A WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) PARTNERSHIP MODEL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION GRADUATES TO GAIN EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has embarked on a National Development Plan and Vision for 2030 to promote a triple helix partnership with education, government and industry to reduce the unemployment rate from 27% in 2011 to 6% by 2030. In support of this national imperative the Human Resources Management (HRM) Programme at the University of Johannesburg pioneered a Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Partnership Model to promote the employability of graduates. The WIL model allows students to gain workplace knowledge, skills and experience while industry partners observe the newly emerging talent in the form of future-fit leaders entering the world of work.

Research was conducted to elicit the responses of key stakeholders on the proposed implementation of the WIL partnership model. Qualitative focus group sessions were facilitated with industry, academic and student groups to highlight common and profound perspectives on participant support, concerns and questions on the implementation process.

Major findings reveal that all three groups of participants supported the implementation of the WIL model. Industry welcomed the model as it provided opportunities for recruitment and meeting national skills imperatives. Academics supported the model as it bridged the theory-practice gap while meeting compliance standards. Students supported the model as they gained workplace exposure and put theory into practice. All three participant groups expressed concerns and raised questions on placement, indemnity, confidentiality, work preparedness, time span, tracking processes and practice-theory alignment.

This paper presents the current WIL trends, research method, research findings, WIL Partnership Model, and the implications for implementation of the model.

INTRODUCTION

Unemployment in South Africa (SA)

SA has a population of 50 million people, of which approximately 70% are under the age of 35. Many of these youth are either semi-skilled, unemployed or are in the process of entering the education and/or economic sectors. Over 11 million employment opportunities are required to reduce South Africa's unemployment rate from 27% in 2011 to 6% by 2030 (South Africa, 2011a).

Recent statistics of the country reveal that the latest official unemployment rate is at 25.2% (Stats South Africa, 2012) with a growing increase in the number of discouraged workers (Developmental Indicators, 2012). Education, training and skills development is high on the national agenda. Government has put education and skills development among the key long-term priorities in order to solve the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality (Development Indicators 2012: 1).

A key aspect of SA's National Development Plan (South Africa, 2011a) is the sustainable development of government, business and civil society initiatives to improve the lives of all South Africans. This, together with other recent skills development and human resource legislation promulgated, such as the National Skills Accord (South Africa, 2011b), the National Skills Development Strategy III (South Africa, 2011c), the Skills Development Amendment Bill (South Africa, 2011d) and the Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training (South Africa, 2012) gave impetus to the conceptualisation of the model presented in this paper. A recurring theme across the legislation is the concept of academic and industry partnerships, specifically the triple helix partnerships of education, government and industry.

Shifting higher education landscape

Adding to the high unemployment rate amongst the youth a further challenge is that school leavers entering higher education institutions (HEIs) in SA will face a shifting landscape. Tertiary education has undergone radical changes since 2004 with mergers of several of the public HEIs in the hope of balancing out previous, historically advantaged and disadvantaged institutions.

By 2009, the 25 HEIs, the 50 public further education and training (FET) colleges, and the 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were placed under a newly formed Ministry of Higher Education and Training (South Africa, 2009). Post school education, training and skills development institutions are consolidated under one government ministry.

The literature review provided adequate grounding for the motivation, definition, trends and models of WIL implemented across the globe, within BRICS countries and more specifically in South Africa. While academic and industry WIL partnership models are on the increase, they are in their infancy with regard to implementation and effectiveness, especially in BRICS countries. The questions of whether the model is a dominant HEI or equal partnership one, and how placement occurs are of significance. The learnership triple agreement model dominates in the public sector of SA with student, training provider and employer contracting to workplace experience while learning; however, this model does not ensure employability. Limited information was provided on an implementable WIL model where lecturers can use specific resources and process to implement WIL in their curricula within one academic year.

