

**Work Integrated Learning in Transnational Higher Education:  
Undergraduate business programmes in Vietnam**

Christine Bilsland

B.A., M.B.A.

Macquarie University

Faculty of Business and Economics

Department of Marketing and Management

Sydney, NSW

Australia

*This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

*24 November 2016*



## **Declaration**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of the requirements for a degree to any other university or institution.

I certify that the thesis is an original piece of research that has been wholly written by me. Co-authors' contribution to articles have been appropriately acknowledged in the body of the thesis. The thesis has been professionally edited according to the Australian Standards for Editing practice. I certify that the intellectual content is the product of my own work and that all literature and information sources used in the thesis have been indicated.

The research presented in this thesis was approved as follows:

Work supervisor data (Chapter Three) was approved by the RMIT Business College Human Ethics Advisory Network (BCHEAN), Reference No: 1000333. 14 May 2013.

Alumni data (Chapter Four) was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Committee, Reference No: 5201300476. 1 August 2013. Stage 2 - Amendment to collect Human resource manager data (Chapter Five) was approved. Reference No. 5201300686. 16 October 2013.

---

Christine Bilsland  
Macquarie student # 43141242



## **Acknowledgements**

I am delighted to formally express thanks and appreciation to the people and organisations that extended support in many ways throughout the thesis journey.

First, Macquarie University provided invaluable financial support by awarding me an APA Scholarship and a candidature research budget. RMIT Vietnam also facilitated data collection procedures reported in Chapter Three through an internal research grant.

My principal supervisor, Dr. Leanne Carter, and associate supervisor, Professor Leigh Wood, have generously shared their time, patience, advice and goodwill. Fortunately, I contacted Leigh when my idea to pursue PhD work was just a seed; my good fortune continued when she brought Leanne onto the team. Thank you, ladies.

The Higher Degree Research team in the Faculty of Business and Economics, Agnieszka Baginska and Lin Bai, have been invaluable providers of administrative support. The many workshops and seminars delivered by Macquarie's Higher Degree Research Learning Skills and Library units have been immensely helpful. I am privileged to have been able to take advantage of such rich administrative and learning resources.

There are too many students and staff to individually thank here. RMIT Vietnam colleagues who were especially supportive include Helga Nagy, Dr. Phil Smith, Professor Bernadine Van Gramberg, and Dr. Ellen McArthur. The wonderful team of multi-talented people from Vietnam and around the world at RMIT Vietnam made work and research rewarding and fun. I thank the work supervisors, alumni, and managers who kindly agreed to be interviewed.

I am grateful for the professional editing assistance from Penny Ralph.

Finally, thanks to all my family and friends who have been extremely understanding.

Particular thanks go to my partner Jim Owen who took on most of the home front duties without a word of complaint.



## Table of Contents

<i>Declaration</i> .....	iii
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	v
<i>List of figures</i> .....	xi
<i>List of tables</i> .....	xiii
<i>Abstract</i> .....	xvi
<i>Terms &amp; abbreviations</i> .....	xviii
<b>Chapter One: Introduction – Work integrated learning in a transnational higher education environment – Vietnam</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Introduction and aims .....	1
Significance .....	3
Research Justification .....	4
Background.....	6
<i>Description of the research setting</i> .....	7
Research problem .....	8
Literature review.....	8
<i>Transnational education (TNE) in context</i> .....	9
<i>Work integrated learning</i> .....	18
<i>Employability</i> .....	19
Methodology.....	22
<i>Methods</i> .....	27
Conceptual framework.....	36
Summary and structure of chapters and articles .....	46
References – Chapter One .....	49
<b>Chapter Two: Work integrated learning in transnational education and Vietnam</b> .....	<b>65</b>
<b>Article One – Enhancing WIL’s value in transnational higher education: addressing the challenges</b> .....	<b>68</b>
Introduction.....	68
Benefits to off-shore students .....	71
Institutional benefits .....	72
WIL as a potential quality indicator .....	75
Obstacles and barriers.....	77
Conclusion .....	81
References – article one.....	83
<b>Article Two – Building employability skills in Vietnamese business graduates: the case for work integrated learning.</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Introduction.....	90
The case for building employability skills in higher education.....	90
Employability skill gaps in Vietnam .....	91

Background of higher education in Vietnam .....	99
Current Work Integrated Learning developments in Vietnam .....	102
Discussion and conclusions.....	104
References – article two .....	105
<b>Chapter Three: Intern work supervisors; building frontline collaboration.....</b>	<b>111</b>
References – Chapter Three introduction.....	116
<b>Article Three – Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: a qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam.....</b>	<b>117</b>
Introduction .....	118
Importance of WIL stakeholder relationships .....	119
Methodology .....	121
Discussion of interview results .....	122
Conclusions .....	125
References – article three .....	126
<b>Article Four – Work integrated learning in Vietnam: perspectives of intern work supervisors.....</b>	<b>129</b>
Introduction .....	130
Literature review .....	132
Methodology .....	136
Research Findings .....	138
Discussion .....	141
Limitations .....	146
Conclusions and implications.....	146
References – article four .....	148
<b>Chapter Four: Alumni; the transnational university and internship experience .....</b>	<b>152</b>
Background of the FUV’s WIL programme .....	155
Two journal articles.....	156
References - Chapter Four introduction .....	162
<b>Article Five – Graduate transitions: reflections from transnational campus alumni.....</b>	<b>163</b>
Introduction .....	164
Literature review .....	165
Method .....	168
Findings and Analysis .....	169
Discussion .....	176
Limitations .....	182
Conclusion.....	183
References – article five.....	184
<b>Article Six – Work integrated learning internships: transnational campus alumni perspectives .....</b>	<b>189</b>
Introduction .....	191
Literature review .....	192
Methodology .....	197



Findings and Analysis.....	198
Discussion and implications .....	203
Conclusion .....	207
References – article six .....	209
<b>Chapter Five: Human resource manager perceptions.....</b>	<b>216</b>
References – Chapter Five introduction .....	219
<b>Article Seven – Are foreign-university graduates work-ready? Views from human resource managers in Vietnam. ....</b>	<b>220</b>
Introduction.....	221
Literature review.....	223
Methodology.....	231
Findings .....	232
Discussion.....	236
Conclusions.....	250
References – article seven.....	252
<b>Chapter Six: Discussion, implications and conclusions.....</b>	<b>261</b>
Cross-stakeholder summary.....	262
Discussion.....	269
Support.....	271
Implications .....	280
<i>Boundary spanning to enrich the WIL experience</i> .....	281
<i>Wider collaboration to enrich the university experience</i> .....	283
<i>Expanded transition-to-work support initiatives</i> .....	284
Collaborative Model .....	285
Limitations of findings .....	290
Conclusions and future research.....	292
References – Chapter Six.....	295
<i>APPENDIX ONE Coding example .....</i>	<i>300</i>
<i>APPENDIX TWO Ethics approval 1000333.....</i>	<i>301</i>
<i>APPENDIX THREE Ethics Approval: 5201300476 .....</i>	<i>302</i>
<i>APPENDIX FOUR Ethics Approval: 5201300686 .....</i>	<i>304</i>
<i>APPENDIX FIVE Memo example.....</i>	<i>306</i>
<i>APPENDIX SIX Research journal entry example.....</i>	<i>307</i>
<i>APPENDIX SEVEN See also link example.....</i>	<i>308</i>
<i>APPENDIX EIGHT Interview guide: Alumni .....</i>	<i>309</i>
<i>APPENDIX NINE Interview guide: Human resource managers .....</i>	<i>311</i>
<i>APPENDIX TEN Table of key recommendations .....</i>	<i>312</i>
<i>APPENDIX ELEVEN Summary of proposals for future research .....</i>	<i>313</i>



## List of figures

This list includes figures in the introductory chapters, conclusion, and appendices.

Figure 1.1 TNE, WIL and employability.....	9
Figure 1.2 TNE. Adapted from Ziguras, 2007, (p. 4).....	10
Figure 1.3 Research framework. Adapted from Crotty, (1998).....	23
Figure 1.4 Stakeholder concept framework.....	37
Figure 1.5 WIL stakeholders (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 11).....	40
Figure 6.1 Support framework.....	265
Figure 6.2 Stakeholder support strength.....	271
Figure 6.3 Stakeholder support flows.....	272
Figure 6.4 Support flows between work supervisors and interns.....	273
Figure 6.5 Alumni support.....	275
Figure 6.6 Ambivalent perceived support from human resource managers.....	277
Figure 6.7 Involve work supervisor.....	279
Figure 6.8 Three levels of support activities and benefits.....	280
Figure 6.9 Boundary spanning roles.....	281
Figure 6.10 Wider collaboration network.....	283
Figure 6.11 Expanded transition-to-work support activities.....	284
Figure 6.12 Model for collaborative transnational WIL.....	288
Appendix One Figure 1. Coding with annotation.....	300
Appendix One Figure 2. Coding with linked memo.....	300
Appendix Five Figure 1. Memo sample from Memo folder.....	306
Appendix Six Figure 1. Nvivo research journal entry.....	307
Appendix Seven Figure 1. Nvivo see also link sample.....	308

Figures found in Chapter Three and in Chapter Five articles are listed below.

Chapter 3, Article 4	Figure 1 WIL Stakeholders, Vietnam	135
Chapter 5, Article 7	Figure 1 Perceptions of a work-ready graduate	240
Chapter 5, Article 7	Figure 2 Shaping skills	241
Chapter 5, Article 7	Figure 3 Shaping a growth mindset	248
Chapter 5, Article 7	Figure 4 Shaping a fixed mindset	248

## List of tables

This list includes tables in the introductory chapters, conclusion, and appendices.

Table 1.1	Higher education delivery to international students	13
Table 1.2	Offshore campuses	14
Table 1.3	Sample details	30
Table 1.4	Chapter summary	48
Table 3.1	Work supervisor sample details	115
Table 4.1	Alumni sample details	160
Table 4.2	Internship details for non-WIL participants	161
Table 5.1	Human resource manager sample details	219
Table 6.1	Summary of stakeholder perception findings	262
Appendix 10	Table of key recommendations	312
Appendix 11	Summary of proposals for future research	313

Tables found in Chapter Articles are listed below.

Chapter 2, Article 1	Table 1 Legal environment for internships in four TNE offshore locations	80
Chapter 3, Article 3	Table 1 Question item topics with highest volume of selectively-coded references	122
Chapter 3, Article 4	Table 1 Research dimensions and corresponding theme details	139
Chapter 4, Article 5	Table 1 Perceived benefits of FUV compared to local universities	170
	Table 2 Perceived drawbacks of FUV compared to local universities	171
	Table 3 Suggested improvements	174
	Table 4 Emergent evidence of incompleteness across transition stages	177
Chapter 4, Article 6	Table 1 Emergence of research dimensions	199
	Table 2 Factors in decision to do WIL internship	200
	Table 3 Factors in decision not to do WIL internship	200
	Table 4 Goals of internship	201
	Table 5 Value of internship	202
Chapter 5, Article 7	Table 1 Categories linked to work-readiness	233



## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the value of work integrated learning (WIL) in a transnational education environment (TNE) in Vietnam through an in-depth investigation of stakeholder perspectives. Research focused on transnational education is growing, along with research on work integrated learning, however there is little published research that investigates the value that universities with transnational campuses provide by delivering WIL programmes offshore. WIL programmes and building collaborative relationships with WIL industry partners is resource-intensive, even in domestic university environments. The challenge of cultivating and maintaining mutually-beneficial relationships with industry, and understanding the external learning context in order to plan and maintain successful locally-relevant WIL learning experiences is magnified in TNE environments that differ in sociocultural, educational, legal and industry contexts from the university's home country.

This research uses a constructionist grounded theory methodology that aimed to discover fundamental insights that contribute to effective WIL processes in Vietnam. Although university internships are commonplace in that country, there is a systemic lack of connection between education and industry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 48 participants from three external stakeholder groups of an Australian university that delivers undergraduate business degrees in Vietnam: alumni, work supervisors of interns, and human resource managers.

Alumni perceived internships as transformative learning experiences valuable to transition from TNE study to local working environments. Intern work supervisors reported that communication with academics demonstrated the university's care and professionalism, and were positive about collaborating to improve intern learning. Human resource managers perceived graduate attitudes and mindset as crucial to graduate work-readiness and stated that practical exposure was a crucial skill-shaping factor but expressed ambivalence about the work-readiness of some foreign and TNE graduates despite their skill levels.



Results are limited in scope to Vietnam, but a proposed conceptual framework based on stakeholder theory indicates that institutional support for WIL generates locally-relevant student learning outcomes, mutually-beneficial collaborative relationships between frontline academic and industry staff, and wider institutional benefits that are particularly valuable in the TNE environment.

## **Terms & abbreviations**

### *Terms*

**Home campus:** the home country location of a TNE provider (also onshore campus)

**Host campus:** a foreign location of a TNE provider (also offshore or international branch campus)

**International education:** education provided to students who travel to study in another country (onshore students) or at a transnational campus (offshore students)

**Internship:** loosely-defined term for a work experience that is associated with education but is not necessarily part of an accredited course

**Onshore/offshore students:** see International education

**Transnational education (TNE):** education qualifications delivered by an institution in one country to students residing in another country

**Transnational education provider:** an institution delivering educational qualifications to students in another country

**Work integrated learning: (WIL)** accredited course offering that embeds authentic work elements such as internships and industry projects



## ***Abbreviations***

ACEN Australia Collaborative Education Network

AEI Australian Education International

AIESEC – formerly the acronym for the *Association des Étudiants en Sciences Économique et Commerciales*; now used as the organisation’s name.

ASEAN Association of South East Asian Nations

AVCC Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee

C-BERT Cross-Border Education Research Team

**FUV Foreign University in Vietnam\***

IEAA International Education Association of Australia

MoET Ministry of Education and Training (Vietnam)

OBHE Observatory on Borderless Higher Education

TNE Transnational education

WACE World Association for Cooperative Education

WIL Work integrated learning

\* In 2016, Vietnam’s first private non-profit university, Fulbright University Vietnam, was launched in Ho Chi Minh City. The foreign university in Vietnam (FUV) referred to in this thesis is not Fulbright University; its acronym was assigned from the start of the research project in 2013. The acronym was used in publications included in this thesis that have been published or submitted prior to 2016. For consistency, I have continued to use FUV throughout the thesis.





## **Chapter One: Introduction – Work integrated learning in a transnational higher education environment – Vietnam**

### *Introduction and aims*

This thesis addresses the intersection of two phenomena of global higher education: transnational education (TNE) and work integrated learning (WIL). McBurnie and Ziguras (2006) applied the term TNE to situations where an educational institution in one country delivers programmes and awards degrees to students in another country. Typically an institution based in a developed, Western country delivers to students located in a less-developed, emerging country (often in the Asia Pacific region), with growing potential for expansion to other developing economies. WIL is not simply work experience, or on-the-job training; Patrick et al. (2008) explained that WIL encompasses “a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum” (p. iv). WIL initiatives enable better higher education outcomes for graduates and provide prospective employers with recruits better oriented to employment (Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (AWPA), 2013; Cooper, Orrell, & Bowden, 2010; Universities Australia, 2015a). Internships and placement arrangements are often associated with WIL, but WIL also applies to other activities where industry involvement is a major component of the curriculum: industry simulations, projects, guest speakers, industry-sponsored competitions, events, fairs, mentoring, and study tours (Lawson, Fallshaw, Papadopoulos, Taylor, & Zanko, 2011).

Vietnam is the TNE market of focus in this study. The research aims for insight into the perceptions of three key WIL stakeholder groups of an Australian university that delivers business degrees in Vietnam (which is referred to throughout the thesis as “the FUV”).

Higher education is a critical social, economic and political area for any government. Economic policies of modern nations place an educated population at the base of a productive and prosperous economic society (Hesketh, 2000), driving modern higher education institutions to demonstrate how they equip graduates with skills that will make them work-ready. Individual citizens also invest heavily in education to fulfil aspirations for better futures. In return for investment in a foreign degree, students and their families expect better career outcomes that will anchor stable family and personal lives. Teichler (2002) proposed that the important responsibility higher education institutions assume in preparing students for their post-graduation futures is a valid concern for entire nations, not just graduates and employers, as those graduates enter the workforce and wider society. WIL, with its mandate to integrate practical, industry-relevant activities and actual work experiences into the curriculum, is being adopted into Australian university curricula (Ferns, Smith & Russell, 2014; Patrick et al., 2008) as higher education strives to deliver “work-ready” graduates that meet employer and society expectations.

