Work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs in Vietnam: Voices of education and industry

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This paper addresses the work-integrated learning (WIL) initiative embedded in selected tourism training programs in Vietnam. The research was grounded on the framework of stakeholder ethos. Drawing on tourism training curriculum analysis and interviews with lecturers, institutional leaders, industry managers and internship supervisors, this study shows that WIL initiatives exist in the tourism training programs under examinations with various levels of industry engagement at both on-campus and off-campus stages. However, the links between the triad of WIL stakeholders – institutions, companies and students – under the impact of the Vietnamese Government policies in the context of higher education and vocational education and training are appraised as lacking, superficial and unsustainable. Consequently, this WIL process barely equips the graduates with the required knowledge and skills to satisfy the demands of the industry. *(Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2016, 17(2), 149-161)*

Keywords: Vietnam, work-integrated learning, tourism training programs, industry involvement, internships

In the fast changing world of business in general and tourism in particular, with high demand and employment competitiveness, people need to acquire new competencies to adapt accordingly. However, there seems to be a sizeable gap between what is required in the tourism industry and what can be provided by tourism training institutions (Barrie, 2006; Hearns, Devine, & Baum, 2007; Kember & Leung, 2005; Zehrer & Mössenlechner, 2009). Around the world, tourism employers are expecting graduates to be work-ready, and to possess a range of competencies and qualities (Yorke & Harvey, 2005). They are typically recruiting individuals with not only specific academic skills and knowledge, but also with proactive attitudes and the capability to perceive and react to problems creatively and autonomously (Fallows & Steven, 2000). Education providers, it seems, are not preparing graduates adequately however, and students are graduating with unrealistic expectations of an industry where operational competence is highly emphasized (Barrows & Johan, 2008; Wang, 2008). This has led to discussions focusing on work-integrated learning (WIL) processes in vocational education as well as in tourism training. These processes aim to equip graduates with knowledge of specific disciplines, employability skills and competencies to meet the growing demands of the tourism industry in the globalised world (Bell, Crebert, Patrick, Bates, & Cragnolini, 2003; Fleming, Zinn, & Ferkin, 2008; Yorke, 2006).

In Vietnamese Higher Education (HE) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) contexts, WIL has been a mandatory component in most tourism training programs. While a significant body of literature has focused on the provision and nature of WIL in tertiary education in Vietnam (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015; L. Tran et al., 2014; T. Tran, 2014), little has been known about the WIL initiative in tourism curricula. This paper aims to bridge the gap in the literature, providing empirical research on the effectiveness of the WIL incorporated in Vietnamese tourism training programs in the provision of specialized knowledge and employability skills to graduates from the perspectives of academics and industry practitioners.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Notions of WIL

The term WIL was actually coined on account of the rising diversity in the modes of vocational learning (Reeders, 2000). Different terms are used in the literature to refer to WIL, including experience-based learning, professional learning (Lawson, Fallshaw, Papadopoulos, Taylor, & Zanko, 2011); cooperative education, work-based learning (Groenewald, 2004); practice-based learning (Hodge, 2008); work placements, internships, field work, sandwich year degrees, and job shadowing (Von Treuer, Sturre, Keele, & McLeod, 2010). Internships or placements taken off-campus are considered "ubiquitous" (Gardner & Bartkus, 2014, p. 46) and "the most widely reported and accepted form" of WIL (Rowe, Winchester-Seeto, & Mackaway, 2012, p. 246). Therefore, WIL is still often mistaken for a simple internship or work placement.

However, tertiary institutions are using the term WIL in a broader sense than just internships or placements to accommodate a wide range of activities which have a strong focus on industry partnerships (Macdonald, Cameron, Brimble, Freudenberg, & English, 2014). In this sense, WIL is used interchangeably with professional learning, which is conceptualized as "the development of professional capabilities through teaching and learning experiences and activities that integrate academic, discipline-specific and industry-referenced knowledge, skills and attitudes (Lawson et al., 2011, p. 63). A typology of WIL to cover all activities which have industry involvement is also generated by Lawson et al. (2011), encompassing industry simulation, industry practitioner delivery, industry mentoring, industry study tour, industry placement, industry competition, and industry project. In this paper, although the internship is the main type of WIL to be examined, other WIL activities that involve partnership with industry will also be addressed.