Although work integrated learning (WIL) is under researched, it is firmly entrenched in the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) (South Africa, 2007). Many HEIs are reengineering the curricula of qualifications to update modules to reflect the WIL component. In addition to traditional lectures, tests, assignments and exams, the youth have to

become employees for a period of time before they graduate. Furthermore, students have to compile and submit a portfolio of evidence (POE) for assessment on their workplace experience. Academics, students, employers and employees have to commit to partnerships in order to improve the socio-educational and socio-economic landscape around us.

WIL in HRM curriculum

In 2005, the University of Johannesburg (UJ) was created through the merger process. The university supports a 'learning to be' teaching, learning and assessment philosophy and strategy. This philosophy is embraced by the Faculty of Management in its aim to create 'future-fit leaders' of its graduates. Within this faculty, the department of Industrial Psychology and People Management (IPPM) offers a variety of qualifications in the Human Resources Management (HRM) programme ranging from Diploma to postgraduate Doctorates.

In order to meet national, sector and institutional imperatives, as well in an attempt to bridge the gap between theoretical lectures and practical industry experience, a WIL partnership model was designed for implementation in the HRM Diploma qualification. The model aims to ensure that graduates who enter the workplace are equipped with the basic HRM skills, attitudes, values and knowledge and are ready for easy transition into a formal workplace as HR Practitioners and HR Professionals (De Vos, 1998; South Africa, 2007).

This paper presents the voices of selected industry partners, relevant academics and third year HRM Diploma students on their support, concerns and implications for implementation of the WIL model. While the section above set the scene for the research, WIL model and its implications, the next section presents the literature on current WIL trends.

CURRENT WIL TRENDS

International and BRICS WIL trends

According to international trends, WIL and education-industry partnerships are on the increase in HEIs due to the fact that classroom-based instruction alone does not produce future-fit graduates who are adequately equipped for the workplace. The role of WIL or learning for performance is essential in the development of the desired graduate profile. The competency profile of a graduate should include discipline specific knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as generic cognitive, behavioural and technical skills and attributes (Coll & Zegwaard, 2006; Powell, Tindal & Millwood, 2008; Ishisaka, Farwell, Sohng, & Uehara, 2004).

With regard to the BRICS countries, Coll & Eames (2011: 355) reveals that the implementation of WIL programmes, including cooperative education, are still largely in their infancy in emerging economies, with the BRICS economies counting as among the largest. The fragility of skills development projects to support national development trajectories are highlighted by McGrath and Akoojee (2009) in four of the five BRICS countries: South Africa, Brazil, China and India.

Experiential learning or WIL involves the placement of students into workplace settings to move individuals from being just students to becoming novice professionals. Work placements are accepted as part of academic curricula in the rapidly changing practice-orientated HEI landscape that is different to traditional courses. Significant theoretical questions arise for WIL curricula and student workplace placements such as: how do students make sense of work experiences; how to turn work procedural learning into assessment forms; is self-regulation and self-authorship promoted by portfolio assessment; should large numbers of student be placed using self-sourcing placements or placement by the Faculty/Department? (Bates, 2003; Meeus, Looy & Libotton, 2004; Coll & Eames, 2011).

WIL trends in SA

In SA, WIL or workplace learning is also being increasingly utilised within HEIs. While there are definite academic, personal, career and work ethic benefits, WIL promotes partnerships with business, industry and government to improve economic growth for the country (Matoti, Junqueira & Odora, 2011). SA's Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) defines WIL as: the component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of learning in an authentic learning workplace context under the supervision and/or mentorship of a person/s representing the workplace. It addresses specific competencies identified for the acquisition of a qualification that make the learner employable and assists in the development of related personal attributes. Workplace employees and professional bodies are involved in the assessment of the learning experience, together with university academic employees (HEQC, 2004).

The HEQC publication, Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide (CHE, 2011: 16-21), outlines four main curricular modalities for programmes, especially new models in SA that align workplace experience (practical) and academic interests (theory) as follows: work-directed theoretical learning (WDTL); problem-based learning (PBL); project-based learning (PjBL); and workplace learning (WPL). The latter, WPL, is commonly referred to as WIL in the South African context (SATN, 2008).

