Challenges implementing work-integrated learning in human resource management university courses

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The examination of work-integrated learning (WIL) programs in the undergraduate Human Resource Management (HRM) curriculum is an area under-represented in the Australian literature. This paper identifies the challenges faced in implementing WIL into the HRM undergraduate curriculum. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with 38 participants including academics, careers advisors, professionals and students from nine Australian universities. The findings show that a lack of resources, a clash of agendas, legal and ethical issues, expectations, the HRM profession and academic perspectives of WIL, are impacting on how WIL programs in HRM are being developed. Recommendations are made for the future development of WIL in HRM. *(Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 2017, 18(3), 199-212)*

Research in relation to work-integrated learning (WIL) programs has been undertaken in the disciplines of sport, engineering, nursing, midwifery, law, medicine and education (McLennan & Keating, 2008; Trigwell & Reid, 1998). An increased demand from government and industry for work-ready graduates has broadened the development of WIL programs into other discipline areas. A review of the literature in WIL programs from an Australian perspective reveals that there have been previous examinations of the range of WIL programs in the business discipline, however limited research into the range of WIL programs in undergraduate human resource management (HRM) degrees (Rook, 2015). This paper presents the challenges impacting WIL development in the undergraduate HRM curriculum across nine Australian universities as identified by key stakeholders (academics, career advisors, students, professionals). The motivations for this study included identifying the reason for a variation between WIL programs in HRM across Australian universities and to address the lack of research into WIL programs in this discipline. This paper includes some of the findings of that study and adds to the body of literature that informs research into WIL. It also provides evidence and direction to those involved in establishing and maintain industry partnerships and WIL experiences within the university setting. In identifying the challenges of implementing WIL in HRM, themes not previously acknowledged in the literature were identified such as, legal and ethical concerns, the nature and characteristics of the HRM profession and the role and impact of academics' views of WIL.

BACKGROUND

A Range of Work-Integrated Learning Programs

The literature on WIL is replete with detailed descriptions of the range of WIL programs being developed within universities across the Australian higher education sector. Rowe, Kelliher and Winchester-Seeto (2012) reviewed 255 sources and developed a Venn diagram which categorizes WIL activities as either predominantly off-campus or predominantly on-campus and maps WIL activities on the degree of engagement in the practice. For example, activities such as internships (off-campus) and panel sessions (on-campus) are rated as having high engagement while other activities such as observation (off-campus) and

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studio/lab work (on-campus) can be categorized as having low engagement. McLennan and Keating (2008) reviewed how WIL is framed in a small sample of Australian universities. Their examples describe WIL as a "range of experiential learning activities" [Swinburne University], "training and practical experience in a location physically different from the university" [Murdoch University], and "meaningful application of theoretical learning to the workplace" [Griffith University] (McLennan & Keating, 2008, p. 6). The recently released national WIL strategy supports the inclusive definition of WIL provided by Patrick et al. (2008 p.iv) as an "umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum" (Universities Australia & Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015, p. 1). This inclusive definition provides a foundation from which to pursue research and practices of effective WIL strategies and activities across the Australian higher education sector.

Challenges for the Implementation of Work-Integrated Learning Programs

Australian research has identified several challenges associated with the design, development and implementation of WIL programs. Research discussed below that has a specific business discipline focus includes Lawson, Fallshaw and Papadopoulos (2011), Choy and Delahaye (2011), and Rowe, Mackaway, and Winchester-Seeto (2012).