Strategies to optimize WIL

The skills and attributes required in a global working environment are more than just the discipline-specific skills and knowledge which students acquire at their training institutions (Richardson, Kaider, Henschke, & Jackling, 2009). They should necessarily be supported and reinforced throughout the students' program as well as being highlighted during the workplace learning experience (Fleming et al., 2008). Whatever type of WIL activities is included, their success will be maintained should there be practical roles of each stakeholder to maintain strong relationships with the key players of WIL. A stakeholder in the context of this research is defined as "any individual or organization that participates in or impacts on WIL" (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 10). Typically involved in a WIL process are at least three key parties: (1) students; (2) lecturers and their training institutions; and (3) employers and workplace supervisors (Patrick et al., 2008; Shirley et al., 2006).

As illustrated in Figure 1, the three stakeholders – student, university and employer – have interconnected relationships under the impact of the policy of government and higher education. The roles of these three WIL stakeholders also depend on the orientation of the training institution and the employers towards the ethos of work experience, which will determine whether the goals of WIL are achievable or not. According to Harvey et al. (1997) (as cited in Orrell, 2004, p. 2), the orientation might exist on a continuum with a 'value-added ethos' at one end and a 'stakeholder ethos' at the other. The 'value-added ethos' puts emphasis on tangible, short-term returns for the industry organizations in which students are expected to be adaptive, are assigned specific tasks to complete and are considered as

workers or observers. The 'stakeholder ethos', on the contrary, emphasizes learning, adopts a long-term view which legitimates students as real learners, allowing them to engage in a range of involvements in the host organization, develop generic skills and personal attributes and have a chance to propose new ideas through the exploration of subject matter and the actual workplace. Therefore, the long-term outcomes of WIL can only be maintained if a stakeholder approach is adopted where partnerships between the university and industry are fostered and students are considered as learners.

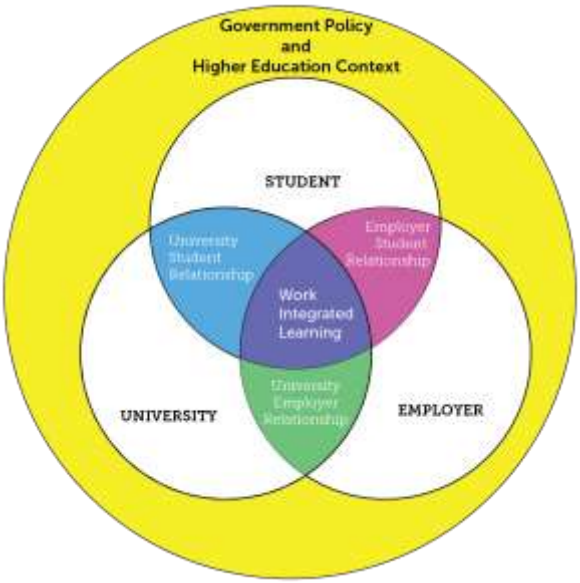

FIGURE 1: Relationships of WIL stakeholders (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 11)

A WIL process, which applies the stakeholder approach, is necessarily constituted by four main components as Groenewald (2004) has summarized, namely: "(a) an integrated curriculum, (b) learning derived from work experience, (c) cultivation of a support-base, and (d) logistical organization and coordination of the learning experience." (p. 24). In other words, the necessary conditions for the WIL process to be successful should be designed to include: a curriculum in which the academic requirements match industry needs; a curriculum designed to encompass the work component which enables experiential learning; support from workplaces which offer appropriate internships for students and provide them with advice and input pertinent to the curriculum; and logistics for the program which ensure profound detail about organizing, coordinating and assessing students before, during and after the work experience (Groenewald, 2004). Therefore, WIL should feature close links between three stakeholders, namely training institutions, workplaces and students with "specified responsibilities for each party" (ibid., p.17) at the design, implementation and evaluation stages of the WIL process.