The formal state driven WIL partnership model in SA is the learnership model, a partnership agreement between the student, training provider and employer. According to Davis and Farquharson (2004), including employers in the selection of students, promoting intrepreneurship and linking learnerships to existing business opportunities will facilitate skills development and economic growth in the country. WIL in SA supports transparent and consistent processes with standardised skills, competencies and delivery procedures to train students to meet international performance outcomes for short and long term results (Landey, 2004). Based on the high unemployment rates, Dhliwayo (2008: 330) claims that WIL in South

Africa should be focusing on 'job creators and not job seekers' so that experiential learning also promotes entrepreneurship education.

Global WIL models

Global trends on the conceptualisation and implementation of WIL models differ significantly. Mawoyo and Robinson (2005) differentiate between three models of HEI and industry partnerships: a separatist model with separate responsibilities, a collaborative partnership between lecturers and workplace, and the HEI led partnership where the HEI defines the learning and assessment of the WIL initiative. Most models reviewed lean towards partnerships and collaboration versus separateness.

The Centre of Excellence model proposes a memorandum of understanding among the national authority, educational provider and employer towards maintaining and sustaining excellent WIL experience for the student (Du Plessis, 2007). The WIL taxonomy is based on the assessment of a student journal capturing symptoms of learning – the student journal should reveal that the WIL experience provided a foundation and stimulus for the active construction of evolving, holistic social and cultural learning in the dynamic, socio-emotional contexts of the workplace (Bates, 2003).

Choy and Delahaye (2011) present the partnership model with shared power over curriculum, pedagogy and accountability. The university-community integrated partnership model moves beyond the paternalistic approach of HEIs deciding for communities, by promoting trust, community consultation and input (Ishisaka et al., 2004).

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the research was to gather, analyse and report on the key stakeholder responses to the proposed implementation s of the HRM WIL partnership model. The review

of any WIL model is imperative if it is to promote HEI and industry partnerships, as well as to positively influence the employability of higher education graduates. This section reports on the exploratory research undertaken during Phase 1, Process 3 of the WIL model: consult with stakeholders for approval, support and review. The research objective, approach, participants and value-add are presented in this section.

Research objective and approach

The research objective was to facilitate qualitative focus group sessions with key stakeholders to gather feedback data on the proposed implementation of the WIL partnership model that will enable students to gain HRM workplace experience during their recess, as a compulsory, assessed part of the study curriculum. Data was gathered using group and individual email correspondence as well as facilitated focus group sessions held during meetings and class lectures. The data was analysed to provide the findings and implications for implementation presented in this paper.

Thematic analysis was applied to the questions probed and to the responses and feedback from all three groups. Common and profound responses to the themes of support, concerns and questions on implementation of the model are reported in the findings section of this paper.

Ethical principles were applied throughout the research process to protect the rights and dignity of all participants. The principles of fairness, reliability and validity were adhered to in the recording, reporting and in presenting the findings of this research.

Research sample and procedure

The research participants were selected using purposeful, stratified sampling. Participants were grouped for research purposes into three categories as follows: industry partners; academics; and students.

Approximately 150 industry partners were purposefully selected from organisations registered with a specific national people professional body or HRM institute. They were ideally suited to be research participants in this study as they were existing partners to a credible, discipline specific authoritative HRM body. Furthermore, they would provide our HRM students with invaluable discipline specific knowledge, skills, values and attitudes when implementing the HRM WIL partnership model. These selected industry partners were invited via two email correspondence calls for 'expression of interest' to participate in the feedback on their support, concerns and questions for implementation of the WIL Partnership Model. They were informed of the research objective and requests for their declaration of interest, participation, feedback, support and concerns were communicated.

Focus group sessions were held with four groups of internal and external academic participants as follows: faculty experiential learning committee (12 participants); department leadership committee (10 participants) and HRM programme team (12 participants); and international conference delegates (11 participants). The international, national, institutional and socio-economic imperatives provided the motivation for the integration of WIL into higher education curricula. All academic teams were invited to discuss debate and interrogate the validity and reliability of the HRM WIL partnership model and the implications for implementation of the model.