Resource Intensiveness

A reoccurring challenge identified in the literature is that of a lack of available resources for providing WIL opportunities (Lawson et al., 2011; McLennan & Keating, 2008; Patrick et al., 2008). Additionally, as WIL becomes more widespread the ability to secure placements and other resources is difficult (McLennan & Keating, 2008). Patrick et al. (2008) has identified 'adequately resourcing WIL' as one of five major challenges when mainstreaming WIL in Australian universities. The authors suggest that a decrease in available funding opportunities from the Federal Government, as well as the Government's often rigid policies has meant many universities have had to rely on student revenue to provide placement opportunities, even in the already established 'old timer' disciplines such as nursing, education and engineering (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 32). Other resource issues identified include workload and time constraints for both academics and employers (Clark, Rowe, Cantori, Bilgin, & Mukuria, 2016), and costs to employers and students who may have to maintain part time work while finding the time to participate in WIL placements. This could be a result of a "lack of recognition of the amount of work and skills required to run successful WIL programs" (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 34). McLennan and Keating (2008) have also identified resource intensiveness as a key challenge when implementing WIL into the Australian university curriculum. They support Patrick et al.'s (2008) resource issue of costs and extend it to include the concerns of the "transaction costs of maintaining partnerships with many employers, sourcing WIL opportunities, developing and evaluating curriculum for WIL and supporting a body of students who are geographically dispersed" (McLennan & Keating, 2008, p. 11).

Lawson et al. (2011) state that a lack of institutional support for WIL can have considerable impact on the resources made available to academics for the development and delivering of WIL initiatives. Academic participants in focus group discussions stated that a lack of support through an institutional framework made it difficult to deliver WIL (Lawson et al., 2011). Policies were found to be time consuming and were described as cumbersome as they often hinged on partnerships with external parties (Lawson et al., 2011). Another issue noted

as impacting on available resources was the way in which WIL was viewed by the institution. WIL was often viewed as a low priority and lacked academic rigor and as a result, resources were not provided by the institution (Lawson et al., 2011). This is further supported by research that suggests the undervaluing of WIL when compared to other academic roles such as research and classroom-based teaching has led to decreased resources available (Emslie, 2011). Emslie (2011) suggests that through appreciating and valuing the work involved in WIL, access to resources will increase. Appreciating WIL might mean understanding WIL more deeply and expanding teaching and learning methods to include WIL principles more widely in every day teaching. This could mean different types of WIL models being developed to widen student participation and ensure that students have access to workplace learning experiences. In HRM the challenge of a lack of resources has meant that academics have had to be creative with their WIL models by bringing the workplace or industry representatives to the university to present problem based projects that students in groups collectively solve (Rook, 2015).

Embedding Work-Integrated Learning

Another issue identified by McLennan and Keating (2008) as being a challenge to mainstreaming WIL in Australian universities, is the challenge of embedding WIL in pedagogy and courses. McLennan and Keating (2008 p. 11) state that embedding good quality WIL practices into the curriculum requires "universities reframing their pedagogical approach to integrate theoretical, professional and experiential models of learning". This not only requires a significant amount of resources and commitment to WIL, it requires a change in perspective for academics and students. For academics, it requires adaption of different teaching and learning styles and for students it requires seeing the importance and relevance in engaging in WIL to their future prospects and careers (McLennan & Keating, 2008). The university's role in embedding WIL is therefore important. A recent report examining the current state and future priorities for WIL as viewed by employers, supports this and argues that "the role of universities in initially engaging organizations to participate in WIL and consequentially easing the load on participating organizations through the process of embedding WIL cannot be downplayed" (Phillips, 2014 p. 66).

WIL offers an approach to teaching and learning that views the boundaries of the university as permeable and that the world of work can be blended and experienced in a myriad of ways (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014). Work-integrated learning challenges the traditional approach to leading and managing teaching and learning practices in universities (Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010). It requires those leading WIL initiatives to consider and include another dimension of leadership responsibilities and new ways of blending the world of work within the curriculum in higher education. However, embedding WIL in pedagogy and courses is challenging as successful integration requires resources and a whole stakeholder commitment. Entrenching WIL successfully extends beyond university commitment, it requires commitment from stakeholders such as government, industry and professional discipline specific organizations (Edwards, Perkins, Pearce, & Hong, 2015). Stakeholders need to fully engage with WIL collaboratively in order to optimize WIL benefits for all stakeholders (Ferns, Russell, & Kay, 2016). Another issue linked with the challenge of embedding WIL is the difficulties associated with locating and discerning relevant resources, tools and best practice sources. This was acknowledged in the Australian Collaborative Education Networks National (ACEN) WIL strategy where one of the key action areas will be to build support for students, universities and employers across all sectors and

governments to increase participation in WIL and to ensure that clear, concise information about WIL is accessible (Universities Australia & Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015).

