

# Students' reflections on industry placement: Comparing four undergraduate work-integrated learning streams

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This paper compares four work-integrated learning (WIL) streams embedded in a professional Development course for tourism, hospitality and event management students. Leximancer was used to analyze key themes emerging from reflective portfolios completed by the 137 students in the course. Results highlight that student learning outcomes and experiences differed depending on the WIL stream chosen. Aristotle's notions of episteme, techne and phronesis are used as a broad framework for situating the key themes that emerge from students' reflections. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2013, 14(4), 265-279

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## BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE

Tourism and hospitality employers rely on higher education institutions to produce graduates that not only have a theoretical understanding of their field, but the practical skills and knowledge to think independently and adapt to new and challenging situations (Spowart, 2011). Employers also value soft skills such as communication skills, teamwork, interpersonal skills and the ability to problem solve (Gamble, Patrick & Peach, 2010; Spowart, 2011), yet research suggests that these attributes have rarely been emphasized or deliberately fostered in higher education settings (Rainsbury, Hodges, Burchell & Lay, 2002). This focus is changing, however, with the curricula of many universities now incorporating work-integrated learning, industry placements, reflective exercises and simulations to enhance their graduates' career-readiness. Through university-workplace partnerships, there are further opportunities to contextualize students' learning, "[bridging] the gap between theory and practice and [promoting] the development of desirable core graduate attributes" (Venables & Tan, 2009, p.18).

Several studies have explored the learning outcomes of industry placements in tourism and hospitality education (Collins, 2002; Beggs, Ross & Goodwin, 2008; Busby, 2003; Mistilis & Harris, 2009). These have concluded that tourism and hospitality internships play an important role in developing transferable skills such as communication, customer relations, networking, team work, time management and problem solving (Beggs, Ross & Goodwin, 2008; Busby, 2003; Busby, Brunt & Baber, 1997; Lee, 2008; Leslie & Richardson, 2000), as well as technical knowledge of the discipline or field (Busby et al., 1997; Lee, 2008). Internships also provide learning benefits that extend beyond the development of skills and knowledge, with some students reporting that their internship experience resulted in increasing confidence (Busby, 2003). Crossley, Jamieson and Brayley (2007, p.312) observed that hospitality internships provided "an opportunity to have an intensive, work-based exposure to a broad range of operations within a company", while Lee (2008) reported that students developed a better understanding of how organizations function. Similarly, some authors in the tourism literature have argued that students should have the opportunity to put theory

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into practice to ensure a balance between vocational and theoretical content (Airey, 1996; Busby, 2003). Recent work has focused on the impact of internships on career planning and development (Chen & Shen, 2012).

While the research on internships is useful and the findings are generally consistent, other innovative WIL approaches in tourism, hospitality and events education are rarely discussed. As Patrick et al. (2008) note, there are a variety of WIL approaches that can be designed to introduce students to the world of work within a purposely designed curriculum. In tourism and hospitality education these have included, but are not limited to, practical or student consultancy projects (Haywood, 1983; Rimmington, 1999), shadowing programs (Solnet, Robinson & Cooper, 2007), industry immersion programs (Ruhanen, Breakey & Robinson, 2011) and industry mentoring.

This paper will address the lack of research related to student responses to different WIL approaches by comparing four WIL streams embedded in a professional development course designed to prepare undergraduate tourism, hospitality and event management students for a professional career. The course is designed to provide students with learning experiences that develop their job search and communication skills, expose them to the latest ideas and opinions from industry leaders, offer opportunities to network with top-level executives, provide an industry placement experience in preparation for entry into the workforce, and support their journey toward becoming reflective thinkers. The course is compulsory, and students must be in the final year of their three year tourism and hospitality degree to enroll. Participation in a work-integrated learning stream is a mandatory component of this course.

There are four work-integrated learning streams that provide students with professional and personal development opportunities and, as such, contribute in their transition to becoming work-ready graduates. Prior to commencement of the course, students submit a resume and expression of interest nominating, in order of preference, which of the four streams they would prefer. Each stream is briefly reviewed below.

*Executive Shadowing Program (ESP):* Highly competitive, ESP is offered to 15-18 students (8-10% of the cohort) who demonstrate high academic achievement, exceptional interpersonal and professional communication skills as well as relevant industry experience. ESP offers students the opportunity to 'shadow' a senior manager or CEO of a tourism, hospitality or event management organization for 60-80 hours. Applicants are first interviewed internally by university staff involved in the professional development course, before being short-listed and recommended to one to three organizations for an in-situ industry interview. Post-interview, the senior manager selects the applicant who best 'fits' the organization's requirements. The main benefits for ESP students include gaining 'real world' interview experience, opportunities to network with key industry leaders, and having access to high level meetings and discussions. Examples of ESP hosts include the Queensland Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Tourism Queensland and Brisbane Marriott Hotel.