To add to the academic rigour of this study, the HRM WIL model and the thematic questions were presented at an academic WIL international conference, the 18th WACE World Conference on Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education (Taylor & Govender, 2012), to gather international responses to the proposed implementation of the WIL partnership model.

The approximately 100 students for the research were selected from the HRM Diploma qualification. Students in their final, third year of study were invited to participate in focus group sessions during lecture periods. The sessions were held during the first semester, while

they were in preparation for implementation of the HRM WIL partnership model in the second semester. The students were introduced to self-sourcing placements and requested to identify industry organisations for their WIL experience. In addition, students were requested to compile and submit a portfolio of evidence (POE) on their WIL experience linked to specific learning outcomes for formal assessment. Feedback was gathered on how the students responded to the implementation of the model with regard to support, concerns and questions.

Research value-add

The value add of this paper is that at a theoretical level, it adds to the body of knowledge on WIL models in SA. At a research level, the paper provides significant findings and implications of the empirical study undertaken to gather, analyse and report on how key stakeholders responded to the proposed implementation of the WIL Partnership Model. At a practical level, this paper presents an approach on how to implement Phase 1, Process 3 on the WIL partnership model by being consultative and collaborative prior to implementation.

The researchers hope that this paper stimulates the curiosity of all academics to attempt the implementation of this WIL partnership model within their qualification. South Africa, Africa, the BRICS countries and the globe can only benefit from a practical, cost-effective, collaborative WIL model, especially if the successful implementation of the model within curricula leads to students becoming more employable and allows them to gain employment upon graduation.

The research findings in the next section present the group responses of industry partners, academics and students on the themes of support, concerns and questions.

FINDINGS

The findings of the research highlight the common and profound responses gathered from industry partners, academics and students. A discussion of their support, concerns and questions on the proposed implementation of the WIL partnership model are presented in this section.

Industry partner feedback

An analysis of the email responses from industry partners reveals an overwhelming positive response in support of the HRM WIL partnership model and for participation in the proposed implementation. The following profound response captures the voice of industry partners: 'I would be happy to help give a student some exposure in the broader world of business and HR. Please be so kind as to let me know what is required to get some candidates CVs, etc. I have a company based in … which operates nationally and conducts human capital services to a number of blue chip companies.'

Common themes emerging from the emails are as follows: the responsibility of student placement, workplace indemnity, confidentiality of workplace records, workplace preparedness for students and time period for the WIL experience/placement. Few questions arose from the industry emails probably due to the detailed, clear correspondence sent as attachments to the 'industry-education partner' by the HRM WIL project team.

At the end of the initial 'expression of interest' data gathering exercise, 18 organisations were committed to the phased, process driven WIL model where resources are allocated and managed. During the secondary 'expression of interest' phase, 30 organisations were confident that the HRM WIL partnership model could be successfully implemented to achieve its objectives. Managers admitted that while they were committed to providing mentoring, work shadowing and project-based workplace learning opportunities for students, they also

benefitted from the partnership in meeting national skills development imperatives. Furthermore, they had the opportunity of screening future graduates for full time employment.

Academic feedback

The internal groups of academic participants, the faculty and department leadership committees supported, encouraged and approved the implementation of the HRM WIL partnership model. In particular, the two phases prior to and after implementation of the model were highlighted as significant pillars for the model as they assured quality management throughout the WIL project.

Academics in the HRM programme focus group expressed negativity to the WIL model probably due to a resistance to change and/or a perception of increased workload implication. While the technical aspects such as the phased approach with processes and resources were generally accepted by this group, WIL in itself was debated as a requirement for inclusion in higher education curricula. Furthermore, the time allocation for preparation and implementation of the WIL model was rejected by a majority of these academics as unrealistic.