Stakeholder Relationships

Maintaining relationships between relevant stakeholders becomes important to consider when designing and implementing a WIL program. It has been stated that there are challenges with managing expectations and competing demands of stakeholders (Patrick et al., 2008), in understanding the role of each stakeholder in the process of WIL (Ferns et al., 2016; Rowe, Mackaway, et al., 2012) and in fostering partnerships between the university and host organization including fitting in with industry needs (Berman, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011; Lawson et al., 2011; McLennan & Keating, 2008).

Managing expectations and competing demands of stakeholders is part of maintaining positive stakeholder relationships. Patrick et al. (2008) however found that this was a major challenge when implementing WIL into the Australian university curriculum. Patrick et al. (2008) found that competing stakeholder interests of employers, students and universities created an expectations gap, and as such an integrated stakeholder approach where there is common understanding of the procedures and commitment of all was needed. Rowe, Mackaway and Winchester-Seeto (2012, p. 115) support this and suggest that a "clearer understanding of the stakeholder roles and better communication are important steps to providing adequate support to host supervisors". Rowe and colleagues' (2012) research designed a conceptual framework, analysis and reflection tool to be used by academics and host supervisors in order to establish the roles the host supervisor is expected to perform. However, this tool is limited in its application as its development was influenced more by those disciplines where there is a tradition of using placements, such as nursing and engineering. Essentially, both Patrick et al., (2008) and Rowe et al.'s (2012) research have highlighted an apparent disconnect in communication among stakeholders involved in the process of developing and delivering WIL programs.

Several authors (Berman, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011; Lawson et al., 2011; McLennan & Keating, 2008) have specified that another challenge facing Australian universities in the process of implementing WIL, is the fostering of partnerships, including the ability for the university to 'fit in' (McLennan & Keating, 2008) with industry needs. Choy and Delahaye (2011, p. 159) indicate that the traditional role and power universities have over the content and types of learning activities and outcomes "serves the interests of the university well" but "falls short of adequately meeting the needs of the workplace and learners". This 'cultural gap' (Berman, 2008) has been described as a significant barrier to successful collaborations among stakeholders.

It could also be suggested that fostering partnerships in WIL is a challenge because of the terminology and language issues identified in the employer report by Phillips KPA (Phillips, 2014). Their findings articulated that regardless of the size, sector or industry, the term WIL is yet to gain traction and understanding among most surveyed employers with only 48 percent of respondent's familiar with the term (Phillips, 2014). As such, the authors suggest that greater effort is needed by governments, industry peak bodies and the higher education sector for a rationale to be developed, advocated and communicated to ensure that the language and intent of WIL resonates across Australian organizations in all industry sectors (Phillips, 2014). This was recently acknowledged by the National WIL strategy across key

eight areas including a focus on facilitating and promoting WIL and partnerships through an integrated framework, leadership, support and specified actions to drive growth in WIL (Universities Australia & Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015).

Work-Integrated Learning in Human Resource Management

Research in relation to WIL in business degrees has identified significant skills gaps in graduates (Jackson & Chapman, 2012). As such there is a push for WIL to be a core part of the curriculum including areas such as business degrees. There is also considerable push for WIL to be an integral component of the higher education curriculum driven nationally from students, industry associations as well as government for its potential in improving the quality of education systems "to meet the challenges and opportunities presented by rapidly changing global realities" (Universities Australia & Australian Collaborative Education Network, 2015, p. 1).