*Tourism Regional Immersion Project (TRIP):* Also competitive, with entry based on students' academic achievement and interpersonal skills, TRIP requires groups of three to five students to live in a regional destination for 4-5 days, conducting a project that benefits the local community and tourism industry. Typically, there are four to five projects on offer, with most requiring TRIP students to conduct community research or audits. On completion of the project, a report, presentation or social media products are provided to hosts. Examples of recent TRIP activities include surveying attendees at the Toowoomba Carnival of Flowers,

developing social marketing tools for the Scenic Rim Regional Council, auditing roadside signage in the Somerset region, and creating day trip itineraries for tourists visiting the Moreton Bay region.

*Industry Placement (IP)*: Most students complete their placement in this stream. IP is non-competitive, requires a commitment of 40-60 hours, and provides opportunities for students to work with a variety of tourism, hospitality, events or leisure sector organizations. Wherever possible, hosts are asked to give students a variety of tasks and, for organizations with multiple departments, to rotate students through as many departments as feasible. Examples of regular IP hosts include Brisbane Marketing, Moda Events, Stamford Plaza Hotel and the Brisbane Lions Football Club.

*Reflection on Current Employment (ROCE)*: Students who are currently employed in a job related to tourism, hospitality, leisure or events, and who would find it too much of a hardship or inconvenience to complete an industry placement elsewhere, can apply for this option. Where possible, ROCE students are encouraged to seek higher duties within their organization or work in a different department for the duration of this placement experience (minimum of 40 hours over the semester). Of the four WIL streams, ROCE has the lowest number of students.

As part of their assessment for this course, students keep a diary and create a reflective portfolio focused on their workplace experiences. Selecting one to three critical incidents that occurred during their placement, students reflect upon what they have learnt about themselves – strengths, skills, weaknesses - and their suitability for the industry into which they were placed. They are also required to describe their thoughts and feelings relating to the critical incident, and indicate whether (and how) they would respond differently should a similar incident reoccur. Finally, students are asked to reflect upon how they have grown or changed as a result of their industry placement and to (re)consider their career options and post-graduation plans (linked to an earlier course assessment piece). Similar to Bates' (2008) experience, "students recorded significant learning experiences in their journals with surprising candour" (p.309).

Complementing this self-reflection, workplace hosts also provide formative (non-graded) evaluations to students about their performance, commenting on a range of attributes (such as enthusiasm, leadership, maturity, appearance and social qualities), strengths, skills, knowledge and possible areas for improvement. Students are encouraged, where possible, to use this evaluation to inform and enhance their reflective practice.

This paper adopts an emic approach by analyzing the content and focus of the students' reflective portfolios. The analysis considers the 'student voice' and situates the outcomes of each stream within a conceptual framework provided by Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Ross & Brown, 2009). Aristotle argued that learning and professional action is associated with three kinds of competencies: *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis*. *Episteme* (theoretical knowledge) is concerned with knowledge that is systematic and universal across particular contexts. *Techne* (practical skill) refers to the skills, routines and techniques associated with making, creating and doing. *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) is about the development and application of experiential knowledge to specific contexts. The distinction between *techne* and *phronesis* is important. *Phronesis* is not just about doing the right thing, but acting in the right way, for the right reasons and at the right time (Saugstad, 2005). *Phronesis* extends beyond skills and

technique to include reflexivity; as such, phronesis is not an inert quality but rather is cultivated through experience, practice and repetition (Dredge, et al., 2012; Jamal, 2004).

Aristotle's ideas have been applied in a range of learning contexts and continue to be reinterpreted by modern scholars. For example, Barnett and Coate (2005) describe the domains of 'knowing', 'doing' (or acting) and 'being' as overlapping circles of importance in professional programs. These domains are broadly analogous with Aristotle's three competencies. It has also been suggested that Aristotle's notion of phronesis is embodied by learner reflection (Birmingham, 2004). The current research therefore builds on a number of studies which have applied Aristotle's ideas or various modern adaptations to teaching and learning contexts (Clegg & Ross-Smith, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Kinsella & Pitman, 2012; Noel, 1999; Sliwa & Cairns, 2009).