METHODOLOGY

The case study approach was chosen to be the main research method because it is the most widely employed method throughout the field of education (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Grady, 1998; Merriam, 1998) and is suitable to the aims and nature of this research. The multiple

case study approach was selected here to gain a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted aspects and distinctive nature of different types of institutions which are involved in providing tourism training programs across different regions in Vietnam. It was designed based on "the logic of replication" in which the researcher replicated the procedures for each case (Creswell, 2007, p. 74) . There were a total of six case studies representing different types of tourism training institutions in Vietnam. Of these, three were government vocational colleges (Institutions A, B and C) under the management of Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA). One was a government university (Institution D), and two were private universities (Institutions E and F) under the management of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET). These were selected to represent a diversity of education forms managed by different authorized ministries and operating in different ways.

Interviews, as described by Guba and Lincoln (1981), are "the very backbone of field and naturalistic research and evaluation" (as cited in Clarke & Dawson, 1999, p. 71). This technique can help the researchers learn "how people construct the realities – how they view, define, and experience the world" (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 110). The academic groups to be interviewed included six faculty leaders, fifteen tourism lecturers and twelve foreign languages lecturers. The aim of interviewing these leaders and academics was to gain an insight into WIL components within the curricula. The second groups of interviewees were thirteen human resource managers and five internship supervisors in tourism companies. The purpose of interviewing these participants was to cross-check their perspectives towards tourism educational programs and the internship with the interview data collected from the academic views to gain deeper understandings of the experiential learning experience. The whole process of data collection was ethically approved from the six training institutions and the tourism companies.

Document analysis was employed as another method of data collection because its main merit is its "clear, tangible record" (Grady, 1998, p. 24). The data collected by this method are also named as "artefacts" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 153) since they are the "products of a given context and are grounded in a real world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 109). The artifacts employed in this project were the current stay of play of the WIL initiative in the curricula of the tourism programs of the selected universities and colleges.

Only a small number of excerpts from the interviews are presented here due to the scope of the paper, and to construct and illustrate the key arguments rather than to exhibit the broad spectrum of interviewees. The key aspects which this paper focuses upon and the relevant quotes were identified through a thorough process of coding. The audio recordings of the interview data were listened to several times for themes and sub-themes. All the quotes employed as illustrations were translated into English by the researcher. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, their names and institutions are kept anonymous through the use of pseudonyms.

WIL CURRICULUM POSITIONED IN RELATIONSHIP WITH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE CONTEXT OF HE AND VET

The WIL curriculum design was under the overwhelming influence of regulatory policies in vocational training and higher education. The lecturers in both educational systems, however, were unanimously critical of these regulations, evaluating them as rigid and cumbersome by their nature and rhetoric, perfunctory and divorced from bona fide needs of the direct beneficiaries, who in this respect were lecturers and students.

Government institutions were under the tight control of their managing authorities, which in this case were MOET and MOLISA. General Department of Vocational Training (GDVT), as a branch of MOLISA, played a central role in building a training framework for all vocational colleges across Vietnam. These vocational institutions were unable to make any modifications once the training framework had been approved and issued for implementation by this authority. Nonetheless, this training framework was beset by limitations addressed by the lecturers in the three colleges, including insufficient time for important subjects like *Process of Vietnamese History*, too much attention given to subjects deemed to be extraneous (political subjects like *Marxism and Leninism*, *Philosophy*), and content overlap (*Process of Vietnamese History* versus *Vietnamese System of Historic Sites and Scenic Spots*, and *Travel Skills* versus *Building Tourism Programs*). Some crucial elements of tour guiding were excluded from the curriculum such as tourist destinations (Institution B) while some subjects such as *Analysis of Trading Activities* (Institution C) or *Designing Menus* (Institution B) were rather redundant in the curricula. Amendments to unreasonable features in the curriculum were underway but were said to be slow moving.