This is a PhD thesis by publication consisting of seven articles. This introductory chapter sets out the thesis background and structure. The significance and justification for the research are stated, then the background and research setting explained. A literature review of the three fundamental topics that underpin the research problem is provided. As the thesis progressed, a methodology of grounded theory that embodies an iterative process of data collection, analysis and concept formation was developed. Thus the initial research questions were broad in scope, developing in focus as key issues emerged. A central tenet of grounded theory is to develop concepts and theories that emerge from data rather than preconception, and therefore the concept framework follows the methodology section.

The chapter ends by describing the structure of each chapter and the situation of each article. Each article includes a literature review, with the most relevant aspects of the literature review for each article identified in Table 1.4 at the end of this chapter. I



endeavoured to introduce literature review elements into each article that would complement the overall thesis progression, and to avoid repetition. As each article is however a stand-alone publication, it was impossible to avoid the inclusion into each one of fundamental elements, such as definitions and orientations to the Vietnamese higher education and employability context.

### *Significance*

Both TNE and WIL have grown in influence in Western societies. Research into each of the separate topics of TNE and WIL has increased since 2000. The significance of this thesis research project is to conduct insightful, investigative research with key stakeholders of a fully-owned foreign site (in Vietnam) of an Australian university (the FUV) with particular focus on the perceptions of the value of work integrated learning initiatives.

Although the issues surrounding the cultural, social, educational, political and legal environment of TNE and the questions about the effectiveness and pedagogy of WIL have both attracted a growing body of research since 2000, the intersection of these two areas presents a largely-vacant field of research. Since many universities now rely heavily on transnational education provision as a strategy of expanding their markets to generate valuable revenue in tight funding environments as well as to increase their influence and profile in rising markets such as Asia, this is an important research gap to address. Higher education-exporting nations such as Australia must demonstrate their commitment to providing international student customers – onshore and offshore – with similar standards of quality as domestic students (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). More recently, government strategies aimed at enhancing international education have been extended to include education outcomes that are globally relevant and practical (Austrade, 2011).

Extant research on academic practice in the field of transnational education is predominantly quantitative, and gathered from the home nation's perspective (British

Council, 2014b). Given the rising significance of TNE in Australia, Hoare (2006) found the lack of research oriented to local contexts of TNE surprising. Therefore, the qualitative approach framed by perspectives of an Australian offshore transnational education provider's local stakeholders (alumni, intern work supervisors, and human resources managers) in a rising international education market, Vietnam, is both theoretically and practically significant. This inductive approach addresses a research gap regarding transnational education's relevance to local industry requirements in terms of work integrated learning internships. The sample location (Vietnam) and research design (qualitative, exploratory) limit generalisation of findings. Nevertheless, the study findings form a base of insight from which future studies of employability initiatives such as work integrated learning in transnational education can draw. They hold significance not only for transnational education providers, but also for Australian international education providers seeking to provide students with internship experiences relevant to their home country environments.

The literature review section in this chapter, combined with the concept framework developed throughout the research process, provide a base of published knowledge in which to situate this research gap.

### ***Research Justification***

Vietnam is an appropriate focus of inquiry within the greater context of transnational higher education because it is an emerging economy with a large young population, identified by Altbach and Knight (2007) as a key emerging TNE location. Ashwill (2010) advised American universities to shift their international student strategic focus from China to emerging nations such as Vietnam, whose education systems will take time to meet economic and societal needs.

Australia's future is linked with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, and since the end of the Vietnam War Australia has developed strong links with Vietnam through its substantial migrant population, as well as through its

increasing business presence in Vietnam. The Vietnamese government believes, as various organisations such as the World Bank (2008; 2012), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) (Aring, 2015), the Asian Development Bank (2012), and the British Council (2013) report that the Vietnamese rising generation needs to become better equipped to match the needs of industry employers on a national and global scale. Academic researchers concur (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; T. Tran, 2010; T. Tran, 2014a; Trung & Swierczek, 2009; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008; Vu & Phung, 2010).

The research justification is summarised as follows:

- (1) Transnational higher education, although a growing subset of “international” education, has had relatively little research attention compared to topics focusing on international students studying onshore at the home campus location.
- (2) Although transnational higher education and work integrated learning are both phenomena that are important to 21<sup>st</sup> century higher education, there is little or no published research examining the intersection of the two.
- (3) Most of the existing studies on transnational higher education have been quantitative and market-driven. There is little or no qualitative, exploratory research that investigates employability-related concerns of a range of stakeholders at a deeper, more insightful level. The constructionist-grounded theory used in this thesis presents a qualitative methodology that has not, to my knowledge, been used in the TNE environment to date; reasons for its potential value in addressing TNE stakeholder issues are explicated in the methodology section.
- (4) Little or no research has been published that addresses concerns of *local external* stakeholders in the TNE provider’s microenvironment: alumni, local work supervisors and the local human resource community. Equivalence and comparability research into curriculum, pedagogy, teaching and learning in transnational higher education has not extended to equivalence and comparability in equipping students with locally

relevant employability skills. There is no publication, to my knowledge, that surveys transnational students with regards to their practical exposure to local industry practice through work integrated learning or other means.

- (5) The little research that exists in TNE focuses on the educational benefits the established home institution can provide to the developing host nation. The thesis findings suggest that by developing stakeholder understanding and knowledge of local stakeholder practices (through research, and through WIL activities), the home institution itself benefits from greater two-way dialogue and knowledge sharing.
- (6) The research has an immediately practical application for transnational higher education providers. Although limited to Vietnam, the three samples of research subjects nonetheless yield insight into aspects of environmental differences between home and host countries that may influence perceptions of external stakeholders, and how these perceptions may, in turn, influence the effectiveness of transnational WIL implementation.

### ***Background***

This research is framed by the need for transnational universities to learn how they can best meet the needs of their student and industry stakeholders through WIL activities. While positivist approaches were considered, there is much to be discovered from a deeper exploration of the unknown, or unclearly defined. Therefore, the thesis took an inductive approach focused on qualitative interviews with alumni, intern work supervisors, and human resources managers that sought to gain insight into their perceptions about work integrated learning and how it applies in the transnational environment (in this case, in Vietnam). The research took an interpretivist perspective while employing grounded theory methodology to explore for useful concepts on which to base future action. This approach reflected my own view as a “pragmatic, experienced practitioner” in work integrated learning seeking to do

“utilization-focused evaluation research” (Patton, 2002, p. 78). I developed a general interest in investigating the usefulness of a degree obtained from a university outside one’s home country over a period of teaching international students in Australia and locally-based students in Singapore and Vietnam. Knowledge of how TNEs can provide locally relevant employability activities such as WIL in their undergraduate business programme is very much at the exploratory stage, and is greatly influenced by the experience and perspective of outsiders (the Australian institution in this case, as an outsider in the Vietnam context). Therefore, I determined that understanding insider perspectives of local stakeholders relevant to graduate employability would yield insight into how the TNE could best implement relevant WIL programmes. Details of this approach will be discussed in the methodology section.

#### *Description of the research setting*

When this PhD research commenced, I was a WIL academic supervisor working at an Australian university campus in Hanoi, Vietnam. WIL was offered as an elective unit within the Bachelor of Commerce and Bachelor of Accounting degrees delivered by the university. The unit was worth 24 credit points, made up of a Professional Development component that required students to undertake a semester-long (12 week) internship, as well as a Personal Development component requiring participation in six workshops held throughout the semester.

I wanted to explore how a business degree from an Australian university could be delivered in a culturally and locally-appropriate manner as well as being ultimately useful to its graduates’ career plans and work transitions. Work Integrated Learning presented as a challenge (due to the resource concerns noted previously, and intern working environments that differed from those encountered in Australia). Therefore, I identified the foreign university’s stakeholder perceptions in relation to appropriate employability skill training, in

particular work integrated learning activities that incorporate high involvement with local stakeholders outside the university itself, as a valuable area of investigation.

### ***Research problem***

My aim was to analyse three key stakeholder groups (intern work supervisors, alumni and human resource managers) in order to generate new insight into effective work integrated learning implementation in a foreign market environment. Initially, the research questions were intentionally broad in scope; in keeping with the grounded theory methodology, I wanted to maintain a focus on discovery rather than on preconception. Therefore, the research problem was conceptualised through two broad questions:

- (1) How can transnational education institutions in Vietnam meet key stakeholder expectations in terms of local work-readiness?
  
- (2) What do stakeholders perceive about the value of internships and work integrated learning?

As research progressed, research questions became more focused and are integrated into the introduction to each of the research based chapters (Chapter Three, work supervisor research; Chapter Four, alumni research; Chapter Five, human resource manager research).

### ***Literature review***

The impacts of transnational education on local stakeholders form the foundation of this thesis, with WIL being proposed as an integral element of meeting stakeholder requirements for graduates of undergraduate business degree programmes. Although stakeholders and researchers have found the meaning of employability to be elusive, higher education must deal with the reality that government, industry and community stakeholders will judge its perceived success in delivering graduate employability.

Figure 1.1 illustrates TNE as a supplier of desired outcomes, in this case “employability” when seen from a host market viewpoint. WIL is proposed as a valuable element of the TNE provider’s offering that, structured effectively within the programme, enhances delivery of employability outcomes. This literature review will outline background details of TNE, WIL and employability.

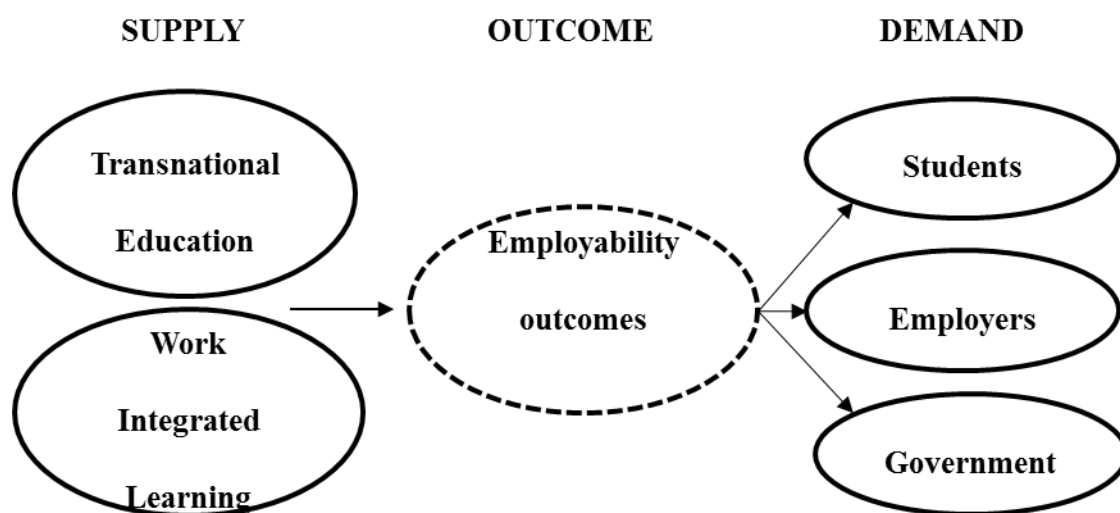


Figure 1.1 TNE, WIL and employability

*Transnational education (TNE) in context*

Transnational education is a subset of a university’s internationalisation strategy as illustrated by the Figure 1.2. The variant of transnational education that is the focus of this thesis is the offshore branch campus mode.

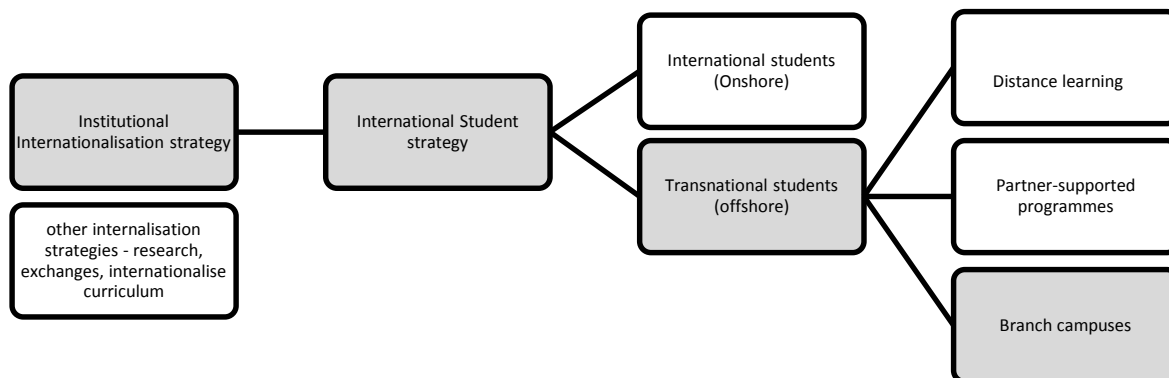


Figure 1.2 TNE. Adapted from Ziguras, 2007, (p. 4)

Harman (2005) offered a practical interpretation of what defines university internationalisation activities: international mobility of students, staff and researchers; incorporation of greater cross-cultural understanding and foreign languages into curricula; links between countries through online learning and other technology; research and curriculum development links; and other multinational collaborations. The “most dramatic and in many respects, important developments in the internationalisation of higher education have been the expansion in enrolments of fee-paying international students” (Harman, 2005, p. 121).

Although mobility for educational purposes is not new (J. Knight, 2004), enabled by the Global Agreements on Trade and Services (GATS), movement of students as well as institutions across borders has increased steadily since 2000 (Lane, Brown, & Pearcey, 2004; Waterval, Frambach, Driessen, & Scherpbier, 2014). Universities can enact an international student strategy by attracting international students to their home campuses, or can take their “products” offshore as represented in Figure 1.2 through three overall modes of TNE delivery: distance learning, partner-supported programmes (incorporating either joint delivery with a local partner institution, private organisation, or degree validation activities) or



operational branch campuses (AVCC, 2005); J. Knight, 2007; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). Healey (2015) pointed out that strict reliance on this commonly-adopted typology cannot capture the complexity of the modern TNE landscape and the resulting interrelated activities, particularly in terms of risk assessments. For this thesis, the investigation centred on stakeholders of an offshore campus mode of TNE delivery in Vietnam, as indicated by shading the “branch campuses” box in Figure 1.2; implications of the research are however also important for TNE providers delivering in partner-supported modes.

### **International student strategy context in Australia**

Australia is recognised as an early and aggressive mover in international education (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). International education is Australia’s third largest export sector after iron ore and coal, with a total export income of AUD19.4 billion; higher education generated AUD12.9 billion of the total figure (Australian Government, 2016a). Deloitte (2014) identified international education as one of Australia’s five key industries of the future along with agribusiness, gas, tourism, and wealth management. Demand for international education is driven by three factors: size of relevant populations; per-capita income; and availability of quality education domestically in host markets (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016, p. 3). The Deloitte forecast for international education services from 2015-2025 ranked Vietnam as a “high” potential market, third overall behind China and India, based on strong economic and student growth prospects, supportive government policy and regulations, and geographic proximity to Australia.

The growing recognition of the need to address international market stakeholder requisites was demonstrated by Austrade’s launch of their Future Unlimited branding initiative (Austrade, 2011). Aimed at both international and transnational students, this positioning highlighted how an investment in Australian education would deliver outcomes in terms of career and life opportunities, including global career options. The International

Education Australia Association has sponsored reports on key employability access issues faced by international students in Australia (Gribble, 2014), and ways to support international students in accessing work placements and internships (Gribble, 2015). Supported by Universities Australia (2015b), the Australian Government's (2016c) International Education Strategy included strategy items targeted towards improving employability of international students, including better WIL access that would advance the career opportunities implicit in the Future Unlimited brand promise.