## METHODOLOGY

The qualitative dataset contained 137 reflective portfolios representing a 315,483 word corpus. The portfolios were categorized according to the four workplace streams, then analyzed using Leximancer, a software tool that performs a content analysis of textual documents and produces a concept map of the qualitative data (Baggio & Marzano, 2007). Leximancer extracts thesaurus-based 'concepts' from the text data, codes these concepts, and then creates a concept map highlighting the frequency and connectedness of concepts (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). A concept consists of sets of words that are used in close proximity to each other in the same portfolio. Leximancer identifies these concepts by using word occurrence and co-occurrence frequencies to produce a word co-occurrence matrix. The strength of relationships between concepts is measured by the number of direct links between concepts (Rooney, et al., 2009). The words that make up each concept are placed in a 'thesaurus' that contains the set of associated words and weightings, which indicate the words' relative importance (Angus-Leppan, Benn, & Young, 2010). The analysis assesses indirect links between concepts to identify significant semantic relationships. The frequency of co-occurring concepts is measured, weighted and clustered to produce a map of concepts from which themes of directly related concepts emerge. The analysis therefore includes both conceptual and relational content analysis which identifies the presence and frequency of concepts from the portfolios as well as how the concepts are related to each other.

An initial exploratory analysis was conducted to see what concepts were automatically generated without intervention by Leximancer. It was clear from the exploratory analysis that human intervention and validation was required to remove unwanted concepts, to merge similar concepts and to interpret underlying themes and linkages. This included deleting words or concepts from analysis that were not meaningful or were too generic. Word variants (e.g. team, group) were automatically grouped together. A major advantage of this computer assisted approach is that it provides an objective, comprehensive and quantitatively derived framework in which qualitative analysis is more effectively facilitated (Scott & Smith, 2005; Smith & Humphreys, 2006). This is particularly useful for large volumes of text. The approach used by Leximancer is more compelling than a count of the most frequent words because the software is able to distinguish between words and concepts, with concepts being the most semantically significant words (Rooney, et al., 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Leximancer generates both concept maps and lists of related words. Table 1 provides the list of related words for each of the four WIL streams. In this table the relevance percentage is a calculation of the number of text segments which were coded with that concept, relative to the frequency of the most frequent concept. As this is a measure of relativity, the concept with the highest frequency will always be 100% but that does not mean all text segments contain that concept. The relevance percentage provides an indication of the importance of a concept within the dataset.

Not surprisingly, 'work' was the most commonly identified concept across three of the streams. Given the nature of ROCE, it was also not surprising to find that students frequently mentioned their 'job'. Students across all streams wrote about their 'feelings', or how they felt about particular incidents and events during their WIL experience. The concept of 'time' was mentioned across all streams and was often related to the development of time management skills. Many students felt that they were getting valuable industry 'experience' from the WIL stream and that this would help them to develop their 'career'.

TABLE 1: Relevance of the most frequent concepts for each stream

ESP		TRIP		ROCE		IP	
work	100%	work	100%	job	100%	work	100%
industry	62%	team	74%	work	95%	event	77%
event	57%	project	57%	<b>guests</b>	72%	time	57%
placement	55%	feelings	52%	feelings	67%	feelings	50%
feelings	53%	time	51%	time	61%	experience	50%
time	51%	experience	44%	manager	56%	industry	46%
job	48%	tourism	42%	<b>service</b>	39%	job	43%
experience	46%	<b>operators</b>	40%	<b>staff</b>	37%	placement	37%
career	38%	industry	38%	hotel	32%	learning	35%
learning	35%	<b>survey</b>	31%	<b>shift</b>	32%	people	31%
<b>opportunity</b>	34%	career	30%	<b>duty</b>	29%	tasks	31%
<b>realized</b>	30%	<b>meeting</b>	28%	team	29%	skills	30%
people	30%	situation	27%	experience	28%	career	26%
<b>program</b>	30%	<b>report</b>	26%	<b>management</b>	26%	<b>knowledge</b>	23%
manager	28%	people	25%	situation	25%	future	22%
future	28%	skills	24%	<b>front</b>	23%	<b>important</b>	22%
skills	27%	tasks	23%	<b>issues</b>	21%	hotel	21%
<b>interview</b>	26%	placement	22%	Industry	20%	<b>different</b>	19%
tourism	25%	<b>members</b>	21%	future	17%	situation	19%
hotel	24%	<b>communication</b>	21%	<b>training</b>	17%	<b>understand</b>	19%

Note: Concepts unique to each stream shown in **bold**

Table 1 also indicates which concepts were unique to each stream (indicated in bold). While there were certainly many similarities between the streams, the table highlights important differences in the relevance of various concepts. For example, 'industry' was discussed by many ESP and industry placement students but was far less prominent in the discourse of ROCE students. Similarly, 'event' was mentioned many times by ESP and industry placement students but did not feature amongst the most frequent concepts for the other two streams. This was obviously because TRIP does not feature events, while few ROCE students had event jobs. However, more enlightening is the finding that students on ESP and industry placements were far more likely to mention 'learning'. Unlike other streams,

the industry placement students also mentioned 'knowledge' and 'understand[ing]', while many ESP students commented on their 'interview'.