The deemed lack of competence in authority and their perfunctory approval of the curricula were to be blamed for the practitioners' dissatisfaction with the training curricula, as Lecturer A in Institution A revealed:

> They must manage various disciplines in which they are not specialized. The majority of them have expertise in engineering or technical areas rather than social fields like tourism. Now they also govern the quality of the tourism major. Therefore, when the nominated institutions give them the design of the training framework, they give approval perfunctorily. As a result, their approval of the training framework for tourism programs leads to dissatisfaction among practitioners.

Government universities under the management of MOET had similar experiences with regards to curriculum design. The interviewed lecturers in Institution D all agreed that the selection of compulsory or elective subjects and the time allocation for them were somewhat unreasonable. While some subjects believed to be essential for the program were compulsory and allocated a great amount of time, some other essential subjects for the specialization were optional or excluded from the curriculum. Lecturers B and C (Institution D) agreed that *Politics* was allotted a large number of periods although it was not closely related to the specialization. Likewise, *Econometrics* which was highly academic and more appropriate for Masters level or for those interested in doing research than for Bachelors was a compulsory subject.

Non-public training providers, albeit being granted more autonomy, were still influenced by rigorous regulations which these governing bodies exerted on all institutions across the HE and VET sectors. Lecturer D in Institution E advised that consultation with the companies was not carried out consistently due to the restriction of the training framework. Whereas the companies argued strongly that the duration of internships and the amount of time for specialization subjects should be increased, the faculty could not adjust the curriculum appropriately due to the core requirements of the ministry's training framework. The governmental regulations caused confusion, so not only demotivated ardent lecturers but also discouraged industry experts from adding their valuable voices for a smooth operation of the WIL initiative.

WIL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE STAKEHOLDERS

On-campus WIL

There was some engagement of industry in the on-campus WIL activities in the six examined institutions. Guest speakers from companies were invited to attend seminars and give talks to the students, sharing their experience from the tourism industry, ideas about workplace environments and requirements of recruiters from candidates in interviews. Consultation with industry experts on tourism curricula was also held. Experienced tour guides were recruited as casual mentors in practical tours. Experts from the industry also collaborated with the institutions as guest lecturers. One of the instruments the institutions used to promote these types of partnership with the industry was through alumni contacts. Nonetheless, according to Lecturer E in Institution E, "this partnership is reliant on the willingness of the company leader or the personal relationships between the lecturers and the companies".

From the industry perspectives, varied activities were held but of varying quality due to the lack of preparation and collaboration from the institutions. Only one third of the managers confirmed that they or their staff members participate in teaching some subjects that require real-life knowledge and experience in some institutions. However, one manager said that he had to prepare the teaching content and materials himself based on the outline given. He was not allowed to know about the training program of the institutions. Just two managers said they were invited by one or two institutions to give talks in front of the students and share their experience. However, this activity was only occasional and ad hoc.

Regarding the contribution of companies' ideas to the institutions' programs such as curricula or materials, the majority of participants shook their heads and shrugged their shoulders. Only a quarter of the managers were invited to give inputs from the companies' perspectives. The invitation was also "*once in a blue moon*", as a HR manager revealed, and after the consultation, these managers did not know if their ideas were implemented or not. Therefore, the cooperation with industry through on-campus WIL scheme was neither systematic nor sustainable, but was over-reliant on personal relationships, thus spontaneous and fragmented.

Off-campus WIL

In both the public and non-public institutional system, there was a paucity of administrative preparation for WIL experience. The students were merely given a brief induction of the internships. They themselves were then responsible for their own arrangement of an internship position in host companies. The academic supervisors or lecturers supported them by referring them to the companies with whom they had personal relationships. The institutions, instead of arranging internship places through the official channel, simply issued an introduction letter for the students to present it to a prospective company as proof of their communication purpose. The students thus encountered numerous obstacles in their contact with the companies. According to Lecturer F (Institution A),

> Many companies tend to be critical of interns and do not welcome them warmly. Their excuse for the lack of cooperation is that travel companies have small offices, so they are afraid that the interns may cause a mess or trouble to their customers due to their lack of sufficient knowledge and skills. They may accept these interns but just for fulfilling required paperwork rather than for actual training.

The Dean in Institution E gave an explanation for the institutions' reluctance of formal arrangements with the industry, "Most companies avoid signing contracts for official affiliation in order not to involve themselves in legal issues in case of unexpected consequences."