### **The TNE context**

McBurnie and Ziguras (2006) proclaimed TNE as “controversy-rich but data poor” (p. 23). Measurement of TNE's size, revenues or economic impacts (Naidoo, 2009) is problematic, with little comparative data to accurately assess the scope of TNE. The limited available data is not directly comparable, since there is no standard system employed across nations and research providers to define, record and measure transnational student numbers (Lawton & Jensen, 2015). Many host nations do not collect or report TNE data, notable exceptions being Malaysia, Hong Kong and Mauritius (J. Knight, 2016; Phillips & Burgess, 2016). Austrade publishes periodic research snapshots of Australian Bureau of Statistics figures gathered from Australian universities that capture enrolments at offshore campuses, and of distance education students studying offshore (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1. Higher education delivery to international students

<b>Delivered to</b>	<b>Students</b>			<b>% Growth</b>	
	2012	2013	2014	2013	2014
International students in Australia	215,592	218,286	236,156	1.2%	8.2%
<i>Students at offshore campuses</i>	82,468	84,785	85,873	2.8%	1.3%
Distance education students *	25,552	25,331	25,531	-.9%	.8%
<i>Subtotal of all transnational students**</i>	108,020	110,116	111,404	1.9%	1.2%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>323,612</b>	<b>328,402</b>	<b>347,560</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>5.8%</b>

\*Includes online learning and correspondence students studying award courses

\*\*Includes around 500 Australian domestic students studying from another country

Source: Austrade 2015

In 2014, 67.7% of these offshore campus students enrolled in Bachelor degrees; 21.1% Masters; and less than 4% in diplomas, graduate diploma, and other higher education-accredited programmes. Management and Commerce was the most popular discipline category (58.6%), likely due to the relative ease and low cost of exporting these degrees combined with popular demand for them, followed by Engineering (8.1%); Society and Culture (7%); Information Technology (6.8%); and Health (6.1%). TNE students are slightly younger than international onshore students. A more significant difference that could influence the type of WIL activities relevant to offshore students is the difference in study mode: international students study primarily full-time, whereas 27.8% of TNE students study on a part-time basis (Austrade, 2015).

The Cross Border Education Research Team (C-BERT) affiliated with the State University of Albany in New York periodically updates global numbers of offshore campuses. As of June 2016, their database showed 232 offshore campuses in 76 importing countries operated by institutions from 32 exporting countries. Table 1.2 shows the five largest exporting and importing nations.

Table 1.2. Offshore campuses

<b>Largest exporters (# institutions)</b>	<b>Largest exporters (# offshore campuses)</b>	<b>Largest importers</b>
United States (52)	United States (82)	United Arab Emirates (32)
United Kingdom (29)	United Kingdom (38)	China (27)
Russia (13)	Russia (20)	Singapore (13)
France (7)	France (16)	Qatar (11)
<b>Australia (11)</b>	<b>Australia (15)</b>	Malaysia (9)

Source: C-BERT (2016).

### **Motivations for TNE**

The Australian Government (2012) white paper *Australia in the Asian Century* pronounced education to be a key pillar of enhanced relationships with Asia that would thereby build capability in both Australian and Asian societies, underscoring Australia’s espousal of education as an internationalisation strategy. The paper recognised the role of TNE in achieving these aims, and encouraged “every Australian university to have a presence in Asia and establish an exchange arrangement involving transferable credits with at least one major Asian university” (p. 174). Despite the challenges of quantifying the exact value of TNE, Deloitte’s (2016) report noted the potential of TNE to make greater contributions to onshore international student pipelines, not just through operating offshore campuses, but through a range of extended offshore activities that go beyond higher education (Australian schools, English language colleges, pathway programmes, for example). Theoretically, the links established offshore would maintain Australia as a first-choice destination for offshore students to continue their studies, enrol their children, or recommend to family and friends. From this perspective, resources devoted to offshore education activities are investments in attracting more students onshore, where the national economic dividend is far greater. Evidently, there is a strong external push for universities to expand their offshore operations.

Internally, universities have diverse motivations to engage in TNE. Profit is the prime motive for private education for-profit companies such as Laureate, the Apollo Group, and Navitas (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Universities may increase onshore international student recruitment to increase revenue, given the push in Australia for universities to “refashion themselves as self-supporting global corporations” (Marginson, 2002, p. 419). Other factors may however provide stronger motivations for offshore moves, such as building a global brand and supporting capacity-building in developing countries (Healey, 2015). Wilmoth (2004) discussed how the Vietnam campus of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), a rare example of 100% foreign ownership, aimed to contribute to the “sustainable economic, social and environmental development of Vietnam” (p. 186) while maintaining financial viability. Altbach and Knight (2007) reported that plans to develop research capacity were behind the University of New South Wales’ Singapore branch campus start-up, which consequently made a sudden exit in 2007, reportedly due to its lack of financial sustainability (Healey, 2015).

Offshore campuses represent sizable reputation and financial risks that seldom result in significant financial return (Healey, 2015). Citing enrolment figures, published by C-BERT, from 94 offshore campuses that showed a median enrolment of 500 students, despite a median age of ten years, Moodie (2015) presented revenue generation as an unlikely prime motivator for most universities. WIL represents a high-resource academic activity; therefore, financial and resource costs of its implementation are controlling factors in its TNE implementation (Naylor, Bhati, & Kidd, 2010; Kosmützky & Putty, 2016).

### **TNE controversies**

Not everyone has welcomed the uptake in universities’ international student marketing strategies; to some, “the idea of selling a public good such as higher education is seen as being undesirable and even offensive” (Harman 2005, p. 4). McBurnie and Ziguras (2006)

described perceptions of TNE that start as a natural “progression of the invisible hand of the market at work, efficiently allocating educational resources across borders” (p.1). This perception of a neoliberal orientation or agenda, where market principles rule higher education provision, partially drives perceptions that transnational higher education is a threat to quality education (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Kosmützky & Putty, 2016).

Debates churn around the tension between commercial, social and influence-leveraging motivations of different educational institutions and governments involved in transnational education. Marginson (2002) detailed the need for Australian international education providers to directly address this tension, and meet the challenge of providing quality educational outcomes by adopting a mindset of global mutuality coupled with greater cultural depth. Altbach (2000) claimed that TNE contributes little to the internationalisation of higher education, in that “Knowledge products are being sold across borders, but there is little mutual exchange of ideas, long-term scientific collaboration, exchange of students or faculty and the like” (p. 5). In contrast, Crighton and Nery (2010) proposed that TNE forms a critical aspect of university strategy and, moreover, has both positive and negative “transformative impacts on the culture/ecosystem” (p. 1). Bennell and Pearce (2003) also suggested that offshore campuses offer universities opportunities to build networks that support development of both teaching and research collaborations and partnerships, benefiting the wider institution.

TNE as an internationalisation strategy entails complex risk (Stafford & Taylor, 2016). Debowski (2008) identified five areas of corporate risk for transnational universities to consider in planning and management of a TNE strategy: “reputation management; control of teaching quality; the student experience; staffing issues; and the need for rigorous risk assessments” (p. 204) throughout the establishment and operation cycles of offshore campuses. Delivery in branch campuses may represent a higher-level investment risk than partnership (Crighton & Nery, 2010; Vinen, 2007), although this cannot be assumed to be due

to the complex funding arrangements that can exist between the home institutions, host governments, and private organisations involved (Healey, 2015). Adopting a lower-level entry method, such as programme articulation or partner-delivered franchising operation, constitutes the most efficient, least costly, and most flexible market approach (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006), but the home campus assumes business and reputational risk due to any loss of control over standards and quality. Typically, host countries lack the regulatory and enforcement mechanisms to maintain these standards; combined with different cultural and working environments, a partner model can expose institutions to higher risk than offshore campus models (Healey, 2015).

Philip Altbach (2010) expressed concern about what he termed the limited curriculum offered on international branch campuses. Ly, Vickers and Fernandez (2015) pointed out that universities' initial offshore expansions can fail to meet offshore student expectations by failing to align, or misaligning curriculum.

Published research investigating issues of TNE appears to be heavily weighted towards issues investigating from the home institution perspective (British Council, 2014a; Djerasimovic, 2014; Kosmützky & Putty, 2016; Pyvis, 2011). Issues that relate to standards and regulation are fairly well represented, possibly due to both the controversial nature of TNE as well as the high business risk associated with it (Eldridge & Cranston, 2009). Kosmützky and Putty (2016) conducted a study of research articles, conference papers, reports, theses and books published on TNE from 1990-2014. Their recommendations included the need for further research into branding and image management activities, and student career paths.

This thesis's scope does not extend to engagement in the wider debate around the desirability of TNE engagement in higher education. Nevertheless, it maintains that TNE institutions have a responsibility to provide locally-responsive WIL opportunities that will benefit students, their prospective employers, and ultimately their communities. Therefore,

TNE institutions must investigate and account for offshore stakeholder perspectives when planning WIL.

### *Work integrated learning*

With its emphasis on synergy and benefits for stakeholders, Gardner and Bartkus' (2014) interpretation articulates WIL's core essence that fits this thesis's framework:

“While each may differ with regard to the relative focus on work or education, they all share a fundamental belief that integrating a practical experience (such as work) with an educational experience (such as formal coursework) creates synergies that result in meaningful benefits for students and other stakeholders” (Gardner & Bartkus, 2014, p. 37).

The importance of links between industry and higher education underpins Australia's National Strategy for Work Integrated Learning in Higher Education (Universities Australia, 2015), but a lack of shared understanding on mutual benefits is noted by many (AWPA, 2013; Brown, 2010; Cooper & Orrell, 2016; Cooper et al., 2010). Mourshed, Patel and Suder (2014), in their report for McKinsey, urged providers to “target the capabilities that matter the most”, implying the need to seek insight into the host market's views on benefits sought from WIL, rather than rely on models based on the market context of the home institution.

Clubs, industry-affiliated societies, and student-based service groups represent opportunities for students to build work-related skills espoused within WIL programmes. These opportunities are recognised by most universities as well as by employers, as further reported and discussed in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis. Participation in these activities is however not recognised as WIL unless the activity is part of an integrated planned course concurrent with workshops, discussion, assessments, and reflection designed to support the activity (Orrell, 2011), and the ongoing interaction with the intern, possibly through workplace visits (Queensland University of Technology, 2016).



## **Resources and risks**

Although considered valuable and desirable by governments and by university policy makers, WIL is resource-intensive (Cooper et al., 2010; Patrick et al., 2008). Therefore its implementation in transnational education, where, as previously discussed, cost-effective operations may drive the TNE strategy, is problematic (Naylor et al., 2010; Welch, Vo-Tran, Pittayachawan, & Reynolds, 2012). WIL also introduces elements of risk to university learning implementations, for example, regarding compensation of interns and workplace health and safety (Cameron & Klopper, 2015). Many Australian universities have instituted processes to contain risks and guide procedures, such as agreements with organisations and insurance coverage extended to WIL participants (Queensland University of Technology, 2016). However, the viability of these processes cannot be assumed in offshore environments. In addition, adapting WIL activities to a TNE environment may pose challenges arising from legal and sociocultural factors that exist in the offshore location (Naylor et al., 2010). Currently, Vietnam does not have the significant international student population that other TNE markets such as Singapore and Malaysia do, and visa restrictions on international student visa holders that limit intern engagement do not apply. The articles comprising Chapter Two discuss these differential elements of WIL implementation in TNE environments. Article One presents the benefits, challenges, and potential wider value of WIL in TNE environments in general. Article Two explores the particular characteristics of educational and sociocultural factors in Vietnam that impact on WIL implementation.

### *Employability*

Employability is a multi-dimensional concept (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013; Sin, Tavares, & Amaral, 2016) that goes beyond the ability to find work in one's discipline (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2012). Little (2006) noted that although the notion of employability lacks standard global application, societies have embraced graduate "work-

readiness” as a means of ensuring economic competitiveness. Most current interpretations of employability extend beyond simply securing employment to being able to apply skills flexibly and choose occupations (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007; Harvey, 2000); orientation to continuous learning and employment career management (Bridgstock, 2009); and ability to perform in culturally diverse contexts (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). Hodges and Burchell (2003) advocated the importance of an orientation to continuous learning and improvement. Knight and Yorke (2002) developed the Understanding, Skills, Efficacy, Metacognition (USEM) model of employability based on the contribution of four factors – Understanding (subject understanding), Skills (both discipline and generic skills), Efficacy (self-efficacy beliefs, personal self-qualities), and M (metacognition) – to Employability. The elements of efficacy and metacognition in this model correspond to the crucial importance of attitude and related personal characteristics to employers (Hernández-March, Martín del Peso, & Leguey, 2009; Ren, Zhu, & Warner, 2011) as the common underlying factor that employers identified as a predictor of a successful hire (Cheong, Hill, Fernandez-Chung, & Leong, 2016).

### **Employability skills**

Hesketh (2000) concluded that skills perceived to denote employability were changing, and even converging, rendering a dependence on lists of employability skills unhelpful. But while employers’ needs for relevant work ready skills vary by discipline and by industry, research publications widely report areas of common concern (OECD, 2011; SouthWestBusiness, 2015) to be communication, problem-solving, analytical skills, and teamwork. The World Economic Forum (2016), supported by studies by Mourshed et al. (2014), forecast that unprecedented innovations will generate widespread demand for creative and critical thinking, and flexibility as occupation-related tasks undergo transformation. Skill mismatches in Europe and the Western nations are echoed by studies focusing on the ASEAN region (British Council, 2012; World Bank, 2013). In particular, ASEAN members such as Vietnam

urgently need to improve skills such as problem-solving, cross-cultural communication and language skills if they are to succeed in transitioning from production-based to services-based economies (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Jagannathan & Geronimo, 2013; World Bank, 2008).

The landmark Dearing report (1997) (see Harvey, 2000) stated that a central aim of education is to deliver employment-related skills. De La Harpe, Radloff and Wyber (2000) found concern among employers that undergraduate programmes did not equip graduates with necessary career skills, and posited this as a worldwide issue. Altbach, Gumport and Berdahl (2011) alluded to the complex challenges and pressures faced by higher education in meeting skill expectations that constantly expand in scope. In the Australian context, where international education is now its third largest export industry (Deloitte Access Economics, 2016), the Australian government is facing the challenges of a progressive and competitive international education environment by incorporating plans for a focus on employability outcomes for international students into its strategy for international education released in 2016 (Australian Government, 2016c).

The extent to which skills can be delivered solely within curricula may be limited if students are not afforded opportunities to develop and practice them in authentic workplace settings (Cranmer, 2006). Cranmer's findings indicated that both work experience and employer involvement in course design lifted graduate employment-related outcomes. WIL statements of purpose typically identify development of employability skills as a key aim (Knight & Yorke, 2004; Orrell, 2011), and development of reciprocal relationships with employers in order to improve course design as well as to facilitate the intern learning instrumental to achieving them (Jancauskas, Atchison, Murphy, & Rose, 1999; Lloyd et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2009). Speight, Lackovic and Cooker (2013) surveyed staff, employers and students from the home campus and students and staff of a Chinese offshore campus of a UK university about their perceptions of employability; they advocated a greater consensus of

views among all stakeholders in future integration of learning and employability. Although limited by its lack of Chinese employer respondents, the reported differences between campuses in staff and student orientations towards employability may indicate a need for adapted approaches in TNE contexts.

### ***Methodology***

Deciding on the methodology for the thesis project initially appeared to be a task requiring a step-by-step approach. First, investigate the available approaches, methods and frameworks. Second, formulate the purpose, aims and research boundaries of the project. Third, determine the approach and method, and carry out the project in accordance with that plan. On reaching the third step of this plan however, I discovered the need to take an iterative approach to the methodology.

I decided against a positivist epistemology early in my candidature. There was little research published about work integrated learning in transnational education in general, and in the context of Vietnam in particular. Deductive research, based on my preconceptions and assumptions built through my own experience with WIL in Vietnam, combined with a paucity of research literature around the key related issues would limit the exploratory value of the research, and risk reporting inauthentic and/or irrelevant findings. Grounded theory initially appeared to be the most useful approach, given the exploratory boundaries of my study delineated by its focus on developing theory through the data as it emerged from the research. Subsequently, however, I found grounded theory to be a complex web of methodological stances with varying degrees of adherence to the original tenets of grounded theory developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, and became less certain about its suitability for my thesis. While trying to make sense of the ambiguity around methodological adaptations ascribed to grounded theory, I continued to search for a method that would ideally fit my study. Patton (2002) added a chapter devoted to the variety of possibilities for qualitative inquiry to the

second edition of his book, *Conceptual Issues in Qualitative Inquiry*, in order to clarify the “major perspectives and traditions that inform the rich variety that is qualitative inquiry” (p. 76), but cautioned that “no consensus exists about how to classify the varieties of qualitative research” (p. 131). This added to my uncertainty around creating a framework. Yet I kept returning to the premise of grounded theory – interacting with data generated from interviews with transnational university stakeholders closely connected with work integrated learning in Vietnam in an iterative manner in order to build an authentic “analytic handle” (Charmaz, 2008, p. 401) that was missing from the current published knowledge. I referred to publications by PhD graduates in *The Grounded Theory Review* for insight into their experience of dealing with the tenets of grounded theory which do not clearly align with typical structures of PhD theses and candidature protocols that require evidence of existing theoretical frameworks and literature reviews. (Elliott & Higgins, 2012; Evans, 2013). Finally, I was guided by Bazeley’s (2013) advice to “be informed by methodology, but not a slave to it” (p. 10), as well as Crotty’s (1998) advice to “devise for ourselves a research process that serves our purposes best, one that helps us more than any other to answer our research question” (p. 216).