Angus-Leppan, et al. (2010) suggest that the concept maps generated by Leximancer should be interpreted according to four elements and these are described in Table 2. In many ways the interpretation of the Leximancer maps is similar to that used for Multidimensional Scaling Analyses. Overall proximity and location give an indication of the strength of the connection between concepts. The maps can also include lines between concepts which indicate direct links.

TABLE 2: Key features of Leximancer concept maps

Key Features	Description
<i>Themes</i>	Concepts are clustered together and identified by themes. Themes are the highest level of abstraction generated by the analysis and provide a high-level summary of the data. Themes are indicated by the large circles on the concept map.
<i>Concepts</i>	The concepts are shown as solid circles within themes accompanied by a label. The size of the circle provides some indication of the centrality, or connectedness of each concept. The more connected a concept is with other concepts, the more central it is. Similarly, frequently occurring concepts tend to be positioned nearer to the centre of the map and less frequently occurring ones are positioned towards the periphery.
<i>Contextual similarity</i>	The proximity of concepts indicates the extent to which two concepts appear in similar conceptual contexts. Concepts that are adjacent to each other are frequently found in the same block of text and/or co-occur with each.
<i>Categorical data</i>	The concept map can also include information on different categories. These categorical tags are positioned around the edges of the map. Categorical tags are positioned closer to concepts with which they have strong associations.

#### *Executive Shadowing Program (ESP)*

The first concept map (Figure 1) illustrates reflections of students participating in the Executive Shadowing Program. The map includes concepts (indicated by the smaller grey nodes) which are grouped into themes (indicated by the larger bubbles). Leximancer groups concepts into themes based on how often they appear together in a block of text (in this case, a sentence).

