

Embedded Work Integrated Learning is an effective model of teaching and learning which enhances employability skills: A case study from a degree program

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The recent release of the *National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in University Education* (ACEN, 2015) has generated much interest in the tertiary education sector. Universities are reinvigorating their exploration of new relationships and strengthening existing links with industry partners, in an effort to provide effective WIL programs and ensure graduates are prepared for the workforce. Various models of WIL exist; “Embedded WIL” (EWIL) is where the student works with industry in small blocks of time at regular intervals throughout semester. This case study highlights benefits and challenges experienced when incorporating EWIL into a degree program. Data was collected through surveys of students and recent graduates and interviews with industry partners. Reflections from university staff involved in the program were also included. Results demonstrate EWILs are an effective pedagogical strategy in terms of providing authentic, real world learning experiences and enhancing students’ employability skills. Specifically, students’ communication skills and confidence are enhanced. In addition, the EWIL model targets specific skills and provides students with experiences that may not occur in other WIL programs. Furthermore, EWILs provide an avenue for community engagement; all stakeholders experienced mutually beneficial relationships as a result of their EWIL involvement. Barriers to the success of the program included time constraints, increasing student cohort size and staffing changes. Minor challenges can be overcome with planning and relationship development. The findings of this study provide valuable information for other tertiary institutions considering implementing EWIL models into their programs.