The interview data with HR managers also reiterated the lack of official arrangements. Although almost all companies were willing to accept interns, they encountered numerous difficulties which were mainly caused by the disconnection. Firstly, a number of institutions did not send their students to the companies which were the most suitable for the topics of the theses that the students had chosen or fitted the students' specialization. Consequently, many companies refused to accept interns due to the incompatibility between the students' demands and their functions. Therefore, these interns all contacted particularly large companies which had different services and could offer various positions for interns to practice. Lecturer G gave an example, expressing concern,

> This situation causes lots of difficulties to us when the number of interns outnumbers our capacity. We cannot use all their ability while they cannot learn much from us because too many students are present at the same time. So, most of them come only for statistics or our signatures to write reports and submit to the institutions. This makes the internships ineffective.

It was obvious that the institutions arranged the internship in accordance with their own plans and disregarded the requirement of companies, resulting in the companies' unprofessional preparation for WIL experience.

There was an absence of genuine quality academic supervision. All of the managers expressed their disappointment in this regard. Once the interns were admitted into the companies, the institutions gave no further support for either the interns or the companies. They even neglected the role of academic supervisors and did not contact the companies to check up on the performance of their students. A few lecturers contacted the companies to inquire about the students' attendance or performance just because of their personal relationship with the students. All of the activities of the interns were only managed by the companies. Consequently, the institutions neither controlled the actual doings of the interns nor ensured the effectiveness of the internship.

Despite some requirements of academic supervision addressed in the internship regulations, the lecturers' engagement in internship supervision was only limited to social exchanges with the interns (Institutions A, B, and C), assessment of internship reports (Institutions A, B, C and E) or guidance of minor thesis generated from the internship experience (Institutions D and F). The interviewed lecturers admitted that only those who felt responsible supported the interns when necessary. They did not visit them at the companies because they were neither assigned with supervising tasks nor received any remuneration or benefits for doing so from the college, as Lecturer H in Institution B revealed. Therefore, their supervision and support occurred at an individual level rather than became a common departmental or institutional practice. The quality of the internships was thus variable and out of the academic control.

Regarding the workplace supervision, the lecturers displayed negative attitudes. Lecturers J and K (Institution C) were ambivalent about the effectiveness of this hands-on training, saying that it was strongly reliant on the host companies. Some companies allowed the interns - especially those who could demonstrate their abilities and skills - to work as tour

guides, but some just gave them errands to run. Lecturer C from Institution D, blamed companies for not providing the interns with necessary data for them to complete internship reports as an academic requirement. Lecturer B (Institution D) also raised her concern that the interns were vulnerable to exploitation in host organizations which had genuine labor needs. These companies were pleased to take the interns; however, they considered them as their own workers and took full advantage of their time and ability. The students had to work full time like the official employees and hence did not have adequate time to write a good quality report or a minor thesis [approximately 20,000 to 30,000 words] as required by the university after the internship. Lecturer C mentioned that as a consequence, "The good students who have competent foreign language skills try to avoid working in these companies for fear that they may not graduate because they cannot complete their project report or thesis on schedule". This created an obvious paradox in the training outcomes between effective internships on one hand and satisfactory reports and theses on the other.

The interview data with HR managers echoed the lecturers' comments. The most common tasks assigned to interns were menial administration tasks such as typing, printing, photocopying and faxing documents. These interns were not allowed to deal with anything related to paperwork. They were also given some simple tasks such as welcoming tourists at the airport, carrying tourists' luggage, helping the elderly to get on or off the company's shuttles and distributing leaflets to potential customers. They were able to join in the company activities such as team building activities. Those who had a good knowledge of their area of specialization could be assigned tasks suitable for their majors such as sales, designing tours, operating tours, booking, contacting tour guides, checking prices, giving quotes, and preparing documents for coming tours. All of these tasks were normally implemented at a simple level with close supervision. Where there were more complicated tasks such as dealing with customers, these interns had to refer the customers to the official staff for consultation. In some companies, they were asked to observe the experienced staff to become familiar with the tasks and then practiced themselves under tight supervision.