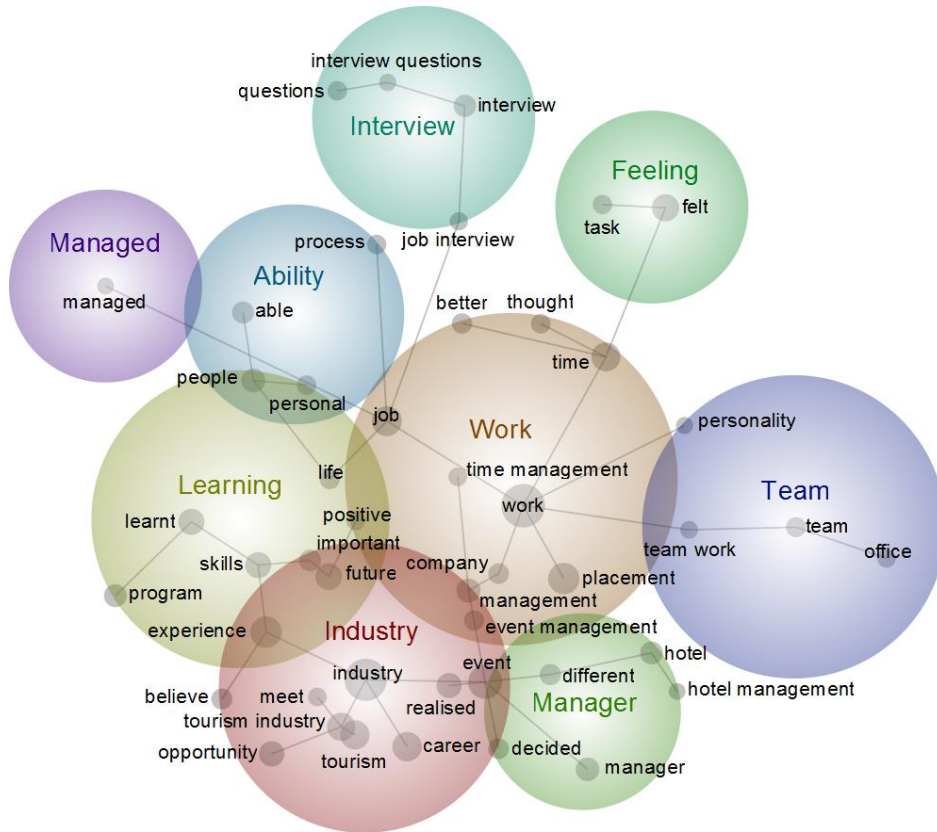


FIGURE 1: Concept map of student reflections in the ESP stream

For the ESP stream, concepts centered on work issues such as time management and management approaches; the industry, particularly in relation to their careers, future and the opportunity to meet people; and the learning experience itself. These findings match the nature of the experience, as ESP predominantly involves observing, meeting and learning from industry leaders. The following quotes from students illustrate this point: "I was always intrigued about the conversation topic and was eager to learn from these professionals as much as possible" and "I found all ideas and conversations revolving around strategy extremely interesting and it ignited my flame to want to help change, shape and impact on the industry that I love."

Teamwork, being managed, and feelings were less important for this group, but this reflects the observational and individual nature of the ESP experience. As ESP is a competitive stream (based on academic results, relevant work experience and interview performance), it was not surprising that the importance of interviews also featured in this map. As can be seen, these reflections were both positive:

from this placement I have been able to enhance my confidence and how I carry myself in a professional environment. I have already seen the fruits of this improvement in my skills – I was offered an interview with the Hilton and drawing on these enhanced skills in my interview, I was able to perform very well and as a result, was offered a job.

or negative:

I felt that all my efforts to earn a high GPA, to gain experience above and beyond my peers and to present myself with confidence and capability had all been wasted. That I was undeserving of even securing an interview with my number one preference shattered me.

ESP students benefit from gaining a managerial perspective of the workplace, enabling them to better understand the practical requirements of being a manager as well as reflect on the relevance of theory learned during their management degree studies. From their comments it is evident that ESP students appreciated the 'learning' opportunity to "understand the critical issues of access to knowledge, including internal politics associated with knowledge, power, and prestige within an organisation" (Murphy & Calway, 2008; p.105). For example, one student noted "I was so excited to see everything that I had been learning about over the past three years put into practice", while another wrote "...the program helped me re-evaluate what my current skills and abilities are, and what I have to do to become successful in the industry I have chosen for my future."

However, ESP students are not necessarily learning by 'doing', so the emphasis tends to be on 'knowing' and developing an understanding of the industry and reflecting on the role of being a senior manager. In support of this, Figure 1 illustrates that the 'ability' and 'managed' themes were less important. Given the emphasis on shadowing a senior manager or CEO, Aristotle's notions of *episteme* and *phronesis* are most evident in this type of experience.

#### *Tourism Regional Immersion Project (TRIP)*

Students in the TRIP stream complete team projects in regional areas in response to regional tourism operators' needs. Analysis of their portfolios illustrates that for these students, issues related to teamwork - dealing with team members, reflecting on their abilities, research tasks - were paramount (see Figure 2).

Interpersonal issues also featured prominently because students are required to live in the destination for the duration of the project. For many, this is their first experience of living with colleagues and, for some, their first trip away from home without friends or family. This created challenges but also led to some revelations about self and other students:

Generally speaking, I was quite unsatisfied with my performance in the group meetings and realized that it would become a main barrier for my future development. Specifically, lack of confidence and communication skills was the key weaknesses negatively affecting my performance in the group meetings.

This experience has taught me to be more understanding and patient of other people whose first language isn't English. It has also taught me that even though a person may not be able to understand your concept that they are a smart, intelligent and most likely able to do something or grasp a concept that you cannot quicker. Having an understanding of this will help me in my career, no matter what I do.

I tried to better understand who the international students are as a person, where they are from, what they can do and bring to the project. I realized that these students are very intelligent and capable of doing more than what I am in some areas.



As most of this cohort was international students, communication issues and developing skills to interact with others were commonly reflected upon in their portfolios. The concept of 'operators' also featured in relation to communication skills, though the concept was less important than expected given that TRIP students had to work closely with local tourism operators. One student wrote "I believe that I would be more constructive had my English been better to communicate with my teammates and the local operators", while another reflected that the experience "...required us to have good oral communication skills in coaching, listening and explaining the concepts to the operators so that they were able to understand, use and update their Facebook pages."