While research about WIL has been conducted in the discipline areas of other subsets of business degrees such as accounting (Abeysekera, 2006; Oliver, Whelan, Hunt, & Hammer, 2011) there is limited published research examining the range of WIL programs in HRM. This study fills a gap in the literature through examining the range of WIL programs in undergraduate HRM degrees.

RESEARCH METHODS
Design and Participants

The aim of this study was to understand the challenges faced in implementing WIL programs in undergraduate HRM degrees. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from four relevant stakeholder groups (academics, careers advisors, professionals and students). Both purposive and snowball sampling was utilized to approach potential research participants. Purposive sampling was used initially to identify potential participants, through a preliminary review of curricula on Australian university websites of undergraduate HRM programs. As the interviews began with participants most of the already active participants were willing to refer someone else suitable for the study, therefore snowball sampling was also utilized. Participants were selected for their role in the development or participation in WIL programs in HRM.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed with the permission of participants. The interviews were semi-structured in nature. Guiding questions were developed from a comprehensive review of the WIL literature. The guiding interview questions incorporated topics such as the role of WIL in higher education, the drivers of WIL, employability, graduate attributes, perceived benefits of WIL, the perceived impact of the range of WIL programs including the current role of WIL in HRM and the perceived future role of WIL in undergraduate HRM studies. Interviews were conducted with participants via Skype, over the phone and in face to face upon request of the participants. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for accuracy and on average 90 minutes.

A total of 38 participants were interviewed, 12 academics, eight careers advisors, 10 professionals, and eight students from nine Australian universities. Included were both single and multi-campus universities with a focus on technology application and design, and creative approaches to education and research. Several of the participating universities emphasize a greater focus in their courses on local and international community and industry engagement, to ensure graduates are well prepared for the workplace.

Analysis

Thematic analysis was undertaken by one researcher and involved two phases. First, the transcripts were entered into NVivo and thematically categorized. Thematic coding involved recording passages of text from the transcriptions that are linked by a common theme or idea. The second phase of the analysis involved categorizing the transcripts into themes utilizing the principles of the complexity framework provided by Mitleton-Kelly (2003). This paper presents the thematic results of the challenges of implementing WIL in HRM and is part of a wider study that was undertaken by the researcher in relation to WIL in HRM in Australia.

Ethics, Credibility, Validity and Reliability

Ethics approval for this research was granted by Western Sydney University in August 2011. Each participant was invited to participate voluntarily in the study, received an ethics approved information letter and was asked to complete a consent form. Individuals were given a choice to participate in the research and withdraw from the study at any time.

After the interviews were transcribed the semi-structured interview transcript was made available to the relevant participant. This established research credibility as credibility parallels internal validity and establishes how accurately the data reflects the social phenomenon being studied (Wahyuni, 2012). By making available the transcript of the semi-structured interview to the participant for confirmation that the researcher has understood correctly that person's view allows for any inaccuracies to be identified and addressed. The relaxed, informal and open-ended structure of an in-depth semi-structured interview allowed the participants to feel comfortable in their surroundings. This structure increases the likeliness of the information given to be a representation of the participants' views about the topic.

Richards and Morse (2013) state that validity is increased through keeping track of coding decisions by using memos to track changes in the development of coding categories and through continually recoding and relabeling the nodes as often as required. This study achieved this through utilizing qualitative software NVivo 10 for managing the data and through extensive documentation of the processes followed throughout the research. As such the reliability of the information in the study was enhanced.

RESULTS

Challenges Implementing Work-Integrated Learning into Human Resource Management Courses

Each stakeholder group identified challenges to implementing WIL in the undergraduate HRM curriculum. Six challenges were identified through the analysis process: a lack of resources and or resource intensiveness; legal and ethical concerns; a clash of agendas; expectations; specific HRM profession characteristics; and the academics view that WIL threatens the role of higher education.

Table 1 presents an overall summary of the number of comments made by each stakeholder group referring to the challenges to implementing WIL in HRM. Each count of responses has been further classified as having low, medium or high strength.