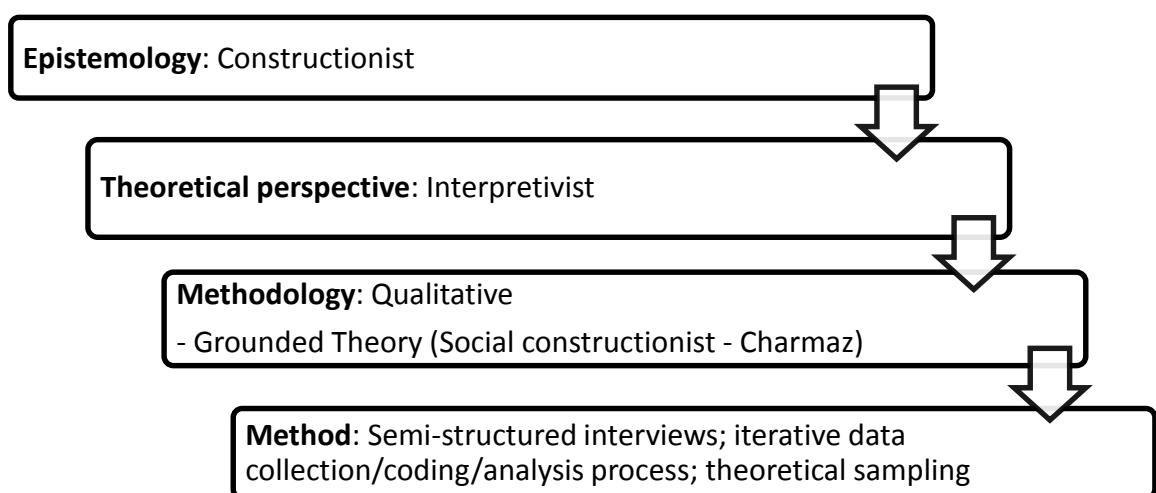


Figure 1.3 Research framework. Adapted from Crotty, (1998)

I adapted Crotty’s framework of qualitative research to lend a fluid but useful structure.

Crotty (1998) uses the term *constructionist* in his framework; some theorists refer to this epistemology as *constructivist*. Charmaz (2008) initially used *constructivist* to define her approach to grounded theory, but in later years re-defined it as *social constructionist*.

### **Epistemology: Constructionist**

Crotty defined epistemology as “how we know what we know” (1998, p. 8). Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) explained that the use of either inductive, deductive or a combination of these two logical ways of knowing determined the path of a research study. Their interpretation of a constructionist framework encompasses inductive logic and a qualitative methodology that incorporates the subjective views of participants while acknowledging the inseparability of those views from their context, which is, in turn, culture-bound. As Becker (1996) stated, “qualitative methods insist that we should not invent the viewpoint of the actor, and should only attribute to actors ideas about the world they actually hold, if we want to understand their actions, reasons, and motives” (p. 77). My research topic is situated in an environment that lacks published research (WIL and employability within a TNE context) and is culturally bound (within the higher education, industry and social context of Vietnam). Therefore, I set the study in an overall constructionist epistemology, a more useful anchor towards identification of an authentic analytic handle (Charmaz, 2008) than deductive frameworks whose hypotheses, or even specific research questions formulated before commencing data collection, might be irrelevant or inauthentic. The open-ended approach, set within a constructionist framework that authorises concept formation from participant data, therefore provided far better alignment with the research purpose and setting.

### **Theoretical perspective: Interpretivist**

An interpretive perspective fundamentally accepts that humans construct meaning as they engage with the world they are interpreting, and therefore an interpretive theoretical perspective inherently aligns with constructionist epidemiology, rather than an objectivist or

subjectivist epidemiology (Crotty 1998). Interpretivist perspectives accept that what people know is socially constructed, acknowledging the nature of the relationship between the researcher, the research participant and the phenomenon that is being researched. Crotty (1998) identifies three interpretive perspectives: hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism. Baker, Wuest and Stern (1992) claimed that grounded theory is entrenched in the interpretive approach of symbolic interactionism, which Patton (2002) defined as “a form of interpretivism that recognises that people create shared meanings through interactions, and those meanings become their reality” (p. 112). Charmaz, whose grounded theory methodology I align with in this thesis and describe in the next section, primarily builds from a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective.

### **Methodology: Qualitative - Grounded Theory (Charmaz Social constructionist)**

In an article that addressed a growing lack of trust in MBA programs, Podolny (2009) reported on the inadequate uptake of qualitative research methodology in business schools; he advised them to reconsider this position in both teaching and research as a matter of importance. Although my purpose does not necessarily involve lost trust, it does relate to building collaborative relationships based on trust with industry stakeholders in a transnational WIL environment. An applied research study, as defined by Patton (2002), this thesis aims not only to contribute to greater understanding of work integrated learning in transnational higher education environments through a description of the views of three stakeholder groups of a foreign university in Vietnam, but also to provide grounded positions from which effective processes for locally-relevant WIL can be researched and enacted. Glaser (2002) maintained that grounded theory seeks usable conceptions in data rather than accurate description. Creswell (2007) supported grounded theory as well-suited to a study of process, and O'Reilly, Paper and Marx (2012) maintained that grounded theory is appropriate when there is a lack of extant theory about the research question, and when the researcher is

vitaly involved in the research, which reflects my situation as a WIL academic in Vietnam, where concepts of WIL are undeveloped. Thus, the central focus on obtaining conceptual insight from data (in this case, interview data) that might illuminate usable processes for foreign universities to implement WIL in Vietnam supported grounded theory as the suitable methodology.

An active body of research and controversy has evolved around grounded theory itself since its articulation by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In fact, the two founders split over Glaser's adherence to the dictum of *no preconception* (Glaser, 2012), and Strauss' subsequent distancing of Glaser's contribution to grounded theory; this disagreeable division became a chapter in its history (Bazeley, 2013). Glaser proscribed pre-data collection literature review and discouraged transcription to ensure that developed theory was completely "grounded" in emergent data, free of researchers' preconceptions and the risk of inappropriate hypotheses. Strauss shifted to a more linear approach, maintaining that realities around researcher preconceptions, experience and exposure to related literature must be managed through techniques such as comparative thinking, rigorous coding and procedures that consciously strive for objectivity in order to capture vital emergent data without prejudice (Patton, 2002).

Charmaz (2014) wrote about the contested status of grounded theory, highlighting its primary usefulness as a form of analysis centred on key processes that unite grounded theorists. These key unitary processes include theoretical sampling, an iterative design based on constant comparative analysis, and a coding process aimed at constructing theory rather than description. Charmaz's social constructionist variant of grounded theory sees "data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants" (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012, p. 4) and acknowledges that "meanings of our data do not inhere entirely within or solely emerge from the data" (p. 4). Charmaz and Belgrave (2012) emphasised the flexibility grounded theory can afford to researchers to build theoretical frameworks based on situational authenticity. Social constructionist approaches recognise that both grounded theory



researchers and their participants bring their individual understanding based on experiences, theoretical proclivities and disciplinary understanding to the research situation (Charmaz, 2014). Social constructionism also mandates that researchers consider reflexivity (their own influence on knowledge construction throughout the entire research process) and that research findings, being based on relative situational conditions, cannot be fully objective (Charmaz 2008). Glaser (2002) strongly criticised the Charmaz variant of grounded theory, stating that the grounded theory process itself provides the requisite abstract distance from the data. However, as an actively involved practitioner in the very processes I was researching, I found the focus she brought to a conscious acknowledgement of the researcher's place in the research helpful to ensuring openness to the interview data. Charmaz (2014) also asserts the usefulness of transcribing interviews, then coding and recoding, in contrast to the dictum of Glaser (2012). As a novice qualitative researcher, I found the process of transcribing interviews as soon as possible after the interview a good way to engage more deeply with the data and generate questions and analytical notes and memos. To summarise, I discovered that the Charmaz variant of grounded theory was most suited to my thesis project because of its focus on classical grounded theory process principles as well as its attention to situational authenticity that demanded my reflexivity. These elements acknowledged my active involvement in the processes of focus as well as the participants' level of involvement, experience, and potential preconceptions.

### *Methods*

All grounded theory variations emphasise particular techniques for collection and analysis of data: constant comparative analysis; theoretical sampling until saturation; rounds of coding that seek emerging concepts, and ultimately, theory development; and intensive memo writing by the researcher throughout the process.

## **Constant comparative analysis**

Glaser and Strauss fashioned constant comparative analysis (CCA) as a defining element of grounded theory. Grounded theory researchers engage with the data as it is collected and analysed, making the collection and analysis process iterative, and findings tightly rooted in the data (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, p. 565). This iterative process leads to rounds of data collection and analysis that incorporate theoretical sampling of additional people, groups, activities, or documents in order to develop emergent themes, to assess the adequacy, relevance, and meaningfulness of themes, to refine ideas, and to identify conceptual boundaries (Charmaz, 2000; Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants between August 2013 and February 2014. Interviews were transcribed immediately following each interview. An iterative approach consistent with CCA was taken. First, as unplanned themes emerged in the transcription process, the semi-structured interview guide incorporated additional probes based on a progressively heightened awareness of possible issues. For example, awareness of a desire for enhanced alumni associations resulted in the topic being introduced into the interview conversation at relevant moments to gain increased insight about what alumni valued about these associations, and how they could be conceptualised to formulate improved WIL opportunities and experiences through alumni involvement. Second, the researcher identified additional participants to sample. As the researcher began to collect similar comments about the differences between internships offered by the FUV and local universities, it became apparent that interviewing local university alumni would provide valuable perspectives and possibly open up divergent insights. See Appendix One for an example of coding for alumni perceptions of differences between local and FUV internships.

Specific details of the interview and analysis methods for thesis articles for each sample group (work supervisors, alumni, and human resource managers) are provided in the corresponding chapters.

## **Sampling**

Patton (2002) created a typology of purposeful (also termed purposive) sampling methods as non-probability methods that have in common the aim of selecting participants on the basis of their potential contribution of insights relevant to a study's central purpose, rather than for the purpose of generalising to a wider population. In Patton's typology, theoretical sampling is justified by the ability of the selected sample to personify relevant theoretical constructs. Grounded theorists further define theoretical sampling as an ongoing sampling process where sample units are recruited throughout the data collection and analysis process according to their ability to contribute to the emerging theory as codes, concepts and patterns develop through the emerged data. This study's primary sampling method was purposeful, theoretical sampling where interviews continued to the point of theoretical saturation, where no new data that contributes to understanding of the phenomena and concept formulation occurs (Patton, 2002).

“Data collection starts most often in a concentration site, this is a unit where the area of interest goes on in concentration” (Glaser, 2001, p. 179). As a starting point, work supervisors of the FUV were identified as the sampling frame of interest for the research purpose, since the only possible members to qualify in Vietnam would be work supervisors from the FUV. As the iterative process of data collection and analysis developed, concepts arising from the relationships that developed between supervisors and their interns, the perceptions supervisors held about the interns, the FUV, and the internship itself led me to question whether human resource professionals at higher levels who did not share the close day-to-day exposure to interns would share these impressions. Theoretical sampling led to human resource managers and recruitment professionals being recruited to the study.

I initially considered interviewing students. I had worked closely with student interns for three years, reading their reflections, facilitating experience-sharing workshops and visiting them at their workplaces. I then realised that the perspectives of alumni who were

now post-internship graduates in the field had not yet been explored; however they were uniquely positioned to provide valuable insight through their experiences both as student interns and as graduate employees. After analysis of initial interviews revealed repeated expression of incidents related not only to the WIL internships, but also to other aspects of the university experience relevant to local employability, FUV alumni who had not done internships were also recruited. Finally, as alumni and work supervisor participants related convergent accounts of the experiences of interns from local Vietnamese universities, local university graduates who had done internships were added to the alumni sample for possible divergence. Sample details are outlined in Table 1.3. Specific demographics of each sample group are incorporated into the introductions to Chapter Three (Work supervisors), Four (Alumni) and Five (Human resource managers).

Table 1.3. Sample details

<b>Sample</b>	<b>Sample location</b>	<b>Recruitment source</b>	<b>Number</b>
Work supervisors	Ho Chi Minh City (14), Hanoi (7)	Academic adviser contacts	21
Alumni	Hanoi	Personal/LinkedIn/snowball	18
Human resource managers	Hanoi (8), Ho Chi Minh City (1)	Personal/LinkedIn	9

Ethics approval was obtained to collect intern work supervisor data from the FUV (see Appendix Two) as these supervisors were actively engaged in supervising the FUV's current intern students. I was advised to obtain ethics approval to collect data from alumni from Macquarie University, as alumni were no longer FUV students (see Appendix Three). A later amendment to interview human resource managers was approved by Macquarie University (see Appendix Four). Interviews continued to the point of theoretical saturation (Patton, 2002).

## Coding and analysis

Constant comparative analysis should start from the first interview in order to limit the impact of researcher preconceptions on the research (Glaser, 2012). Glaser defines coding as “conceptualizing data by constant comparison of incident with incident, and incident with concept” (1992, p. 38). As previously mentioned at the start of the methodology section, I transcribed the interviews myself, usually the evening of the interview (except for work supervisor interviews done in Ho Chi Minh City, see Chapter Three for details). In this way, I had notes and impressions taken during the interview that were reviewed during the transcribing and later with the finished transcription, which was subsequently uploaded to Nvivo 10.

Grounded theory coding proceeds through various steps, or rounds, with slight differences in terminology used to define the various stages. Strauss and Corbin’s three-stage process of open, axial and selective coding (1998) appears in many grounded theory publications. For example, Cresswell (2007) and Patton (2002) integrate this terminology into their discussion of coding. Similarly, Charmaz and Smith (2003) defined *open coding* as the initial, detailed line-by-line coding where the researcher forms descriptive impressions of the data. Charmaz termed the second stage *focused coding*, where links between categories are recognised and used to further build a conceptual picture. Researchers merge concepts into groups that form bases for theory conceptualisation. As the coding process is iterative, data (including previous coding and memos) are revisited, codes refined and reorganised, and sources of potential useful material identified (theoretical sampling) until theoretical saturation. I followed this overall process. For the articles that derived from the work supervisor interviews, I described coding as selective, using the Strauss and Corbin terminology as it matched the situation (conference and special edition topic focus) more clearly (see Chapter Three for details on coding). However, the process used to code the work

supervisor data as part of the overall thesis topic, and to arrive at theories of support and collaboration reported in the conclusion chapter, followed open and focused stages.

### **Memo writing**

Charmaz (2015) described memo writing as an “intermediate stage of writing that bridges coding data with drafting the theoretical analysis” (p. 405). Memo writing fractures data, taking it apart to evaluate and reconsider its meaning and relationship to other data, and examine for patterns in the data. Writing memos also helps researchers to avoid forcing data into existing theories (Charmaz, 2012). I found this type of free-style memo writing a useful way to maintain a reflexive posture, as distinct from shorter notes in annotation form which I used less frequently to record surface observations (Bazeley, 2013), mostly during open coding rounds. In memos, I recorded where data converged with or diverged from other data, but also speculated on reasons why this was so and on possible wider significance. Memo writing helped to construct associations that resulted in tentative categories that were questioned and examined more closely through queries and models. Appendix One displays coding from the category ‘differences between local university internships’ in two figures. Figure One shows an annotation noting that local university students do internships for the grade value rather than the work experience value. Figure Two displays an adjacent memo that incorporates this annotated observation into associated reflection about the lack of support for internships provided in local universities, a recurring theme in the data that built credibility for the proposed concept of institutional support as a crucial factor behind effective internships.

Most, if not all, grounded theorists incorporate memo writing into their process as a critical element in questioning what they find in the data, refining conceptions and generating theory while staying constantly rooted in and engaged with the data, as described above. According to Charmaz (2015), “distilling a code to essential properties simultaneously

condenses its description and allows the researcher to treat it analytically” (p. 405). The scope for memo writing to make research more analytical also contributes to its capacity to control for researcher bias, add meaningful participants to the sample group, develop ideas to share with research team members and investigate in future interviews with participants (Bazeley, 2013). Theoretical sampling and the formulation of potential concepts to explore in future interviews largely developed through this kind of associative memo writing.