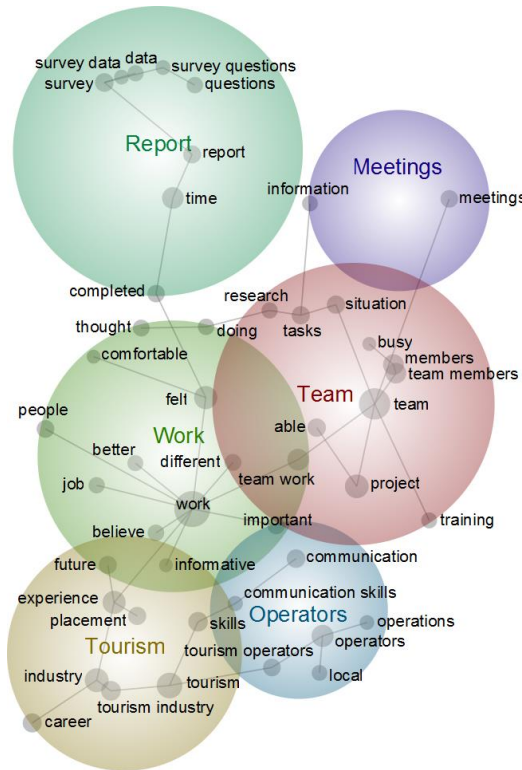


FIGURE 2: Concept map of student reflections in the TRIP stream

As TRIP students produce a research report as part of their immersion experience, the concepts of reports and time management rated highly. Many students found the short time line of TRIP projects challenging and realized that their time management skills were, in places, less than ideal. For example one student wrote "unfortunately, because of the limited time and the mistakes of leaving out too much work for last days, we could not finish the final report on time." Another reflected that "our poor time management arose from not properly preparing ourselves for what we had to do during the week." Related to this theme, one student commented on the effectiveness of multi-tasking: "I didn't tell Brad this but I knew at that point that I should not have been watching television, listening to the recording for another assignment and writing the emails at the same time".

In summary, with such a strong emphasis on practical project work, the outcomes of the TRIP WIL stream support the students' development of technical skills (*techne*) such as communication, team work and time management.

*Industry Placement (IP)*

The IP map (Figure 3) indicates a somewhat diverse range of concepts, which is not surprising considering the variety of placements on offer, the fact that most students are participating in their first 'real' industry placement, and that a significant proportion are international students from a non-English speaking background.

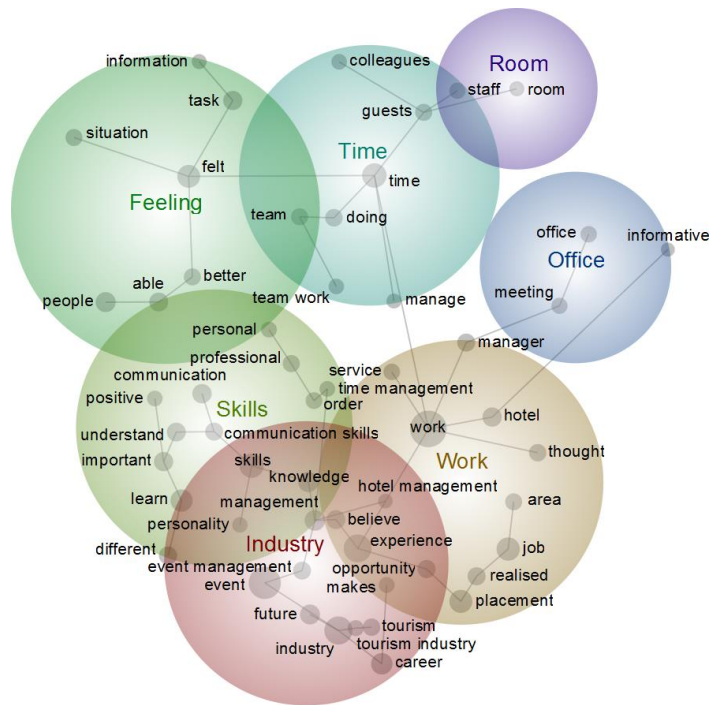


FIGURE 3: Concept map of student reflections in the Industry Placement stream

One of the key themes shown in the IP concept map was work, particularly in relation to the many different facets of a management role. Students felt they got a real insight into the industry and, as a result, had more realistic expectations of their graduate options. For example: "I felt it has provided me with a more realistic view of work within a hotel, and lowered my expectations substantially of future work within such industries." Another student wrote:

However, the hours took quite a toll on me and I had to learn to work efficiently, be professional at all times and to push through exhaustion to get the job done. This placement was therefore one of the most rewarding experiences in preparing me for work ... as it was a realistic insight into my future work routine.

The IP experience also seemed to make students aware of the skills required and the qualities they already possessed. These skills related to physical skills required of the job as well as communication, understanding and personal qualities. The following examples illustrate

this theme: "this experience opened my eyes to the many skills that I still needed to possess to make it within the competitive environment of the events industry", "through completing my placement I have become more aware of the skills I have developed over the past few years of university study, and this has given me more confidence", and I have a clearer perspective on what I want to do after I graduate and how I can improve my skills in order to achieve a great career that I would enjoy and love."