TABLE 1: Summary and strength of challenges to implementing WIL in HRM undergraduate degrees

Challenges	Academics (n=12)	Careers advisors (n=8)	Professionals (n=10)	Students (n=8)
1. Lack of resources/resource intensiveness	High (12)	None	High (8)	Low (1)
2. Legal and ethical concerns	Medium (5)	Medium (3)	Low (1)	None
3. Clash of agendas*	None	Medium (3)	None	None
4. Expectations	Low (4)	Medium (3)	Medium (7)	None
5. HRM profession characteristics	Medium (7)	Low (1)	None	Medium (3)
6. WIL threatens the role of Higher Education	Medium (5)	None	None	None
Strength of identification of challenges	Low= 1-4	Low= 1-2	Low= 1-3	Low= 1-2
	Medium= 5-8	Medium= 3-5	Medium= 4-7	Medium= 3-5
Low, Medium, High	High= 9-12	High= 6-8	High= 8-10	High= 6-8

* The theme clash of agendas was identified through identifying what is driving each of the stakeholders to engage in WIL. This was a result of the analysis; stakeholders did not specifically state a clash of agendas except for the career advisor participants.

A Lack of Resources and/or Resource Intensiveness

All stakeholder groups stated that a lack of resources, including a lack of host organizations for student curriculum-based placements, was influencing WIL program development in the HRM undergraduate curriculum. A lack of resources was found to be increasing academics' workload as they struggle to find time and money to teach and organize students in WIL programs. As noted in Table 1 all twelve academic participants stated that there was a lack of resources available to support WIL. The identified specific resources included limited industry placements offered, limited training and a lack of support staff. Also noted was that WIL requires a significant amount of time particularly in building relationships with industry. Concern was also expressed about a lack of resource relative to not being skilled in recruiting for placements. "We are doing all the work here; so we are advertising it, doing the short list, and once again I am not skilled in this area" (Academic 11). Another academic also commented on the struggle associated with WIL placements:

> Companies and organizations obviously have a limited number of students they can take on an any point in time so if they have built up a relationship with one university with having student placements I don't think they are necessarily going to find the time or resources to suddenly take an influx of more student placements (Academic 12).

Professional stakeholders stated that the biggest challenge they faced with WIL is the time that is required to manage a student. Careers advisors and professional participants also support this by stating that WIL programs are very time consuming. Professional 9 stated that "it is time consuming and it takes about three months to get them where they need to be and then they leave after three months". Student 6 on the other hand identified that it was the lack of supervision and guidance provided on a placement that was a concern stating, "I was kind of left on my own, just doing my own research, getting used to the environment".

Legal and Ethical Concerns

Academic participants expressed concern over the legal and ethical issues that are associated with implementing WIL placements stating specifically "So, you've got legislative issues, you've got what is work experience? You've got workers comp" (Academic 8). Academic Participant 1 was concerned over the potential inequities with the selection process for student placements stating, "We were very conscious of equity and how do we equitably select people . . . if it's done on credits and credit average, like GPA, is that the best way to do it?" while Academic 11 raised an ethical concern over becoming a 'recruitment agency' for organizations stating "there is an ethical issue . . . becoming a recruitment agency for organizations". Career advisors also identified legal and ethical issues as a hindrance to the development of WIL by noting that "on the legal side, there are resource problems. . . . There's a natural tension of exploitation v experience" (Careers Advisor 4).

Clash of Agendas

The clash of agendas theme emerged from the findings related to identifying the driver for each stakeholder to engage in WIL. Professional and student stakeholder groups identified that personal benefits were determining factors for participating in WIL. While academic and careers advisors identified external forces to the university driving WIL. This presents an inherent clash of agendas. For example, the professional and student stakeholder groups identified personal motivating reasons for engaging in WIL, such as the perceived advantage of being more employable when applying for jobs (students) and the value that the organization gets from a student particularly when you have a skill shortage (professionals). Student 4 noted their personal benefit of participating in WIL by saying "Well for one it [work experience] made me heaps more competitive in the workforce. . . . I'm already in a permanent full-time job which I highly doubt would have been nearly as possible". Professional 3 reflected on their involvement in WIL noting their reasons for participating: "We realized there was an awful lot of value in having them [students] there. They really achieved a lot more than we thought they might . . . I'd say certainly the skill shortage might have been the first prompter though".