## **Quality**

Bazeley (2013) described how qualitative researchers view the classic criteria of research quality, reliability and validity from an active, process-oriented approach. Therefore, many qualitative researchers actively seek triangulation and use member-checking to achieve credibility (Charmaz, 2015). Grounded theory, however, claims that its methodology precludes traditional barriers of bias and extraneous elements through its focus on findings that emerge strictly from the data (Glaser, 1998). While this perspective has been challenged, adherents maintain that by using constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling, as was done in this study and described in the preceding section outlining the use of constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling, research findings are consistently checked for quality throughout the research process (Lazenbatt & Elliott, 2005). The researcher seeks new participants who have different experiences that may diverge from those already analysed, acting as a check on previous findings as well as a possible source of new data. This makes member checking redundant, and possibly confounding, as respondent validation can be inaccurate (Lazenbatt & Elliott, 2005). Nonetheless, although “absolute claims to accuracy may not be necessary for research to be useful” (Bazeley, 2013 p.402), grounded theorists must establish credibility. Bazeley (2013) discusses how credibility is addressed by maintaining consistent, comprehensive documentation. I will briefly explain how two processes were employed throughout the data collection and analysis stages to address

credibility, transparency and applicability: memo writing; and maintaining an audit trail.

Memo writing brings the researcher's subjectivity to the surface and allows the researcher to acknowledge potential bias and to "correct problems such as overgeneralizations and leaving assertions unchecked" (Charmaz, 2015, p. 405). Therefore, memo writing in grounded theory imparts trustworthiness, evidence of transparency and credibility through its process of forcing the researcher to confront possible issues of subjectivity and stay grounded in the actual data. Appendix Five – Memo example illustrates a memo developed to maintain grounding in the data by questioning the statements made by alumni about local university internship experiences, and taking note to explore them in future interviews as well as to compare them with statements found in the work supervisor interviews.

Bazeley (2013) wrote that maintaining an "audit trail" (p. 402) throughout the research process that incorporates detailed memos and a clearly detailed evidence database is the most valuable way for qualitative researchers (including grounded theorists) to show evidence of quality of both process and findings. I used Nvivo 10/11 analytical software to establish and maintain a detailed research journal, a set of memos and annotations, and to create "see also" links that were used to document the analysis process and links to other source data and literature to establish applicability.

The previously-discussed Appendix One – coding example and Appendix Five – memo example form part of the audit trail of my research database. Two other examples of my audit trail are described below:

1. Appendix Six research journal entry example. This entry illustrates a stage in the development of the central theme of mutual support. At that stage, three potential benefits were postulated. The first was marked for future research, however provided an idea that formed the basis of the concept framework design (integration of support between stakeholders in a cyclical manner).



2. Appendix Seven see also link example. The coded paragraph shows the see also link titled Ambiguities in individual work readiness to a coded passage in a human resource manager's transcript. Note that is another see also link to Ambiguities in individual work readiness in the same transcript; several such linkages spanned across most of the human resource interview data, indicating ambiguity as a definitive concept of human resource managers' perceptions.

### **Methodological limitations**

The most obvious limitation was my inability, as a non-Vietnamese speaker, to use Vietnamese language document sources in literature reviews. However, a growing research body in English has accelerated recently More Vietnamese academics are publishing in English about concerns with higher education (Dao & Thorpe, 2015; D. T. Nguyen & Nguyen, 2015; M. Nguyen, 2011; N.C. Tran, 2006: T.T. Tran 2014a).. There have been several PhDs published by Vietnamese on related topics since I commenced research on this PhD in 2013, as well as by Western academics (Cam, 2015; Ly, Vickers & Fernandez, 2015; Nguyen, 2014; T.T. Tran, 2013).

I realise that language is always a contextual factor in interviews (Schober, Conrad & Fricker, 2004; van Nes, Abma, Jonsson, & Deeg, 2010). Only one participant was a native English speaker, as I am; all others spoke Vietnamese as their first language. However, in the context of the study's focus my lack of Vietnamese language facility did not compromise the research value of the interviews. All participants spoke English well and provided clear and richly described details. It could be argued that these respondents do not represent all the work supervisors and human resource managers in Vietnamese organisations, as many of them (especially older, more senior managers) may not speak English at all. However, qualitative research rarely claims representative qualities (Patton, 2002); its aim is to gather rich data from purposefully-selected respondents. In this case, alumni of foreign university

business degree programmes in Vietnam are valued for their English skills, and often choose to attend foreign universities to develop English skills that will help them with global careers.

Limitations of the findings relevant to the research context of each stakeholder group will be discussed in the relevant articles, and in terms of their overall generalizability beyond the research study context in the conclusion chapter.

### ***Conceptual framework***

Stakeholder theory provides the overarching perspective that ties the thesis concept framework together, illustrated in Figure 1.4. I did not conceptualise this framework from the start of the PhD research activity. The concept developed as the research progressed; it did not actually take shape until well into the analysis process when associations between positive stakeholder perceptions of the FUV and the various dimensions of perceived institutional support emerged. By that time, three of the research papers (Articles two, three and four) had been written and published.

On entry to the PhD programme, I had thought about how theories related to learning in workplaces, informal learning, experiential and reflective learning, cross-cultural issues and international business would prove valuable to my study. As the study process developed it emerged that work supervisors valued the support of the FUV, especially in the context of Vietnamese higher education where business degree internships appeared to be largely disconnected from institutional support. My review of literature indicated that the success of both WIL and TNE partnerships depend on mutual understanding to build relationships between stakeholders; between the home institution and its offshore stakeholders for TNE providers (Healey, 2014), and between university, student, and employer stakeholder groups (Bates, 2005; Patrick et al., 2008). Thus I conceptualised that theoretical elements related to the context of learning in the internship workplace (driven by work supervisors) and in the transnational university academic environment (as experienced by alumni) as well as the wider

business context of human resource managers were all linked to the stakeholder environment of higher education and work integrated learning in Vietnam. Each link will be discussed in the context of the stakeholder group linked to each of thesis Chapters Two to Five as presented in Figure 1.4.

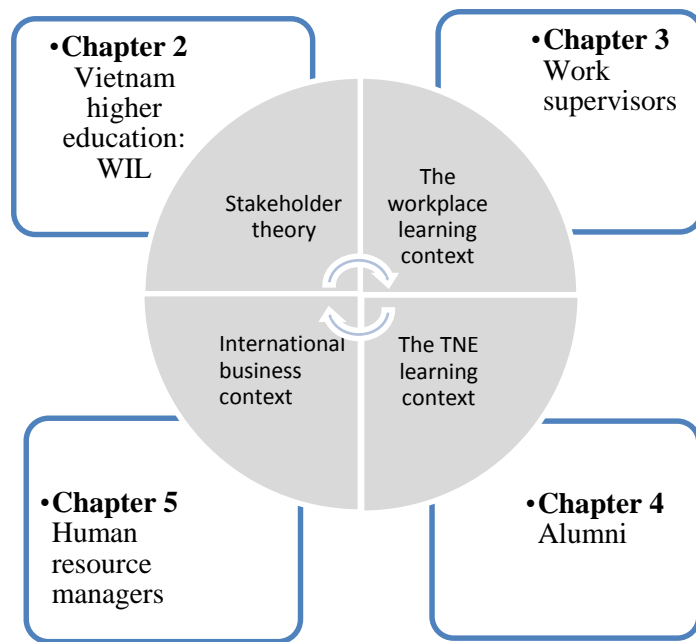


Figure 1.4 Stakeholder concept framework

## **The stakeholder approach – Chapter Two (Environmental context of WIL and higher education in Vietnam)**

Freeman (2001) expanded the concept of stakeholder beyond that of an entity expecting a return on a financial stake to that of “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives” (p. 46). This interpretation, and its aligned theory that organisations be managed with the concerns of such stakeholders in mind, has attracted scrutiny. Proponents of stakeholder theory have attempted to deal with wide-ranging criticisms of its effectiveness, role in financially responsible management, and role in society as well as misinterpretations of the theory’s intent and scope (Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Parmar, & De Colle, 2010).

Therefore, before outlining how the concept has been applied to higher education in general and identifying why stakeholder analysis elements of stakeholder theory will advance my thesis, I make it clear that stakeholder theory is not being proposed as a management style or strategy for the transnational institution. In business, stakeholder theory typically starts with a stakeholder analysis that assesses the strength, power and influence over business returns and objectives that each stakeholder group holds in order to prioritise strategies and actions towards each group according to each group’s potential value and influence to business objectives and returns (Gross & Godwin, 2005). For this thesis, stakeholder theory provided me with a useful lens through which to explore and understand the concerns, perceptions, nature of relationships and expected benefits around employability and work integrated learning held by three key external stakeholder groups of a TNE institution in Vietnam in order to develop locally-relevant WIL activities.

Amaral and Magalhães (2002) discussed the general danger of using concepts that emerge from organisational theory to address issues in higher education. Nonetheless, researchers such as Bryson (2004), Benneworth and Jongbloed (2010), Gross and Godwin (2005), and Kettunen (2015), have claimed that stakeholder analysis assists higher education

to frame “issues that are solvable in ways that are technically feasible, politically acceptable and that advance the common good” (Bryson, 2004, p. 21). Wilkins (2015) noted the importance of understanding transnational education project stakeholder needs through adequate analysis in transnational education projects. Deriving shared meaning between stakeholders through a stakeholder approach was fundamental to the success of one such project, a partnership value model developed by Bolton and Nie (2010) for an Australian university that partnered with a university in China, in a transnational context subject to constant and often unpredictable shifts.

Universities are responsible for maximising the learning that students derive from WIL activities, but largely rely on industry to develop learning in the workplace. As inexperienced interns in a host organisation, students are relatively powerless; although they have stakes in their learning outcomes and should be supported in taking ownership of their WIL experiences, in reality they lack organisational influence to drive learning programmes. Therefore, universities assume a duty of care to student stakeholders by developing employer relationships to collaborative levels that support optimal learning experiences. A significant body of WIL research alludes however to a lack of shared understanding between universities and industry about what WIL is and what it should achieve (AWPA, 2013; Little & Harvey, 2007; National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2015; Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). To develop effective collaborative links between the TNE institution and its local industry partners, an understanding of industry stakeholder perceptions about WIL is needed.

Aimed at improving the learning experience of WIL students, Patrick et al.’s (2008) seminal study on work integrated learning in Australia employed a stakeholder approach that defined stakeholders as “any individual or organisation that participates in or impacts on WIL (university staff, university students, employers and government)” (p. 11), as illustrated in Figure 1.5.

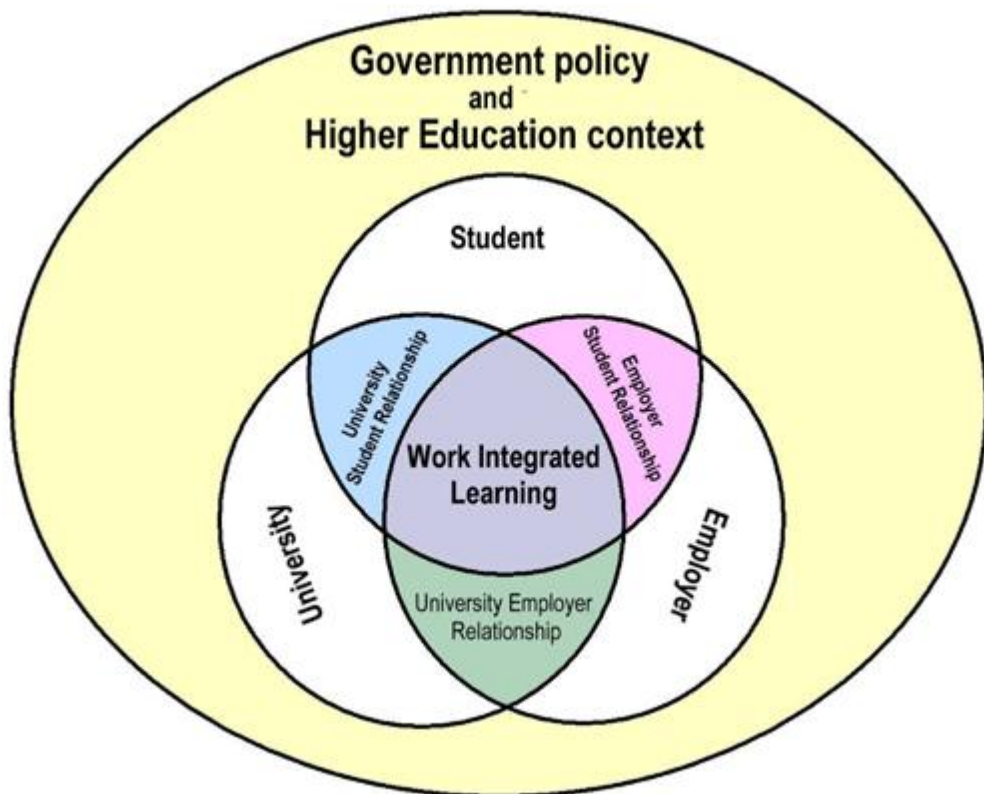


Figure 1.5 WIL stakeholders (Patrick et al., 2008, p. 11)

Adaptations of this model will be incorporated into various parts of the thesis. I focus on three sub-groups of external stakeholders: intern work supervisors, alumni, and human resource managers. The rationale for choosing each group as a stakeholder unit of analysis was outlined in the methodology section. The disconnection between higher education and industry stakeholder groups in Vietnam is a current issue for employability and work integrated learning, and provides the central focus of Article One, in Chapter Two. The value of work integrated learning to student and institutional stakeholders forms the basis of Article Two, in Chapter Two.

### **The workplace learning context – Chapter Three (Work Supervisors)**

Boud and Garrick (1999) highlighted that the concepts of “work” and “learning”, primarily separated by context in the past, are merging. As expressed by Dewey (1986, p. 5), “there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education”. Work-based learning provides the necessary context to action these processes. University students must experience the integration of theory and practice in authentic, work-based contexts in order to realise optimal benefits from their education (Cranmer, 2006; Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragnolini, 2004; Muenjohn, Montague, Zhang, & Hoare, 2013; Tynjälä, Välimaa, & Sarja, 2003).

The social context of the learning environment determines the extent of learning (Harland, 2003). Billett (2001a) agreed with the building evidence about the socially-influenced nature of workplace learning, claiming that “social situations, such as workplaces, are not just one-off sources of learning and knowing. Instead, they constitute environments in which knowing and learning are co-constructed through ongoing and reciprocal processes” (p. 433). Furthermore, Billett (2009) cautioned higher educators against viewing practice-based learning simply as a means to foster occupational skills. Lave and Wenger (1991) formulated a situated learning theory based on recognition of the fundamentally social elements of learning, claiming that these are embedded in workplace practices. As social and cultural and regulatory influences operate at various levels, from formal and explicit to subtle and implicit, the workplace as a learning opportunity in the transnational context constitutes unknown territory for TNE institutions.

The contextual value of authentic workplace learning stems from the benefits of applying formal knowledge gained through study to real practice, but possibly even more from the integrated influence of informal learning on a day to day basis (Eraut, 2004, 2007). As relationships with superiors and peers develop, increased self-confidence, self-esteem and efficacy (Choy, 2009) contribute to the transformative journey outlined by Mezirow (1991).

Mezirow's first step of the transformation (a disorienting dilemma), and all subsequent phases of cognitive and behavioural elements, are far more likely to occur in a work placement situation than in a university classroom environment. The transformative learning experience lies largely in recognising, interpreting and acting in novel and challenging circumstances through navigating new kinds of interpersonal relationships that are part of these situations. In doing so, the intern's self-concept starts to transform from student to member of a profession. Although universities cannot control circumstances their interns will encounter in the workplace, they need insight into the "physical material dimensions of workplace learning environments" (Trede, Sheehan, & McEwen, 2013, p. 94) that their interns will likely encounter in local workplaces, as well as awareness of the informal nature of learning that they will experience.

The intern work supervisor is a critical element in this learning context. Researchers concur on the high value of their feedback to interns (Ferns & Russell, 2014; Peach, Ruinard, & Webb, 2014; Subramaniam & Freudenberg, 2007; Knight, 2003), and of their ability to foster intern independence coupled with appropriate guidance as workplace educators (Bates, 2005; Kramer-Simpson, 2016; Smith, Ferns, & Russell, 2016). There is however a lack of extant research published from work supervisors' perspectives (Henschke, 2014; Richardson, Henschke, Kaider, & Jackling, 2009; Richardson, Jackling, Henschke, & Tempone, 2013; Trede, 2012; Vaughan, 2014), as well as insufficient clarity about the actual role of work supervisors (Bilsland, Nagy, & Smith, 2014; Rowe, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2012; J. Smith, & R. Smith, 2010; Winchester-Seeto, Rowe, & Mackaway, 2013; M. Smith et al., 2009; Tovey, 2001).