The procedures for assessing an internship in the three colleges and Institution E were less complicated than in Institutions D and F. Students in the colleges and University E were required to submit a feedback form completed and signed by the company manager, an internship journal with signatures of the mentor and an internship report. A typical feedback form obtained from Institution B addressed three main criteria: (i) attitude of the intern in compliance with the company regulations; (ii) attitude of the intern in learning and contribution to the tasks assigned; and (iii) the specialized skills of the interns. There were no other sub-criteria for the mentors to give detailed feedback. Therefore, the general comments failed to reflect the actual quality of the interns. The internship report was designed in the form of a minor thesis of approximately 30-page-long. The student was required to choose one of the five given topics and collect data during their internship to write up this thesis. The student was allocated a supervisor during the time of the internship for the purpose of this minor thesis rather than for the supervision of the students' performance at the workplace. For the other two universities, similar documents were required. In addition, the students in Institution D were requested to write a minor thesis related to the content of the internship and to undergo an oral defense of their thesis. Institution F also required the interns to present an internship oral report.

Regarding the requirements of assessing interns given by institutions, the interviewed managers expressed an ambivalent attitude. They reiterated that the most common form of

assessment of the internship was through the feedback sheets, the internship journals and the internship reports for which templates were provided to the companies by the institutions. Normally after the period working for the companies as interns, the students needed to write a journal about their daily activities and asked the companies for certification. They also had to write a report about the companies and the internship with feedback from their mentors and submitted these documents back to their institutions for marking. Some institutions gave very simple feedback forms. One manager disagreed with the procedure of assessing interns generated by the institutions. He insisted,

> Companies themselves should be entitled to assess all the interns' performance during their work place learning experience. Now, many students are given maximum marks in their theses or internship reports by their teachers but when they come to work in my company, they do not know how to do things properly.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings confirm that WIL initiatives exist in the tourism training programs under examinations with various levels of industry engagement (Lawson et al., 2011) at both on-campus and off-campus stages. The links between the triad of WIL stakeholders under the impact of the Vietnamese Government policies in the context of HE and VET, nonetheless, are appraised as lacking, superficial and unsustainable. The results reiterated the previous study by Bilsland and Nagy (2015). In light of the WIL model by Patrick et al. (2008), WIL partnerships in Vietnamese HE and VET contexts are illustrated as in Figure 2.

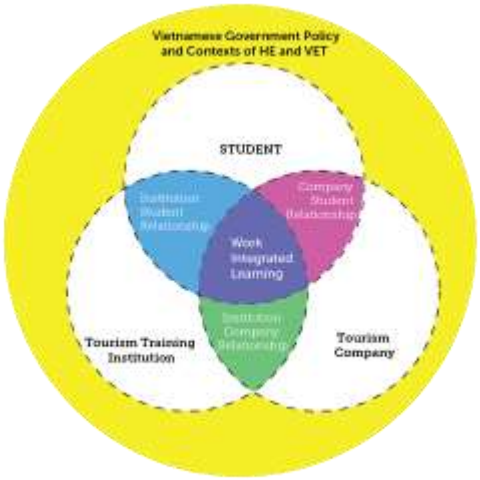

FIGURE 2: WIL relationships in Vietnamese HE and VET

The findings indicate an invisible role of government authorities in WIL environment despite their exercising tight control over the operation of institutions and in the curriculum design. They undermine their roles in passing legislations to support and protect students in pre-, while-, and post-WIL learning experience. Both companies and students follow the arrangement of institutions while there are no government policies or regulatory settings to enable and promote the growth of WIL. Given the dearth of governmental support, the

employers are reluctant to collaborate with institutions in WIL. Students' exploitation as free labor in these companies becomes paramount. This is actually a legal issue, which needs timely courses of action from authorized bodies.