Rich and valuable research data was gathered from the external, international conference focus group of academics at a breakaway session. All 11 delegates who attended the research presentation on the HRM WIL partnership model accepted and supported the model, while two participants expressed reservations with the 40 hours allocated for the WIL component of the HRM curriculum. The questions that arose from these participants are as follows: 'Should the time for the WIL itself not be a whole semester?'; 'Are students offered self-placement and/or university placement?'; 'Will students be tracked after graduation for linking the model to employment?' While the conference delegates were invited to question, debate, interrogate and critique the WIL partnership model, the conference peer reviewers

evaluated and validated its academic merit. Both conference delegates and reviewers supported the HRM WIL partnership model as viable and implementable.

Student feedback

Student views on implementation of the WIL model varied over the research period from one of excitement and enthusiasm to confusion, concern and disillusionment, and back to enthusiasm and anticipation. Most of the approximately 80 students in the focus groups accepted, supported and looked forward to the WIL partnership model. Although the model phases, processes and resources were accepted unanimously, some students were 'uncomfortable with the self-placement process' that had to begin a semester before the actual WIL implementation phase of the model. Furthermore, the POE component 'raised alarm bells' and 'increased stress levels' as students were not familiar with how to compile a POE. The significant questions that arose from the students are as follows: 'I am a foreign student how do I find employment when my visa says I can study in the country only?'; 'I live in Res [residence] and I don't know the industry around here. How will I find a company?'; 'Do I have to work in an HR environment?'; 'What if the work that I do is not linked to my module outcomes?'; 'What if the company wants to pay me?'; 'The POE criteria are confusing and complicated, how must we compile it?; and 'What if I don't like the organisation I am placed in?'

The above findings reveal that the voices of the stakeholders are louder in support of the implementation of the HRM WIL Partnership Model. The findings also reveal valid concerns and questions raised on the implementation processes. Some of these are addressed later in this paper in the section on implementation implications. The next section presents the HRM WIL Partnership Model that was proposed for implementation.

THE HRM WIL PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The HRM WIL partnership model is a framework consisting of five phases implemented over a period of 10-12 months as follows: design, develop and approval phase; preparation phase; implementation phase; evaluation phase; and review phase. Each phase has 4-5 processes that require essential resources. Table 1 below presents the HRM WIL Partnership Model.

Phase 1: Design, develop and approve WIL model

Phase 1 of the model, the design, development and approval of the WIL model, involves implementing the following five processes within a two month period: adopt or design the WIL model; identify students and industry partners; consult with stakeholders for approval, support and review; develop the supporting documentation; and communicate the details of the WIL project plan. The essential resources required for Phase 1 include the WIL project team; agreement from students and industry partners; approval at faculty committees, support of departmental teams and lecturer; and communication information such as learning guides with specific outcomes (SOs), assessment criteria (ACs), time span of WIL component and weighting of marks; as well as letters of introduction to the company, pro forma Memorandums of Understanding and PowerPoint presentations.

Phase 2: Preparation for implementation

Phase 2 of the model, the preparation to implement the WIL model, consists of the following four processes implemented over a two month period: conduct awareness and information sessions to prepare the stakeholders for the WIL project; distribute WIL information packs; prepare students for entry into the workplace; and finalise the industry partnership base. The essential resources required for Phase 2 are: focus group sessions with

selected students; focus group sessions with lecturer; decisions and documents of WIL project team; workshops from academic support services for students (PsyCAD); communication with selected industry partners; and the preparation of information packs of memos, letters, brochures, portfolio of evidence (POE) criteria and relevant forms. PsyCAD conducts pre-planned workplace readiness workshops to empower students on job search, CV writing, interview skills, dress code, business etiquette and the necessity of acquiring tax numbers and bank accounts.

Phase 3: WIL implementation

Phase 3 of the WIL partnership model is the implementation phase that spans over three months. This phase involves these processes: confirmation of placement list; indemnity and risk management; support base for students and partners communicated; tracking and feedback from students and supervisors. The resources required for Phase 3 are: signed letters from industry partners (supervisor/ mentor) per student; established data base of industry partners; indemnity forms and safety insurance for HEI and industry partners; structured POE with progress reports, attendance and performance tasks, challenges experienced, competencies displayed and employability growth reflections in POE/ reflective reports.