Given the essential role of the workplace supervisor in the work learning context, combined with the legacy of separation between industry and education as learning contexts that exists in Vietnam, foreign universities in Vietnam need to carefully negotiate collaborations with intern work supervisors. Therefore, the perceptions of work supervisors



form the focus of Chapter Three. Insight gained from this research aims to improve understanding of and engagement with work supervisors to co-create optimal learning contexts for interns.

#### **The transnational education learning context – Chapter Four (Alumni)**

Although elements of the workplace environment are instrumental in creating a learning context for interns as discussed in the learning context section, it is the university's responsibility to structure the WIL experience, monitor and communicate with the host organisation, and help prepare students so that they have a good learning experience. The TNE institution's role in enabling intern learning forms the next element of the conceptual framework.

The quality of academic and administrative processes significantly influence WIL outcomes (Smith & Worsfold, 2015). Provision of academic discipline support (Wolf & Yong, 2009) and academic developer support in designing appropriate WIL curricula that supports students in work-based learning contexts form essential bases for successful WIL outcomes (Abeysekera, 2006). Wolf (2010) advised that WIL developers must address structure and relevance from diverse perspectives, and consider how industry and discipline perspectives may differ in diverse cultural contexts such as offshore environments. Also critical are administrative processes that institute ongoing communication with host organisations, and maintain quality control through systematic monitoring processes that ensure that placements are safe and appropriate places for intern learning. Awareness of mutual benefits that derive from maintaining relationships with international alumni have recently been highlighted in Australian government reports on international education (Australian Government, 2016b, 2016c) and supported in related commentary (Dobson, 2015). Alumni working in Vietnam can potentially provide valuable intern mentoring support, as well as increase supply of placement organisations. Australian universities are encouraged

to do more to assist international students' participation in WIL through targeted employment preparation units and activities, and with placement assistance (Australian Government, 2016c; Gribble, 2015). Especially in Vietnam, where internships may be mandatory but have historically lacked university support (Cam, 2015; Tran, 2014b), academic assistance needs to be planned in accordance with the educational and cultural context.

The higher education institution's obligation is to help the intern make meaning out of the workplace experience (Billett, 2001b, 2002). WIL researchers advocate the importance of carefully planning and structuring academic tasks and activities (Trede et al., 2013), and providing targeted mentoring support to interns (Smith-Ruig, 2013). Planning a scaffolded approach assists students to complete WIL tasks that some may find unfamiliar and ambiguous, and therefore stressful (Ferns, Russell, & Smith, 2015; Naylor et al., 2010). Mezirow (1991) identified critical reflection as a major element of transformative learning, and theories of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Kolb, 1976) that underpin the value of WIL typically incorporate reflective opportunities as integral to meaningful intern learning (Smith & Worsfold, 2015). Engaging in meaningful reflection that will usefully complement the workplace learning experience can be challenging for students and therefore, incorporating guided reflective practice is commonly advocated (Herrington, Parker, & Boase-Jelinek, 2014). Supported reflection and goal setting through journal writing helped Vietnamese English students' perceptions of autonomy, and having greater control over their learning (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2014).

What motivates students to invest in a transnational degree has attracted recent research activity with one common finding of the belief that a foreign qualification will contribute to positive employment outcomes (Bailey & Ingimundardottir 2015; Chapman & Pyvis, 2005, 2006; Pyvis & Chapman, 2007; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011), but the link between perceived activities that transnational universities can provide to enhance positive employment outcomes is not evident. Therefore, the two articles in Chapter Four

focus on the perceptions held by alumni about the role of the Australian transnational university in supporting their transition to local employment through WIL activities, as well as other aspects of the transnational university experience.

### **The international business context – Chapter Five (Human resource managers)**

McBurnie and Ziguas (2006) situate TNE squarely in the international business context of offshoring, where due to technology and transportation not only students, but degree programmes and the institution itself can re-locate to foreign markets. Universities can enter these markets using a range of entry strategies depending on market conditions, costs, benefits and risks, and, in the eyes of the host nation's government, effectively become multinational corporations. The majority of TNE students are self-funded (Altbach & Knight, 2007); freed from governmental funding constraints, TNE providers therefore have more freedom to operate on market terms in the offshore environment than in their home country environment (Ziguas & McBurnie, 2014).

Yet, Wilkins and Huisman (2012) attributed several problems TNE institutions experience with offshore campuses to a general lack of business mindset. Mazzarol (1998) claimed that education in general, while operating under dynamic marketing-oriented environments both domestically and internationally, had a legacy of marketing neglect. Mazzarol advised universities with international student bases, or aspirations to acquire them, to cultivate a presence in the offshore target market as a means to establish a base for future onshore international student growth, while underscoring the need to develop their understanding of local stakeholders through more customer-oriented service cultures (Gronroos, 1990). From the WIL perspective, this service culture would impel TNE providers to understand industry expectations and needs, since WIL objectives to deliver beneficial learning through industry-based opportunities that will render graduates employable depend on productive, mutually-beneficial relationships with industry employers.

For industry insight, Fitch and Desai (2012) drew on their experience of delivering a public relations qualification in India to advise Australian transnational educators to consider demands from the social and industry context of the host country, and not to rely exclusively on what Australian employers or professional associations demand. Yorke (2010) maintains that “the possibility of standardisation evaporates” (p. 8), in terms of employability-related outcome evaluation, when programmes involve WIL. Following this line of logic, TNE providers must understand more about the nature of local organisations with whom their offshore students will seek employment after graduation, and develop collaborative partnerships wherein WIL activities can serve the learning needs of students as well as the recruitment and development needs of industry.

Therefore, the fourth component of the concept framework focuses on understanding the context of employer stakeholders. Because of the instrumental role of human resource managers in recruitment and training, and hence their importance as stakeholders of influence in the futures of TNE graduates, the need to understand their perceptions, as business practitioners in the context of Vietnam, underpins the qualitative research with human resource managers. Their perceptions of work-ready graduates, the role of the university in preparing graduates for work, and the partnership role of industry in graduate preparation cannot be assumed to follow patterns similar to the home country, even in a continuously globalising environment.

### ***Summary and structure of chapters and articles***

Chapter One introduced the thesis topic and rationale. Literature generally pertinent to the key issues around both transnational higher education and WIL and employability was discussed. The methodology of the thesis research was explained. A foundation of stakeholder theory, in conjunction with the context of workplace learning, learning in the transnational university, and international business principles was presented in the conceptual framework.

Chapters Two – Five incorporate three conference publications and four journal articles, numbered and referred to as Articles One – Seven. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction that situates its articles within the thesis topic and conceptual framework, and outlines publication details of each one. The table below outlines Chapters Two – Six of the thesis, including the chapter topic, titles, and key features of the Literature Review.

Articles Three and Four (Chapter Three, work supervisor research) were co-authored by Helga Nagy, further details are found in the introduction to Chapter Three.

All other articles were wholly and completely researched and written by me, under the guidance and final approval of my thesis supervisors and co-authors Dr. Leanne Carter and Professor Leigh Wood.

Table 1.4. Chapter summary

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Article title</i>	<i>Literature review focus</i>
Chapter Two – Discussion papers	Article 1 – Enhancing WIL's value in transnational higher education; addressing the challenges (Conference paper)	Benefits of and barriers to WIL from the TNE institution and offshore student perspective
	Article 2 – Building employability skills in Vietnamese business graduates; the case for Work Integrated Learning (Conference paper)	Stakeholder disconnection and its impact on employability in Vietnamese higher education
Chapter Three – Work Supervisor Research	Article 3 – Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: A qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam (Conference paper)	Importance of work supervisor relationships and collaboration
	Article 4 – Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors	Context of learning in the workplace; role of work supervisor
Chapter Four – Alumni Research	Article 5 – Graduate transitions: reflections from transnational alumni in Vietnam	Motivations, satisfaction of alumni with institutional support for transition to work
	Article 6 – Internships; alumni perspectives from a transnational campus in Vietnam	Value of WIL internships from graduate perspectives
Chapter Five – Human Resource research	Article 7 – Are foreign university graduates work-ready? Employer perspectives from Vietnam	Human resource, training and business concerns relevant to work-readiness of foreign university graduates
Chapter Six – Conclusion	Presents key concepts generated across stakeholder groups:	Limitations and proposals for future research

## ***References – Chapter One***

- Abeysekera, I. (2006). Issues relating to designing a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program in an undergraduate accounting degree program and its implications for the curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 7(1), 7-15.
- Asian Development Bank. (2012). Improving Transitions from School to University to Workplace. Manila: Asian Development Bank. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/29968/improving-transitions-school-university-workplace.pdf>.
- Altbach, P. (2000). The crisis in multinational higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 32(6), 28-31.
- Altbach, P. (2010). Why branch campuses may be unsustainable. *International Higher Education* (58). 2-3.
- Altbach, P. G., Gumport, P. J., & Berdahl, R. O. (2011). *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political, and economic challenges*. 3rd ed. Baltimore USA: JHU Press.
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542
- Amaral, A., & Magalhães, A. (2002). The Emergent Role of External Stakeholders in European Higher Education Governance. In A. Amaral, G. A. Jones, & B. Karseth (Eds.), *Governing Higher Education: National Perspectives on Institutional Governance* (pp. 1-21). Netherlands: Dordrecht: Springer.
- Aring, M. (2015). ASEAN Economic Community 2015: enhancing competitiveness and employability through skill development. *ILO Asia-Pacific working paper series*. Bangkok, Thailand: International Labour Organisation.
- Ashwill, M. (2010). Vietnam: A Rising Star on the US Higher Education Scene. *World Education News and Reviews*, July/August 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/event/PF/10aug/pffeature.htm>.
- Austrade. (2011). About Future Unlimited. Retrieved Feb 1, 2016, from <https://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Future-Unlimited>
- Austrade. (2015). Australian International Education (AIE2025) Consultation Workshops Report. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency. (2013). Work integrated learning: AWPAs scoping paper (pp. 1-34): Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.

- Australian Government. (2012). *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper*. Canberra: Australia in the Asian Century Implementation Task Force.
- Australian Government. (2016a). *Export income to Australia from international education activity in 2015: Research snapshot*. Canberra: Department of Education and Training.
- Australian Government. (2016b). *Global alumni engagement strategy 2016-2020*. Canberra Australia: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Australian Government. (2016c). *National Strategy for International Education 2025*. Canberra Australia: Department of Education and Training.
- AVCC. (2005). Australian Vice-Chancellors' revised Code of Good Practice in the provision of transnational education. Australia: Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee.
- Bailey, L., & Ingimundardottir, G. (2015). International employability: Stakeholder attitudes at an international university in Malaysia. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 6(1), 44-55.
- Baker, C., Wuest, J., & Stern, P. N. (1992). Method slurring: the grounded theory/phenomenology example. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 17(11), 1355-1360. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2648.1992.tb01859.x
- Bates, L. (2005). *Building a bridge between university and employment: Work-integrated learning*. Queensland: Queensland Parliamentary Library, Research Publications and Resources Section.
- Bazeley, P. (2013). *Qualitative data analysis*. UK: Sage Publications.
- Becker, H. S. (1996). The epistemology of qualitative research. *Ethnography and human development: Context and meaning in social inquiry*, 53-71. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Bennell, P., & Pearce, T. (2003). The internationalisation of higher education: exporting education to developing and transitional economies. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23(2), 215-232. doi: 10.1016/S0738-0593(02)00024-X
- Benneworth, P., & Jongbloed, B. W. (2010). Who matters to universities? A stakeholder perspective on humanities, arts and social sciences valorisation. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 567-588. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9265-2
- Billett, S. (2001a). Knowing in practice: Re-conceptualising vocational expertise. *Learning and instruction*, 11(6), 431-452.
- Billett, S. (2001b). Learning through work: workplace affordances and individual engagement. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 13(5), 209-214. doi: 10.1108/EUM0000000005548



- Billett, S. (2002). Toward a workplace pedagogy: Guidance, participation, and engagement. *Adult education quarterly*, 53(1), 27-43. doi: 10.1177/074174302237202
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843. doi: 10.1080/03075070802706561
- Bilsland, C., Nagy, H., & Smith, P. (2014). Planning the journey to best practice in developing employability skills: Transnational university internships in Vietnam. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(2), 145-157.
- Bolton, D., & Nie, R. (2010). Creating Value in Transnational Higher Education: The Role of Stakeholder Management. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 9(4), 701-714.
- Boud, D., & Garrick, J. (Eds.) (1999). *Understanding learning at work*. US: Taylor & Francis.
- Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report. Canberra: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(1), 31-44. doi: 10.1080/0729436080244437
- British Council. (2012). Lifelong Learning Strategies. Vietnam main page. <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>
- British Council. (2013). *The shape of things to come: The evolution of transnational education: data, definitions, opportunities and impacts analysis*. Manchester, UK.
- British Council. (2014a). Exploring the impacts of transnational education on host countries: a pilot study. *Going Global*. UK: British Council.
- British Council. (2014b). Impacts of transnational education on host countries: academic, cultural, economic and skills impacts and implications of programme and provider mobility. *Going Global*. UK: British Council.
- Brown, N. (2010). WIL[ing] to share: an institutional conversation to guide policy and practice in work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 507-518. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502219
- Bryson, J. M. (2004). What to do when Stakeholders matter. *Public Management Review*, 6(1), 21-53. doi: 10.1080/14719030410001675722

- C-BERT. (June 17 2016). Quick Facts. *Cross Border Education and Research Team*. Retrieved Sep 21 2016, from <http://www.globalhighered.org/>
- Cam, K. T. H. (2015). *Internationalising tourism education in Vietnam: an evaluation of the work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs*. (Doctor of Philosophy), RMIT University, Australia.
- Cameron, C., & Klopper, C. (2015). University lawyers: a study of legal risk, risk management and role in work integrated learning programmes. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 16(10), 253-266. doi: 10.1080/1360080X.2015.1034423
- Chapman, A., & Pyvis, D. (2005). Identity and social practice in higher education: student experiences of postgraduate courses delivered 'offshore' in Singapore and Hong Kong by an Australian university. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(1), 39-52. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2004.05.003>
- Chapman, A., & Pyvis, D. (2006). Quality, identity and practice in offshore university programmes: issues in the internationalization of Australian higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 11(2), 233-245. doi: 10.1080/13562510500527818
- Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory method. In J. Holstein & J. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of constructionist research* (pp. 397-412). New York: Guilford Press.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2015). Grounded Theory: Methodology and Theory Construction. In J. D. Wright, (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences (Second Edition)* (pp. 402-407). Oxford: Elsevier.
- Charmaz, K., & Belgrave, L. L. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein, & A. B. Marvasti (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*. (pp. 347-366). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2003). Grounded theory. In Smith, J. (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods*. (pp. 81-110). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cheong, K. C., Hill, C., Fernandez-Chung, R., & Leong, Y. C. (2016). Employing the 'unemployable': employer perceptions of Malaysian graduates. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2253-2270. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1034260
- Choy, S. (2009). Transformational learning in the workplace. *Journal of transformative education*, 7(1), 65-84.

- Cooper, L., & Orrell, J. (2016). University and Community Engagement: Towards a Partnership Based on Deliberate Reciprocity. In F. Trede & C. McEwen (Eds.), *Educating the Deliberate Professional: Preparing for future practices* (pp. 107-123). US: Springer International Publishing.
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. UK: Routledge.
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/03075070600572041
- Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C-J., & Cragolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/0729436042000206636
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative enquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks CA USA: Sage.
- Crighton, S., & Nery, C. (2010, October). *Between the devil and the deep blue sea*. Paper presented at the Australia International Education Conference, Sydney AU.
- Crossman, J. E., & Clarke, M. (2010). International experience and graduate employability: stakeholder perceptions on the connection. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 599-613. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9268-z
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. UK: Sage.
- Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 49(4), 277-289. doi: doi:10.1108/00400910710754435
- Dao, M. T. N., & Thorpe, A. (2015). What factors influence Vietnamese students' choice of university? *International journal of educational management*, 29(5), 666-681. doi: doi:10.1108/IJEM-08-2014-0110
- De La Harpe, B., Radloff, A., & Wyber, J. (2000). Quality and generic (professional) skills. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6(3), 231-243. doi:10.1080/13538320020005972
- Debowski, S. (2008). Risky business: Effective planning and management of transnational teaching. In L. Dunn & M. Wallace (Eds.), *Teaching in transnational higher education: Enhancing learning for offshore international students* (pp. 204-215).