On the other hand, academics and career participants identified external motivating forces for engaging in WIL, such as increased competition for universities. As one stated:

> If we want to get to the crux of the issue lifting the cap on uni [sic] places is why everyone's rushing towards work-integrated learning. It's a strategy. Global financial crisis, young people and their parents are shaking in their boots (Academic 2).

While Careers Advisor Participant 5 stated "I think probably it is [increased demand for WIL] the demand of industry and technological advancements making us change the course design".

As such, these differences in motivations for engaging in WIL present a clash of agendas. Careers Advisor 8 described this clash succinctly, identifying a conflict of agendas when organizing placements:

> corporates would have their own agenda so as the learning institution you are supposed to encourage individual thinking. . . . I can sense a conflict of interest there and I think I can imagine if this is not carefully planned there is going to be a lot of conflicts arising of this, because one organization will come in with their own philosophy and the other come in will be something different and it may not match

with the university agenda . . . organizations will come in with a lot of profit making agenda whereas university I believe should be more neutral. . .

Expectations

As shown in Table 1 the ability to manage expectations was the second most important challenge faced by professional stakeholders. Professional 6 stated:

> You have to make sure that managers don't expect too much, because the student is still at university and still learning. . . . I guess managing intern's expectations would be the other side of that so you know making sure the student knows that we expect them to look and behave a certain way and we expect you to know when you are operating outside your level of competence or authority and where to draw the line.

Professional Participant 7 commented on a past WIL experience and the challenge they faced regarding communication issues and a mismatch in expectations:

> How well or poorly an internship works I think depends enormously on three things, and they are the three parties that are involved, the host organization…the university and the student themselves. I think the construct is often a good thing but I think the application of it at times leaves something to be desired . . . a mismatch in expectations brought about by not good communication. Of the ones that I have been involved in where they haven't worked, it's more been about a miscommunication… usually you have got two of them with their heads not in the same space at the same time.

The Human Resource Management Profession

Half of all participants indicated that there is a lack of, or less prevalent presence of, HRM placements being offered in both the context of the curriculum and external to the curriculum. This is represented in Table 1 in two challenges, both the lack of resources and the HRM profession characteristics. As academic 1 stated:

> We've just found that when we've thought about it or tried to do it [WIL] for our [HRM discipline] numbers, our size, our cohorts, the resources available to us that we've had to design and also what we've wanted to achieve academically [are not available]. We are a new profession. We are a new area. . .

This perception of the HRM profession held by the stakeholder groups has influenced the development of alternative WIL program models to the curriculum-based placement model. In support of this Careers Advisor 7 said:

> I don't think there is enough offered in HR and probably the reason is ethical, privacy, confidential issues and the sensitive kind of subject matter but yeah at the same time I think there is not enough placements because departments just don't have the resources to do it.

Work-Integrated Learning Threatens Role of Higher Education

It was also found that academics have the main influence on the development of WIL programs in HRM. Interestingly, it was found that as a group academics do not view WIL positively with many of the participants questioning the role of WIL in higher education. More specifically, they raised questions of the practical component of WIL (curriculum-based placements). Academics perceived the implementation of practical work experience in

university courses as having a negative impact on the identity of the institution of the university. As such, they advocate and implement alternative WIL models to the traditional placement type programs. An example of this perspective has been stressed by one academic:

> I think universities have lost the reason that we were here for. We are here to be at the cutting edge of technology change or of innovations. Well actually we are catching up if we are using the community to serve us, and I think that that's the role of TAFE [Technical And Further Education] or when we used to have the college, colleges of advanced education. Maybe that is where the vocational stuff is at, I don't know that it really does sit at university (Academic 11).