Phase 4: Evaluation WIL model

Phase 4 is a two month process of evaluating the WIL model as follows: gaining feedback from the lecturer, students and industry partners; and evaluation, recognition and appreciation of the industry partners and stakeholders. The essential resources required during this phase are: lecturer assessment ratings of student POEs as per the assessment criteria; quantitative and qualitative research data from students and industry partners; and the hosting of award ceremonies to acknowledge the participating industry partners and other stakeholders.

Phase 5: Review WIL model

Phase 5 of the HRM WIL partnership model, the review phase, concludes the conceptual framework within a month. The focus in this phase is on process questions and solutions for improving the model design as follows: what worked; what did not work; what should change; and how best to revise and improve the model. The essential resources for this phase are: WIL project team reports; the measurements of the impact of the WIL partnership model; risk management strategies; stakeholder consultation; and an improved WIL partnership model.

Table 1: HRM WIL Partnership Model

PHASE 1: DESIGN, DEVELOP AND APPROVE WIL MODEL (2 MONTHS)	
Processes	**Resources**
1. Conceptualise WIL model and develop the model outline	Conceptualisation and agreement in WIL Project Team
2. Identify pilot student group/s and industry partners	Final year HRM Diploma students and existing and new industry partners
3. Consult with stakeholders for approval, support and review	Faculty of Management Experiential Learning Committee; HRM Department leadership team; HRM programme team; qualification leader; class lecturer; students; industry partners; UJ PsyCAD Services for work readiness preparation
4. Develop the support documentation	Learning Guide, letters of introduction to the company, pro forma Memorandums of Understanding, PowerPoint presentations, WIL information packs and brochures
5. Communicate the compulsory, non-remuneration WIL project plan	Learning Guide: 40 hours of WIL component; link to specific outcomes (SOs) and assessment criteria (ACs); Portfolio of Evidence (POE) criteria and assessment; allocation of marks
PHASE 2: PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF WIL MODEL (2 MONTHS)	
Processes	**Resources**

1. Awareness and information sessions: preparation of stakeholders for WIL programme	Students; lecturer; project team; PsyCAD; industry partners
2. Distribute WIL information packs	Students and industry: memos; letters; brochures; POE criteria; forms; declaration; etc.
3. Prepare students for entry into workplace	Workplace readiness workshops: job search; CV writing; interview skills; dress code; business etiquette; tax numbers; bank accounts
4. Finalise industry partner base	Student employer of choice, HRM Programme Advisory Board members and other industry partners

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENT WIL MODEL (3 MONTHS)	
Processes	**Resources**
1. Confirmation of placement list	Signed letters from industry partners (supervisor/ mentor) per student; establish data base of partners
2. Risk management	Indemnity forms; industry and UJ WIL Insurance provisions
3. Support base for students and partners communicated	UJ support services (PsyCAD), WIL Project Team, lecturer and industry, supervisor/ mentor
4. Tracking and feedback from students and supervisors	As per structured POE: progress reports; attendance and performance tasks; challenges experienced; competencies displayed; employability growth reflection journal

PHASE 4: EVALUATE WIL MODEL (2 MONTHS)	
Processes	**Resources**
1. Feedback from POE assessment	Students and lecturer; SOs & ACs
2. Feedback from students	WIL Project Team: quantitative and qualitative research
3. Feedback from industry partners	WIL Project Team: quantitative and qualitative research
4. Evaluation, recognition and appreciation.	Award ceremonies for industry partners and other stakeholders

PHASE 5: REVIEW WIL MODEL (1 MONTH)	
Processes	**Resources**
1. What worked?	WIL Project Team: SWOT report
2. What did not work?	Stakeholders to manage project risks
3. What should change?	Stakeholder consultation and agreement
4. Revise and improve model	WIL Project Team, lecturer and students

IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HRM WIL MODEL

The findings section of this paper presented the support, concerns and questions of the participants on the proposed implementation of the WIL partnership model. This section addresses some of the concerns and questions that arose from key stakeholders during the consultation process.