- Deloitte. (2014). Positioning for prosperity? Catching the next wave *Building the lucky country #3 - business imperatives for a prosperous Australia* (Vol. 3, pp. 35-38). Australia.
- Deloitte Access Economics. (2016). Growth and Opportunity in Australian International Education: a report prepared for Austrade. Melbourne, Australia.
- Dewey, J. (1986). Experience and Education. *The Educational Forum*, 50(3), 241-252. doi: 10.1080/00131728609335764
- Djerasimovic, S. (2014). Examining the discourses of cross-cultural communication in transnational higher education: from imposition to transformation. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 40(3), 204-216.
- Dobson, G. (2015). Where there is a WIL there is a way (for alumni to make a difference). *Vista*, (Winter 2015), 10-12. Retrieved from International Education Association of Australia website:  
[http://issuu.com/ieaaustralia/docs/vista\\_winter\\_2015\\_final?e=6827210/14550576](http://issuu.com/ieaaustralia/docs/vista_winter_2015_final?e=6827210/14550576)
- Duoc, T. Q., Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Eldridge, K., & Cranston, N. (2009). Managing transnational education: does national culture really matter? *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 31(1), 67-79. doi: 10.1080/13600800802559286
- Elliott, N., & Higgins, A. (2012). Surviving grounded theory research method in an academic world: Proposal writing and theoretical frameworks. *The Grounded Theory Review*, 11(2), 1-12.
- Eraut, M. (2004). Transfer of Knowledge between Education and Work Settings. In A. Fuller, H. Rainbird & A. Munro (Eds.), *Workplace learning in context* (pp. 201-221). New York, NY. Routledge.
- Eraut, M. (2007). Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(4), 403-422. doi: 10.1080/03054980701425706
- Evans, G. L. (2013). A novice researcher's first walk through the maze of grounded theory. *Grounded Theory Review*, 12(1).
- Ferns, S., Russell, L., & Smith, C. (2015, August). *Learning for Life and Work in a Complex World*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference, HERDSA. Kyoto, Japan.
- Ferns, S., Smith, C., & Russell, L. (2014). The impact of work integrated learning on student work-readiness: Final report. Sydney, Australia: Australian Government, Office for Learning and Teaching.

- Finch, D. J., Hamilton, L. K., Baldwin, R., & Zehner, M. (2013). An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability. *Education + Training*, 55(7), 681-704. doi: doi:10.1108/ET-07-2012-0077
- Fitch, K., & Desai, R. (2012). Developing global practitioners. *The Journal of International Communication*, 18(1), 63-78. doi: 10.1080/13216597.2012.662169
- Freeman, R. E. (2001). A stakeholder theory of the modern corporation. *Perspectives in Business Ethics*, 3(144), 38-48.
- Freeman, R. E., Harrison, J. S., Wicks, A. C., Parmar, B. L., & De Colle, S. (2010). *Stakeholder theory: The state of the art*: Cambridge University Press.
- Gardner, P., Bartkus, K. (2014). What's in a name? A reference guide to work – education experiences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(1), 37-54.
- Glaser, B. (2012). No preconception: the dictum. *Grounded Theory Review*, 11(2), 1-6.
- Glaser, B. G. (2002). Conceptualization: On theory and theorizing using grounded theory. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 1(2), 23-38.
- Gribble, C. (2014). Employment, Work Placements & Work Integrated Learning of International Students in Australia. In International Education Research Network (Ed.), *Research Digest*. Australia: International Education Association of Australia
- Gribble, C. (2015). Enhancing the Employability of International Graduates: A Guide for Australian Education Providers. Melbourne Australia: International Education Association of Australia.
- Gronroos, C. (1990). Relationship approach to marketing in service contexts: The marketing and organizational behavior interface. *Journal of Business Research*, 20(1), 3-11.
- Gross, K., & Godwin, P. (2005). Education's many stakeholders. *University Business Magazine*. <https://www.universitybusiness.com/article/educations-many-stakeholders>
- Harland, T. (2003). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development and Problem-based Learning: Linking a theoretical concept with practice through action research. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8(2), 263-272. doi: 10.1080/1356251032000052483
- Harman, G. (2005). Internationalization of Australian higher education: A critical review of literature and research. *Internationalizing higher education* (pp. 119-140). Springer.
- Harvey, L. (2000). New realities: The relationship between higher education and employment. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 6(1), 3-17. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2000.9967007
- Healey, N. (2015). Towards a risk-based typology for transnational education. *Higher Education*, 69(1), 1-18. doi: 10.1007/s10734-014-9757-6

- Henschke, K. (2014, October). *Connecting the dots: Building WIL capacity within and across university boundaries*. Paper presented at the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) Work integrated Learning: Building Capacity, Gold Coast, Australia.
- Hernández-March, J., Martín del Peso, M., & Leguey, S. (2009). Graduates' Skills and Higher Education: The employers' perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 15(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/13583880802699978
- Herrington, J., Parker, J., & Boase-Jelinek, D. (2014). Connected authentic learning: Reflection and intentional learning. *Australian Journal of Education*, 0004944113517830.
- Hesketh, A. J. (2000). Recruiting an elite? Employers' perceptions of graduate education and training. *Journal of Education and Work*, 13(3), 245-271.
- Hoare, L. (2006). *So near and yet so far: an ethnographic evaluation of an Australian transnational education program*. (Doctor of Philosophy). University of Melbourne, Melbourne.
- Hodges, D., & Burchell, N. (2003). Business Graduate Competencies: Employer Views on importance & Performance. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 4(2), 16-22.
- Humphreys, G., & Wyatt, M. (2014). Helping Vietnamese university learners to become more autonomous. *ELT Journal: English Language Teaching Journal*, 68(1), 52-63.
- Jagannathan, S., & Geronimo, D. (2013). Skills for competitiveness, jobs, and employability in developing Asia-Pacific. In C. U. I. School (Ed.), *International Publications*. Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- Jancauskas, E., Atchison, M., Murphy, G., & Rose, P. (1999, July). Unleashing the potential of work-integrated learning through professionally trained academic and industry supervisors. Paper presented at the International Conference of Cooperative Education, Washington DC.
- Kettunen, J. (2015). Stakeholder relationships in higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 21(1), 56-65. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2014.997277
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5-31. doi: 10.1177/1028315303260832
- Knight, J. (2007). Cross-border higher education: Issues and implications for quality assurance and accreditation. In B. C. Sanyal & B. Tres (Eds.), *Higher Education in the*

- World 2007: Accreditation for Quality Assurance: What is at stake?* (pp 134-146). London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Knight, J. (2016). Transnational Education Remodeled: Toward a Common TNE Framework and Definitions. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(1), 34-47. doi: 10.1177/1028315315602927
- Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2004). *Learning, curriculum and employability in higher education*. UK: Psychology Press.
- Knight, P. T., & Yorke, M. (2002). Employability through the curriculum. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 8(4), 261-276. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2002.9967084
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212. doi: 10.2307/40214287
- Kolb, D. (1976). *Learning styles inventory*. Boston: Wiley.
- Kosmützky, A., & Putty, R. (2016). Transcending Borders and Traversing Boundaries: A Systematic Review of the Literature on Transnational, Offshore, Cross-Border, and Borderless Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 20(1), 8-33. doi: 10.1177/1028315315604719
- Kramer-Simpson, E. (2016). Moving From Student to Professional: Industry Mentors and Academic Internship Coordinators Supporting Intern Learning in the Workplace. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*. doi: 10.1177/00472816166646753
- Lane, J. E., Brown 11, M. C., & Pearcey, M.-A. (2004). Transnational campuses: Obstacles and opportunities for institutional research in the global education market. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2004(124), 49-62. doi: 10.1002/ir.131
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lawson, R., Fallshaw, E., Papadopoulos, T., Taylor, T., & Zanko, M. (2011). Professional learning in the business curriculum: engaging industry, academics and students. *Asian Social Science*, 7(4), 61.
- Lawton, W., & Jensen, S. (2015). An early-warning system for TNE: Understanding the future global network connectivity and service needs of UK higher education. A summary report. UK: Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.
- Lazenbatt, A., & Elliott, N. (2005). How to recognise a 'quality' grounded theory research study. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22(3), 48.
- Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). An array of qualitative data analysis tools: A call for data analysis triangulation. *School psychology quarterly*, 22(4), 557.

- Little, B. (2006). Employability and work-based learning. *Learning and Employability Series 1*. UK: Higher Education Academy.
- Little, B., & Harvey, L. (2007). UK Work Placements: A Choice Too Far? *Tertiary Education and Management*, 13(3), 227-245. doi: 10.1080/13583880701502174
- Lloyd, K., Clark, L., Hammersley, L., Baker, M., Rawlings-Sanaei, F., & D'ath, E. (2015). Unintended outcomes of university-community partnerships: Building organizational capacity with PACE International partners. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 16, 163-173.
- Ly, T. M. Chau, Vickers, M., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam. *Education + Training*, 57(1), 88-107. doi: 10.1108/ET-08-2013-0104
- Marginson, S. (2002). Nation-building universities in a global environment: The case of Australia. *Higher Education*, 43(3), 409-428.
- Mazzarol, T. (1998). Critical success factors for international education marketing. *International journal of educational management*, 12(4), 163-175.
- McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2006). *Transnational education: issues and trends in offshore higher education*: Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Moodie, G. (2015). Branching out-why universities open international campuses despite little reward. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/branching-out-why-universities-open-international-campuses-despite-little-reward-46129>
- Mourshed, M., Patel, J., & Suder, K. (2014). Education to employment: Getting Europe's youth into work. USA: McKinsey & Company.
- Muenjohn, N., Montague, A., Zhang, J., & Hoare, L. (2013). *Developing soft skills of leadership: The case of middle managers in international hotels in Asia*. Paper presented at the ABMC ACPEL 2013.
- Naidoo, V. (2009). Transnational Higher Education A Stock Take of Current Activity. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(3), 310-330.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). (2015, 27 July). Employers' views of work integrated learning. *Insight*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncver.edu.au/about/news-and-events/insight-newsletter/insight-issue-55/employers-views-of-work-integrated-learning>.
- Naylor, S., Bhati, A., & Kidd, P. (2010). Multiple campus operation-challenges and opportunities in implementing Work Integrated Learning (WIL). In Proceedings of the



- Australian Collaborative Education Network Conference (pp 342-351), Perth Australia.
- Nguyen, D. T., & Nguyen, T. T. M. (2015). Can knowledge be transferred from business schools to business organizations through in-service training students? SEM and fsQCA findings. *Journal of Business Research*, 68(6), 1332-1340. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2014.12.003>
- Nguyen, M. (2011). Vietnamese Students Employability Skills. *International Education Studies*, 4(4), p175. doi: doi:10.5539/ies.v4n4p175
- Nguyen, T. (2014). Selling western dreams: Australian transnational education in Vietnam and the formation of students' identities. (Doctoral dissertation), Monash, Melbourne Australia. Retrieved from <http://arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/926724>
- O'Reilly, K., Paper, D., & Marx, S. (2012). Demystifying Grounded Theory for Business Research. *Organizational Research Methods*, 15(2), 247-262. doi: 10.1177/1094428111434559
- OECD. (2011). The OECD Skills Strategy. Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Orrell, J. (2011). Good Practice Report: Work-integrated Learning. Sydney, Australia: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.
- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). *The WIL (Work Integrated Learning) report: a national scoping study* [Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report]. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peach, D., Ruinard, E., & Webb, F. (2014). Feedback on student performance in the workplace: The role of workplace supervisors. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Special Issue*, 15(3), 241-252.
- Pellegrino, J. W., & Hilton, M. L. (2012). *Education for life and work: Transferable Knowledge and Skills for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: National Research Council.
- Phillips, R., & Burgess, P. (2016). Australian Transnational Education and Onshore Student Flows (Vol. Research Digest 9). Melbourne AU: International Education Institute of Australia (IEAA).
- Podolny, J. M. (2009). The buck stops (and starts) at business school. *Harvard business review*, 87(6), 62-67.

- Pyvis, D. (2011). The need for context-sensitive measures of educational quality in transnational higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 16(6), 733-744. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2011.570436
- Pyvis, D., & Chapman, A. (2007). Why university students choose an international education: A case study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 235-246. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.07.008>
- Queensland University of Technology. (2016). Work Integrated Learning. Retrieved Sep 22 2016, 2016, from <http://www.careers.qut.edu.au/student/wil.jsp>
- Ren, S., Zhu, Y., & Warner, M. (2011). Human resources, higher education reform and employment opportunities for university graduates in the People's Republic of China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(16), 3429-3446. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2011.586871
- Richardson, J., Henschke, K., Kaider, F., & Jackling, B. (2009, July). *A framework for assessing work integrated learning*. Presented at the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia (HERDSA) annual conference: Darwin, Australia.
- Richardson, J., Jackling, B., Henschke, K., & Tempone, I. (2013). Developing a collaborative model of industry feedback for work placement of business students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 14(1), 28-43.
- Rowe, A., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2012). 'But I thought you were doing that'—Clarifying the role of the host supervisor in experience-based learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(2), 115-134.
- Schober, M. F., Conrad, F. G., & Fricker, S. S. (2004). Misunderstanding standardized language in research interviews. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 18(2), 169-188. doi: 10.1002/acp.955
- Sin, C., Tavares, O., & Amaral, A. (2016). Who is responsible for employability? Student perceptions and practices. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 22(1), 65-81. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2015.1134634
- Smith-Ruig, T. (2013). Exploring the links between mentoring and work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(4), 769-782. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2013.863837
- Smith, C., Ferns, S., & Russell, L. (2016). Designing work-integrated learning placements that improve student employability: Six facets of the curriculum that matter. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 17(2), 197-211.

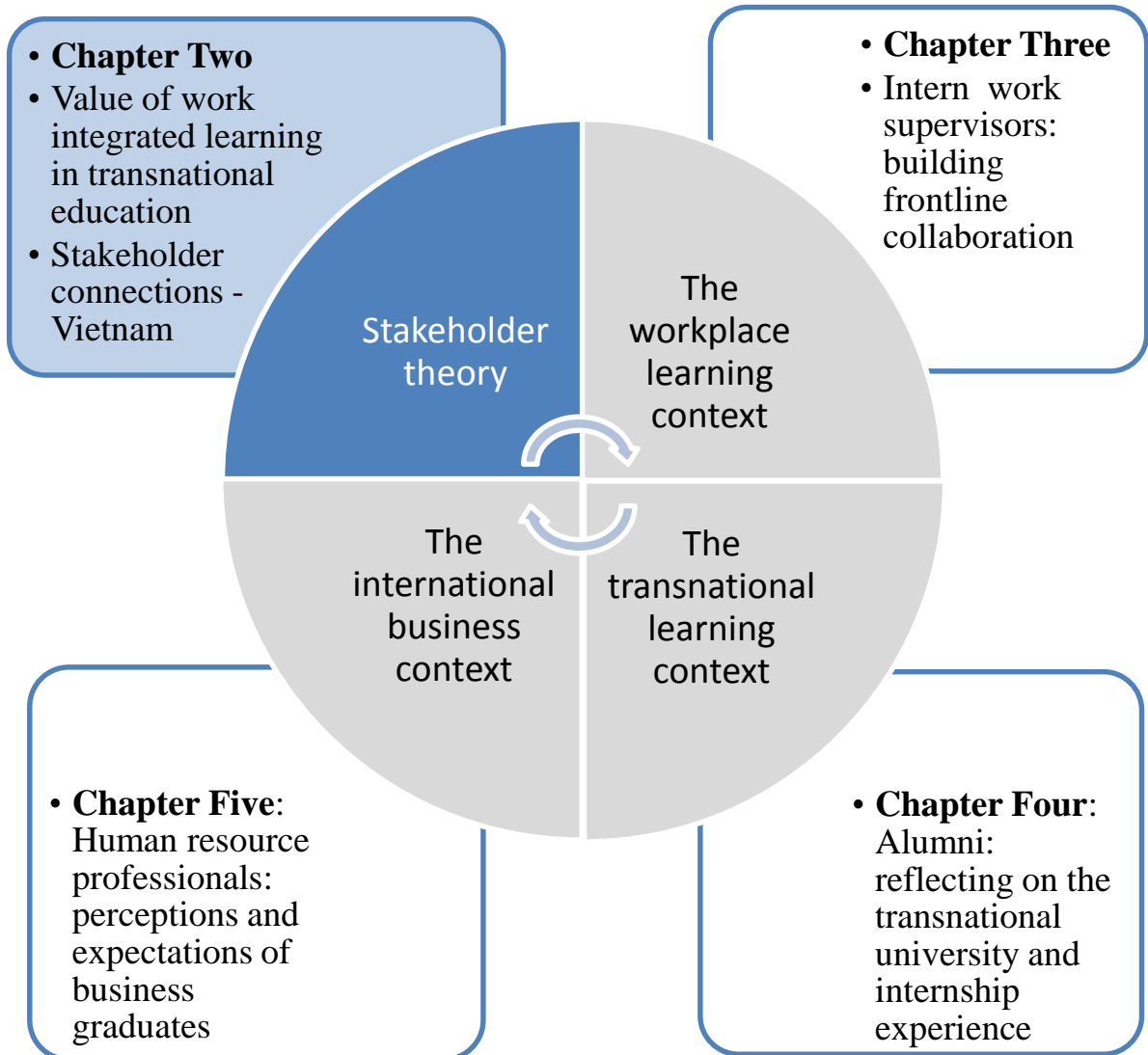
- Smith, C., & Worsfold, K. (2015). Unpacking the learning–work nexus: ‘priming’ as lever for high-quality learning outcomes in work-integrated learning curricula. *Studies in Higher Education, 40*(1), 22-42. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2013.806456
- Smith, J., & Smith, R. (2010). Work integrated learning: An industry partner's perspective. In *VET Research: Leading and responding in turbulent times*. Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference proceedings (pp.1-10). Gold Coast, Australia.
- Smith, M., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., McIlveen, P., Torjul, P., & Tyler, J. (2009). *Career development learning: maximising the contribution of work-integrated learning to the student experience* [Australian Learning & Teaching Council Final project report]. University of Wollongong, Careers Central, Academic Services Division.
- SouthWestBusiness. (2015, January 15). Soft skills CBI campaign welcomed by Gloucestershire business. Retrieved from <http://www.southwestbusiness.co.uk/news/15012015083127-soft-skills-cbi-campaign-welcomed-by-gloucestershire-business/>
- Speight, S., Lackovic, N., & Cooker, L. (2012). Stakeholder attitudes towards employability in a Sino-British university. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability, 3*(1). 26-40.
- Speight, S., Lackovic, N., & Cooker, L. (2013). The Contested Curriculum: Academic learning and employability in higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management, 19*(2), 112-126. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2012.756058
- Stafford, S., & Taylor, J. (2016). Transnational education as an internationalisation strategy: meeting the institutional management challenges. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 1*-12. doi: 10.1080/1360080X.2016.1202811
- Subramaniam, N., & Freudenberg, B. (2007). Preparing accounting students for success in the professional environment: enhancing self-efficacy through a work integrated learning program. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 8*(1), 77-92.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (1998). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Vol. 46). USA: Sage.
- Teichler, U. (2002). Graduate employment and work in Europe: diverse situations and common perceptions. *Tertiary Education and Management, 8*(3), 199-216. doi: 10.1023/A:1016357826723
- Tovey, J. (2001). Building Connections between Industry and University: Implementing an Internship Program at a Regional University. *Technical Communication Quarterly, 10*(2), 225-239. doi: 10.1207/s15427625tcq1002\_7

