placements. He was made a life member of NZACE in 2007 in recognition of long service on the national executive. More recently, Chris's work has taken him in slightly different directions, but he retains a keen interest in the development of cooperative education.