Industry issues such as management, opportunities, beliefs and experiences were mentioned by some students. As this was the first experience of the world of work for many students, feelings also featured strongly: "it was the first time that I felt as though I was an equal rather than just a university student", "initially I felt rather nervous, as this would be the first time I would be facing [an] actual guest" and "I was also feeling pessimistic about this task as I was inexperienced and did not feel confident however I didn't want to appear hopeless so I just smiled, took the bottles and started on my rounds."

As with TRIP students, time management was an important theme. Again, this is likely to be prompted by the fact that for many IP students, this was the first time they had been required to work to a roster and adjust their lifestyles to accommodate work commitments. One student wrote: "I am also disappointed with my student evaluation because I did not persist in completing my tasks in a timely manner." Another reflected that: "I had taken on too many tasks and there was no more time for my catching up on university and no time for [me] to socialize." The following comment illustrates the capacity for students to learn about time management:

This incident has revealed the importance of time management and planning skills. Having analyzed the situation, I now realize that I need to focus and allocate time for my priorities. In the future, I will keep track of the tasks I have to complete .... so that I can plan my timetable for work and leisure activities.

The IP concept map provides an indication of issues graduates with little 'in-the-field' experience are likely to face when entering the workforce, and skills that should be developed via tertiary-based WIL experiences. There is a strong emphasis on 'doing' and developing skills (*techne*) but also on reflexivity (*phronesis*).

#### *Reflection on Current Employment (ROCE)*

The themes emerging from the ROCE concept map (Figure 4) largely focus on specific tasks and duties related to the individual's job such as shift work, training, managers and staff; guests and service; hotels and careers in hotels; and management. Here students reflect on specialized skills and the transition from operational tasks to management tasks: "I feel this job matches my career plan goals of working in an enthusiastic and energetic team in the tourism, transport or hospitality sector utilising my reservation skills, tourism knowledge and customer service experience", and "when my position changed within the company I became overwhelmed with the new learning and further training which I required, my main focus became completing the shift to a standard which was satisfactory on a management level, and I feel that my focus was withdrawn on the operational level."