This collaborative link is also frail with regard to the organization, coordination and assessment of internships. No official arrangements or legal contracts are signed for internship purposes. Dialogues between the institutions and host organizations are mainly through the informal/unofficial channels and via simplistic documents. The preparation thus is assessed as insufficient and too unstructured to provide a desirable workplace learning experience, which entails inadequate involvement of academic supervisors and workplace mentors during the internship. The workplace itself is in total charge of the workplace training. Therefore, whether or not this experiential learning is effectively implemented it is out of the control of the education providers. Only when the internship is reaching the completion stage are these institutions informed of the students' performance by means of internship reports submitted by the students or feedback sheets issued by the workplace mentors. The institutions and academic supervisors' central and pivotal roles in this WIL environment as Cooper, Orrell, and Bowden (2010) proposed are seriously undermined.

The loose connection between institution and industry directly impinges on the students' professional learning quality. The institution – student and company – student nexus is hence evaluated as lacking and precarious. The theoretical training at the institutions is unable to provide the students with adequate preparation for WIL experience since the curricula are replete with limitations in both content and time allocation. The benefits that companies brought through on-campus WIL activities are just limited to occasional talks, lectures and inputs into curriculum design, all of which could only target superficial learning. Inadequately prepared, the students are thrown in at the deep end when it comes to the internship. They interact with the workplace independently through simplistic introductory documents. Whether or not they could find a workplace is completely dependent on their own initiative. During the internship, the involvement of the internship coordinator or an academic adviser is almost non-existent. The interns are under only the supervision of the workplace mentors, so they do not have a say when merely assigned with menial administrative duties rather than specialized tasks. The students are considered as free workers, bringing immediate benefits for companies rather than being treated as real learners. They have to undergo the internship to obtain satisfactory paperwork from the companies and a "pass" mark in the internship reports to be eligible for graduation. They are not able to gain any new knowledge or improve their skills after the cursory WIL experience. These findings echo the study by Bilsland and Nagy (2015). Both the education and the industry apply value-added ethos instead of stakeholder ethos put forward by Harvey et al. (1997) (as cited in Orrell, 2004, p. 2) in this WIL practice. The WIL overall is appraised as ineffective at three stages of organizing, coordinating and assessing before, during and after the workplace learning experience as it is found to lack a quality integrated curriculum, genuine learning derived from work experience, actual cultivation of a support-base, and logistical organization and coordination of the learning experience (Groenewald, 2004). Consequently, this WIL initiative barely equips the graduates with expected knowledge and skills to satisfy the demands of the industry.

For the long-term outcomes of WIL to be achieved, a stakeholder approach is strongly recommended. Partnerships between the university and host organizations should be fostered under the impact of sensible government policy, and students need to be considered

as actual learners. In this sense, the model of Patrick et al. (2008) modified to be localized in the Vietnamese educational context is proposed as visualized in Figure 3.

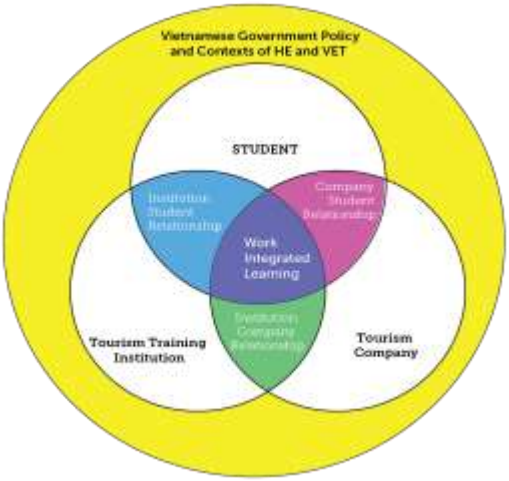

FIGURE 3: Recommendations for best relationships of stakeholders in WIL processes in Vietnamese Tourism Training programs

According to this model, each stakeholder and its members need to ensure the relationships with other stakeholders throughout the WIL process. They need to be proactive in their specific roles for successful tourism programs with an effective design, implementation and assessment of WIL. It is hoped that the findings are able to pave way for further research on strategic suggestions for improvement within the indicated constraints and for relevant organizations including governmental authorities, tourism training institutions and tourism companies to lobby changes for an optimized WIL embedded in tourism training programs.

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Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education
ISSN 1175-2882
www.apjce.org

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