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Research on work-integrated learning (WIL) in the undergraduate the human resource management (HRM) curriculum is limited. This paper has presented the challenges impacting WIL development in the undergraduate HRM curriculum as viewed by academics, students, professionals and careers advisors in nine Australian universities. Six themes and/or challenges were identified when implementing WIL in HRM. These themes are: a lack of resources or resource intensiveness; legal and ethical concerns; a clash of agendas; expectations; the HRM profession; and academic view of WIL as threatening the role of higher education.

Previous writers have highlighted some of the main challenges such as workload and time constraints (Patrick et al., 2008), maintenance of partnerships with industry (Berman, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011; Lawson et al., 2011; McLennan & Keating, 2008), competing demands of stakeholders (Patrick et al., 2008) and managing expectations or understanding stakeholder roles (Rowe, Mackaway, et al., 2012) when implementing WIL. However, this study also found challenges specific to the implementation of WIL in HRM that have not been identified previously such as, legal and ethical concerns, the nature and characteristics of the HRM profession and the academics negative view of WIL. In regard to legal and ethical concerns, participants highlighted the issues of: insurance; workers compensation; privacy issues; inequities in placement selection process; and ethical concerns being a 'recruitment agency for an organization'. It was found that WIL in the undergraduate curriculum is limited by industry specific characteristics. The large cohorts enrolled in HRM, along with the varying needs for HRM in practice, and not having a cultural history of providing placements has impacted on the type of WIL programs being developed in HRM. Systems to support WIL development in this area are also not yet available. These factors combined with a negative academic discourse of WIL threatening the role of higher education have made it difficult implementing WIL in HRM.

Implications and Recommendations

Academics need to recognize the value that WIL offers universities, students and other participating organizations. This study found academic views about WIL were negatively framed around implementation issues of WIL. Academics are the individuals developing WIL programs and as such their negative views are likely to have an impact on the sustainability of WIL overtime. Academic participants voiced their opinion that the role of WIL in higher education questions the intentions and role of higher education institutions in

the wider educational system. However, academics need to acknowledge and appreciate that WIL and its link to employability skill development offers universities a way of providing a product that students now expect as a payoff for their investment in education (Abeysekera, 2006). Literature supports the need for change in how WIL is viewed arguing that embedding WIL in undergraduate degrees requires changes in perspective for both academics and students (Emslie, 2011; Lawson et al., 2011; McLennan & Keating, 2008). Higher education institutions might consider that in order to change the current negative view of WIL, training or learning in WIL practices for academics involved in WIL development is provided. It is important that universities strive to create a positive academic culture so that uncertainty and change is embraced and a positive language culture around WIL is fostered (Rook & McManus, 2016). It is also important that WIL initiatives be carefully integrated into a leader's responsibilities, external partners be engaged in the process and that infrastructure is developed to support WIL (Cooper et al., 2010). This holistic systematic approach to WIL leadership facilitates a reconsideration of current practices thus driving and motivating stakeholders to view WIL as being valued. This element of value is seen to be critical to ensuring adequate and appropriate resources are provided to support WIL in universities (Emslie, 2011) and may ease the load of participating external partners (PhillipsKPA, 2014).