Accountability for implementation of the WIL partnership model

The model proposes that the WIL project team consisting of the discipline programme or qualification leader in collaboration with the institutional WIL Coordinator undertake the major responsibility for all five phases; hence accountability and performance indicators should reflect the WIL partnership model implementation as key performance indicators on their annual scorecard. Although the WIL Coordinator prepares and implements the model where students undergo work preparedness workshops to empower them with CV writing, interview and professional etiquette skills; the learning guide, POE criteria, letters, memoranda, forms, documents and meeting sessions that form the basis of the communication strategy to all stakeholders, are prepared by the discipline specific lecturers. Surveys and a tracking system prior to and after the implementation phase to measure the impact of the WIL model on student employability skills and opportunities have to be collaborative, partnership tasks.

In the implementation phase, when students spend 40 hours (one week) or more in the workplace to explore the practical implications of their theoretical knowledge, workplace managers accept accountability for providing students with an enriching learning experience. The WIL partnership model anticipates that students will accept responsibility for developing in their field of study, for graduating and for increasing their potential for absorption into the workplace after graduation. Simultaneously, industry partners accept responsibility for evaluating potential employees when students interact with them during the WIL experience.

Promoting graduate employability while reengineering curricula

The implications for the HEI, faculty, department and HRM programme academics are that they meet national and international imperatives for integrating theory and practice into learning programmes, promoting employability and creating new knowledge. By exposing students to the practical workplace, academics invite industrial experts into their lecture halls, thus improving HEI learning programmes. Implementation of the WIL partnership model within HEI curricula fosters growth, employability, partnership and reengineered qualifications.

The WIL partnership model allows academics and students to interact with business and industry employees and hence jointly create future-fit leaders for the country and world. If graduates are to benefit from discipline specific, business and employability skills and opportunities, all partners of the model must invest in transformational, developmental leadership. Students must develop intrinsic motivation and present a professional graduate-to-be attitude. Academics must practice collegiality and professionalism when engaging with other academics, students and industry partners. Supervisors from industry must commit to flexible mentoring and coaching during the WIL implementation phase.

Approved industry partners

The development of a sustainable, approved set of industry partners is a crucial aspect of this model, given that once it has been integrated into the curricula, it will be a compulsory component with attached credit values. Students who do not achieve self-sourcing placements must be placed by the university WIL Coordinator. Interested organisations should be approved according to the university guidelines. Ideally, the WIL partnership model should be integrated into the programme curricula thus eliminating the limitations of the recess being the only period for implementation of the WIL model.

Although organisations may elect to pay stipends to the students, this is not an expectation in this WIL partnership model. Ideally though, a cost structure for the WIL model should be budgeted for to enable the partnership building sessions, documentation and feedback mechanisms to be implemented professionally.

CONCLUSION

Vision 2030 for South Africa means that unemployment, poverty and inequality are reduced by promoting the triple helix partnership among education, government and industry stakeholders. The HRM Diploma qualification of the University of Johannesburg aims to create employable, future-fit leaders using a 'learning to be' philosophy and a WIL partnership model that integrates theory and workplace practice learning. Research was conducted using qualitative focus groups to consult with key stakeholders on their support, concerns and questions surrounding implementation of the of the HRM WIL partnership model designed to promote higher education graduate employment.

This paper highlights the current WIL trends, research methodology, findings, WIL model and the implications for implementation of the model.

The researchers recommend further rigorous research be undertaken to measure the impact of each phase of the WIL partnership model, especially in pilot projects. The hope is that this model is embraced by fellow academics, business partners and students in South Africa, Africa, the BRICS and other countries so that WIL is integrated quickly and easily into academic curricula. The benefits of this WIL partnership model are that it fosters education-industry partnerships, bridges the knowledge-skills gap and it promises to promote employment opportunities for graduates.

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