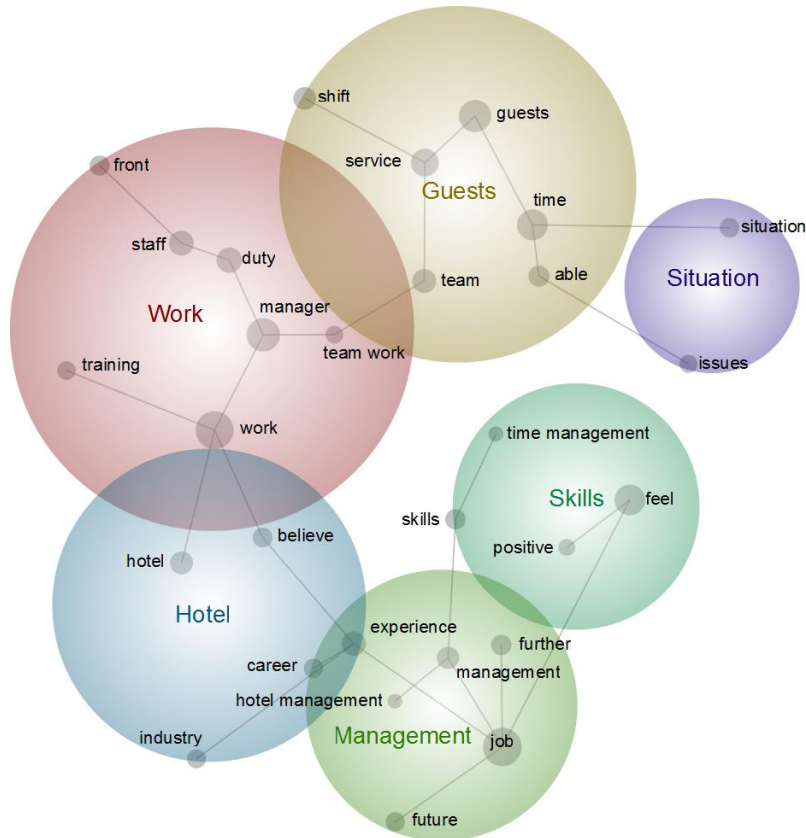


FIGURE 4: Concept map of student reflections in the ROCE stream

Interestingly, learning does not feature strongly in this group's portfolios although this is not entirely unexpected when considering the reasons students select ROCE (i.e., convenience of working in a familiar job along with the capacity to continue earning income without doing voluntary work during a placement). This suggests that WIL experiences that allow individuals to remain working within their comfort zone may not add value to professional career-readiness. While these students have undoubtedly already developed important skills (*techné*) and technical knowledge (*epistémé*) through their current employment, the ROCE stream may not add much value as a learning experience, other than providing students with an opportunity to reflect on their workplace and the competence they have developed over a longer period of time. The following student reflections illustrate this conclusion: "I believe that my confidence within my job is growing especially since I feel supported by my manager", "I feel like my position within the organization and my hard work has been validated and that people respect me and the work I do" and "I can confidently say that over the past three months working ... I have grown significantly, going from strength to strength."

However the focus on personal growth, confidence and respect from others do provide some evidence of students developing a sense of 'being' or *phronesis*. This is perhaps best illustrated by Aristotle's assertion that "knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom."

## CONCLUSIONS

Aristotle's concepts of *episteme*, *techne* and *phronesis* have been used as a broad framework for situating the key themes that emerge from students' reflections of WIL experiences. The key contribution of this paper is the identification of thematic differences in the reflective discourse of students who have completed each stream. The ESP stream appears to be most successful in developing *episteme* and technical knowledge of being a manager in the tourism industry. These students' reflections suggest that in-situ observation and discussion with industry experts provides an insight into management operations that goes beyond what can be learnt in the classroom. Many ESP students commented on the personal and professional value of being invited to high level meetings and having the opportunity to listen to industry and political leaders debate key tourism issues. While many of these issues had been the basis of classroom discussion, hearing them debated in a 'real world' setting 'brought the issues to life' and verified the relevance of their university studies. The strength of TRIP is that it clearly develops project management and interpersonal skills that are valuable for career advancement in the tourism industry. As the tourism industry relies heavily on team work and communication skills, the TRIP stream places students in good stead for obtaining positions as tourism, hospitality or events managers. While IP is also useful for students' developing skills and evaluating their preparedness for entering the workforce, the focus is more strongly on interpersonal skills, a key requirement of tourism professionals. And although the ROCE stream is certainly 'convenient' for those choosing this option, it still provides an opportunity for students to affirm the value of their industry-gained skills and abilities. Arguably, while the experience itself may not develop *phronesis* in all streams, the summative assessment requirement for all students to reflect on their WIL experience does provide a learning opportunity once they return to the formal university setting. Through their reflective journal writing, students can gain a clearer image of 'the big picture' in terms of the industry and their career-readiness, the value of which cannot be underestimated. Indeed, the results indicate that while a different pattern of knowledge and skills outcomes is apparent for each stream, all four streams offer valuable learning experiences which contribute towards developing work-ready graduates.

This research supports previous studies that highlight the personal and professional value of industry placements. There was considerable evidence of students developing transferable skills in the areas of interpersonal communication, networking, team work and time management (benefits identified in studies by Beggs et al., 2008; Busby, 2003; Busby et al., 1997; Lee, 2008; Leslie & Richardson, 2000). As in previous studies (e.g., Busby et al., 1997; Lee, 2008), there was also evidence that students had developed technical skills and knowledge. These are important learning outcomes, as universities are often criticized for focusing on theory and failing to provide students with sufficient practical knowledge and skills to successfully transition from classroom to workplace. Responses obtained in this research suggest that integrating WIL into tertiary courses helps to produce work-savvy graduates with a range of transferable skills and informed industry perspectives.

The analysis has relied on qualitative data extracted from reflective student portfolios and while this emphasizes the 'student voice', it is important to highlight that the number of responses relating to interpersonal communication, team work and networking may reflect the nature of the industry in which students completed their placement – tourism, hospitality and event positions rely heavily on interpersonal skills and group work which may be why these featured so prominently in students' reflections. Notwithstanding, the use of student

work as a data source does triangulate with the findings of other studies which have used more conventional methodologies. There are further opportunities to complement the approach used in this paper with other forms of data collection, including student and industry interviews, surveys and focus groups. The technique could also be used by academics in other disciplines to explore whether similarities and differences emerge.

WIL is an important, yet often undervalued and under-resourced, aspect of tertiary instruction. Ideally, it should be integrated across the curricula to ensure we provide meaningful opportunities for graduates to develop the practical abilities, interpersonal skills and theoretical knowledge needed – and expected by industry – to excel in their chosen field. As such, the four WIL streams discussed in this paper – despite noted differences in learning outcomes – go some way in helping meet this expectation.

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# Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education

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