Connections between stakeholders must also improve. Academics and higher education institutions need to continue to work on building stronger relationships with industry including any relevant professional bodies or associations appropriate to the discipline such as The *Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI).* Participants in this study highlighted a clash of agendas and as such expectation concerns arose when managing students in the work placement. In order to overcome this challenge, it has been suggested that a stakeholder approach to managing WIL be adopted to ensure that there are clearer understandings of the role of each stakeholder in the process of WIL (Patrick et al., 2008; Rowe, Mackaway, et al., 2012). For the discipline of HRM this might mean engaging and developing stronger partnerships with the Australian Human Resources Institute. This might assist in meeting HRM industry needs, making explicit the expectations of parties and removing any barriers to communication so that the potential of WIL in HRM can be realized (Berman, 2008; Choy & Delahaye, 2011). Tools that might assist in the process of managing expectations between the university and participating partners and employers of students in placements might also be considered by WIL program leaders. Tools such as the one developed by Rowe, Mackaway and Winchester-Seeto (2012) could be adapted to suit the needs of the HRM discipline to ensure placement opportunities are not lost due to communication issues and a mismatch in expectations which was identified as a challenge by the professional participants in this study. For example, the tool could be adapted to include expectations and understandings surrounding the ethical and legal concerns associated with working in the HRM profession, again alleviating some of the concerns participants identified as challenges to implementing and participating in WIL opportunities.

Participants across all groups identified that there is less placements available than there is student enrolled in HRM degrees. This challenge coupled with the profession not having a cultural history of providing placements has impacted on the type of WIL programs being developed in HRM. This raises other challenges such as how to equitably select students for placements and points to issues highlighted in the literature around the WIL program quality (Ferns et al., 2016). One strategy to overcome these challenges is to encourage HRM academics to consider new ways of working and relating their teaching and learning styles to

WIL by including alternatives to off-campus placement activities such as authentic engagement activities with industry and community on-campus. This would be a holistic approach to WIL that would go some way in assisting students to gain relevant work-ready skills through lecturers embedding relevant skills and knowledge across HRM courses. In undergraduate HRM courses academics are encouraged to consider current resources and use them in creative ways to adapt their teaching and learning styles so that they do not 'water down' WIL alternatives but ensure that WIL is embraced and its full potential is realized (Rook & McManus, 2016 p.11). WIL activities can extend across a continuum of high and low engagement (Rowe, Winchester-Seeto, et al., 2012). Any number of activities might be considered as long as they meet the criteria of an authentic workplace experience which focuses on developing graduate learning outcomes and career pathways (Ferns et al., 2014).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations of the study. Firstly, participants were selected for their involvement in coordinating, lecturing or participating in WIL in HRM. This means that the views of teaching HRM academics not involved in the implementation of WIL were not included. Including these HRM academics may provide further understandings of WIL in HRM. This study provides a snapshot of the stakeholder perspectives of WIL in HRM at a specific point in time. This limitation is somewhat mitigated by the variation in the cohort being studied (academics, careers advisors, professionals and students). In addition to this, in qualitative research the term generalization can be substituted for the goal of transferability (O'Leary, 2010). Transferability, concerns the applicability of the research to other situations and setting or to consider the 'lessons learned' from the research as being applicable in alternative settings. Transferability is achieved in this research through providing a detailed description of the research setting and the methods employed. By providing this detailed account applicability can be determined by those reading the research account. The third limitation relates to the non-inclusion of the Australian professional body for HR, the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI). Since AHRI represents a great number of professionals working in HRM, their perspectives may provide further insight into the implementation of WIL in HRM. As such future research which includes AHRI perspective is strongly recommended.

CONCLUSION

Research examining the range of WIL programs in HRM is underrepresented in the literature. However, research about WIL programs, the range of models being developed and the challenges associated with WIL is growing. The findings presented here suggest that there are challenges implementing WIL in HRM that provide support to the literature in other discipline but that there are also challenges unique to the discipline and profession of HRM. Six themes were identified: a lack of resources or resource intensiveness; legal and ethical concerns; a clash of agendas; expectations; the HRM profession; and academic view of WIL as threatening the role of higher education. These challenges have made it difficult to implement, support and expand opportunities for WIL in HRM. To broaden the opportunities and success of WIL in HRM in the future it is recommended that a positive culture be developed that prioritizes and elevates the value of WIL to create a positive language space among academics. In addition to this it is recommended that academics consider new ways of working and relating to WIL in their teaching and learning style and

ensure that partnerships with stakeholders including professional associations are strengthened.

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