- Tran, N. C. (2006). *Universities as drivers of the urban economies in Asia: The case of Vietnam* (Vol. 3949). Washington, DC:World Bank.
- Tran, T. T. (2010). Enhancing graduate employability: challenges facing higher education. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne.
- Tran, T. T. (2013). *Enhancing Graduate Employability: the perspectives of Vietnamese university students and graduates*. (Doctor of Education), LaTrobe University, Melbourne Australia. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.9/316250>
- Tran, T. T. (2014a). Governance in higher education in Vietnam—a move towards decentralization and its practical problems. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 7(1), 71-82.
- Tran, T. T. (2014b). Is graduate employability the ‘whole-of-higher-education-issue’? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28 (3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Trede, F. (2012). Role of work-integrated learning in developing professionalism and professional identity. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(3), 159-167.
- Trede, F., Sheehan, D., & McEwen, Celjna. (2013). Investigating what constitutes an effective workplace learning environment: A scoping review of the role physical and material elements play in student learning. *www.ceiainc.org/journal*, 47(1), 94-105.
- Trung, T. Q., & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175
- Tynjälä, P., Välimaa, J., & Sarja, A. (2003). Pedagogical perspectives on the relationships between higher education and working life. *Higher Education*, 46(2), 147-166. doi: 10.1023/A:1024761820500
- Universities Australia. (2015a). National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education. Canberra: Universities Australia.
- Universities Australia. (2015b). Universities Australia response to the Draft National Strategy for International Education. Canberra: Universities Australia.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>

- van Nes, F., Abma, T., Jonsson, H., & Deeg, D. (2010). Language differences in qualitative research: is meaning lost in translation? *European Journal of Ageing*, 7(4), 313-316. doi: 10.1007/s10433-010-0168-y
- Vaughan, B. (2014, October). *Student-reported quality of supervision/mentoring in Work Integrated Learning*. Paper presented at the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) 2014 Annual Conference, Gold Coast, Australia.
- Vinen, D. G. (2007). *Sustainability of offshore business programs: the key to success in Vietnam*. (Doctor of Business Administration), Swinburne. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/77105>
- Vu, D. A., & Phung, N. X. (2010, June). *Adapting the CDIO Approach in Developing Learning Outcomes for Economics and Business Disciplines in Vietnam: A Case-Study of University of Economics and Business at Vietnam national University, Hanoi*. Paper presented at the 6th Annual CDIO Conference. Montreal, Canada.
- Waterval, D. G., Frambach, J. M., Driessen, E. W., & Scherpbier, A. J. (2014). Copy but Not Paste: A Literature Review of Crossborder Curriculum Partnerships. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 1-21. doi: 1028315314533608
- Welch, B., Vo-Tran, H., Pittayachawan, S., & Reynolds, S. (2012). Crossing borders: Evaluating a work integrated learning project involving Australian and Vietnamese students. *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*, 43(2), 120-134. doi: 10.1080/00048623.2012.10722265
- Wilkins, S. (2015). Ethical issues in transnational higher education: the case of international branch campuses. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-16. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1099624
- Wilkins, S., Balakrishnan, M. S., & Huisman, J. (2012). Student Choice in Higher Education: Motivations for Choosing to Study at an International Branch Campus. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(5), 413-433. doi: 10.1177/1028315311429002
- Wilkins, S., & Huisman, J. (2012). The international branch campus as transnational strategy in higher education. *Higher Education*, 64(5), 627-645. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9516-5
- Wilmoth, D. (2004). RMIT Vietnam and Vietnam's development: Risk and responsibility. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(2), 186-206.
- Winchester-Seeto, T., Rowe, A., & Mackaway, J. (2013). *The Role of Stakeholders in Work-Integrated Education: Comparing the Perceptions of Academics, Host Supervisors and Students*. In New Zealand Association for Cooperative Education 2013 Conference Proceedings, Auckland, New Zealand.

- Wolf, K. (2010). Bridging the distance: the use of blogs as reflective learning tools for placement students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 589-602. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502292
- Wolf, K., & Yong, K. H. (2009, December). *Industry ready graduates for a global job market—a reflection on transnational education*. Paper presented at the Curtin International Business Conference, Miri, Malaysia.
- World Bank. (2008). Vietnam Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2012). Vietnam - Second Higher Education Project. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2013). Skilling up Vietnam: Preparing the workforce for a modern market economy. Vietnam Development Report (Vol. 82940): Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Economic Forum. (2016). The Future of Jobs: Work, Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution *Global Challenge Insight Report*. Switzerland: World Economic Forum.
- Yorke, M. (2010). Employability: aligning the message, the medium and academic values. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*. 1(1), 2-12.
- Ziguras, C., & McBurnie, G. (2014). *Governing cross-border higher education*. New York: Routledge.

## Chapter Two: Work integrated learning in transnational education and Vietnam







## **Chapter Two: Work integrated learning in transnational education and Vietnam**

Stakeholder theory, proposed as the overarching theoretical approach that underpins this thesis, grounds this initial literature review chapter; in order to understand the demands and expectations of key external stakeholders, one must appreciate the external environments in which they function. Therefore, this chapter includes two articles that frame environments relevant to work integrated learning in transnational education environments in general (Article One), and specifically in Vietnam (Article Two).

Article One, “Enhancing WIL’s value in transnational higher education: addressing the challenges” was presented at the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) Research Symposium, June 2016 (Victoria, Canada) and accepted for inclusion in peer-reviewed proceedings. The paper identifies the challenges of WIL in transnational education environments but proposes that its value to students and to the wider institution justifies its implantation in transnational environments.

Citation:

Bilsland, C. (2016, June). Enhancing WIL’s value in transnational higher education: addressing the challenges. Paper presented at the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) Research Symposium, Victoria, Canada.

## **Article One – Enhancing WIL’s value in transnational higher education: addressing the challenges**

This paper confronts dilemmas that transnational universities encounter when introducing work integrated learning (WIL) to offshore campus locations. Even on domestic fronts, WIL presents challenges for universities: identifying what graduate attributes make graduates desirable to employers and the national interest, and creating programmes that deliver these effectively to a range of student and employer stakeholders in ever-constrained university resource environments demands considerable insight, planning and resource allocation. These problems are magnified in the transnational university context. While cost-effective operation is often a strategic priority of offshore campus locations, WIL is notoriously resource-intensive: operating cost-effectively in unfamiliar education, legal, sociocultural, and industry work environments to deliver quality outcomes that match local stakeholder expectations is enormously challenging. Although research into the two distinct areas of transnational education and WIL is increasing in tandem with the rising profile of each phenomenon, little research to date examines how universities deal with WIL in the transnational environment.

In addition, transnational universities face complex pressures at government and institutional levels both at home and abroad. Government-related issues include mandates for universities to deliver academic and employability outcomes that address both local and international student priorities. Institutionally-driven pressures include regulating curricular standards, equivalence and comparability, negotiating power relationships, sourcing sufficient numbers of quality host employers, and safeguarding WIL interns. However, despite these challenges, the paper argues that WIL offers benefits to transnational education (TNE) institutions that transcend better employability outcomes for students, and advocates further research initiatives to enhance the value of transnational WIL.

### ***Introduction***

Universities worldwide face pressure to equip graduates with skills and attributes that match industry and wider social and community needs. Therefore, moves to integrate work integrated learning – course offerings that embed authentic work elements such as internships and industry projects – are gaining strength. Running work integrated learning (WIL) is

resource-intensive (Universities Australia, 2015); therefore, research into WIL's ability to improve employability outcomes for key university stakeholders – students, employers, and wider society – is a growing area of interest. Concurrently, growth in transnational education (TNE) – where an educational institution in one country delivers programmes and awards degrees to students in another country (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006) – has sparked growing research into associated issues of quality and standards, general administration and management, equivalence and comparability, English language skills, teaching and learning, and student satisfaction. Surprisingly, given rising concerns over employability, the incorporation of relevant employability skills through WIL and other curricular approaches in international education is only starting to be addressed (British Council, 2015). Mellor, Jones and Woodford (2015) found that internships, or even experiences with activities clearly linked to employability, were rare in their interviews with transnational undergraduate alumni from a range of host countries. As outlined by the British Council (2014), as the transnational education (TNE) industry has grown, a research body has increased; this research is however mainly from the home institution viewpoint, rather than the host market viewpoint.

The significance of this discussion paper is not only to identify issues TNE providers face in delivering WIL in transnational locations, but moreover to:

- address the need to approach these issues from local offshore WIL stakeholder perspectives;
- propose opportunities for WIL to deliver benefits not only to students and industry partners, but to the wider university.

The terms transnational campus/offshore campus/ host campus will be used interchangeably to refer to an institution's delivery locations overseas. The terms home campus/domestic campus will refer to the location in the institution's home country. Orrell (2011) claimed that WIL needs full endorsement and active support from institutional leaders; this paper extends

this assertion to transnational locations. The paper discusses purported benefits of WIL, particularly as they relate to the transnational education environment. Australia is considered a leading, aggressive mover in the TNE trade (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). Therefore, the paper outlines aspects of the TNE environment fundamental to WIL implementation, and presents challenges as they relate to Australian universities operating offshore campuses. Finally, recommendations for future research to address how institutions can integrate WIL principles and value into the particular context of their offshore locations are presented.

### **Benefits of WIL**

Building student employability skills is widely perceived as the main benefit of WIL programmes (Fallows & Steven, 2000). The Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency (2013) concurred with Cranmer (2006) that these skills should be developed through authentic work situations, making it essential to incorporate elements of WIL into curricula (Billett, 2009; Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Other commonly-cited WIL benefits include applying academic knowledge to real work situations, learning new skills, evaluating career fit, developing career awareness and developing networking contacts and skills (Flinders University, 2015). Smith et al. (2009) championed WIL as a “transformative pedagogy which entails a wider range of personal development and experiential learning” (p. 15), thereby delivering student benefits that extend beyond skill acquisition.

There is not enough research that clearly measures WIL benefits (AWPA, 2013). Although Kramer and Usher (2011) found that students perceived benefits from summer jobs with WIL associations, they also found a hierarchy of benefits from other non-WIL workplace activities, and therefore concluded that institution-led WIL interventions may not be necessary.

However, based on literature reviewed in this paper, effective WIL implementation in TNE environments not only benefits students but goes “far beyond mere outreach activities to the very conduct of university research and teaching” (Flinders University, 2015).

Accordingly, Smith and Worsfold (2015) advised universities to ensure proper WIL support. Careful investment in offshore WIL resources appears justified not only to provide equivalent employability outcomes to a university's offshore students, but as an investment in the university's wider strategy.

### ***Benefits to off-shore students***

The National WIL Scoping paper (Patrick et al., 2008) and the International Education Advisory Council (2013) recommended encouraging and supporting international students in Australia to do WIL in order to gain the advantage of overseas workplace experience over local graduates in their home country. Leggott and Stapleford (2007) concluded that employability skill requirements were internationally consistent; therefore, employability interventions in the curriculum which are devised for students planning to work in one country are largely appropriate for students planning to work in another. However, Campbell (2010) questioned this stance, maintaining that “developing generic skills is a process influenced by the cultural, ideological, economic and political context in which it occurs” (p. 494) and hence, cautioned against assuming their relevance to other countries and cultures. Similarly, Australian universities operating offshore campuses must enable their offshore students to develop their learning in authentic local workplace contexts, not only to access locally-relevant learning affordances (Billett, 2009), but also to demonstrate to employers the value of their transnational degree. Pham (2015) found that transnational graduates received favourable consideration as recruits by local employers in Vietnam, notwithstanding that employers identified internships and international exchanges as influential elements of graduates' employability.

Naylor, Bhati and Kidd (2010) noted the responsibility of Australian university WIL programs to focus on all stakeholder needs, and to embrace orientations towards both innovation and customisation in their various campus locations. For example, several offshore

campuses of Australian universities attract significant numbers of international students – 75% of James Cook University’s Singapore campus business students come from countries outside Singapore (Naylor et al., 2010). Many employers from these international students’ home countries value TNE degrees more if these students have overseas work experience (Naylor et al., 2010). According to a British Council (2014) study, transnational students are attracted by opportunities to do work placements as part of their international university programme. In offshore situations where securing internships for international students is impossible due to local work regulations, innovative approaches that create relevant WIL alternatives to work placements are imperative.

### ***Institutional benefits***

Reeders (2000) identified a need to address collaboration challenges presented by WIL. In other WIL literature, collaboration across academic disciplines, between industry and universities, and the front-line work supervisor and the university are claimed to be integral to WIL (Peach, Ruinard, & Webb, 2014; Richardson, Jackling, Henschke, & Tempone, 2013; R. Smith, Mackay, Challis, & Holt, 2006). Proactively tackling these challenges in transnational environments and undertaking effective WIL exchanges can be encouraged through boundary spanning approaches. Underpinned by effective collaboration, boundary spanning links organisations to create mutually beneficial relationships (Peach, Cates, Jones, Lechleiter, & Ilg, 2011). According to Brink, Mearns and Du Plessis (2014), a WIL process built on a boundary-spanning concept of knowledge exchange between academic (research, theory development), educational (teaching, assessment) and professional (expertise, transformation of knowledge) agents requires clear linkages, mutual role understanding, mutual commitment, and sharing of relevant information. Aldrich and Herker (1977) also emphasised the value of boundary spanning functions but proclaimed their implementation in university environments problematic. Nevertheless, Peach et al. (2011) identified that effectively-implemented WIL

boundary spanning helps universities to react to environmental uncertainty – a clear benefit for TNE providers.

### **Aspects of institutional benefit**

Partner relationships and an institutional knowledge culture built through offshore WIL can benefit the wider institution in five ways, as outlined below:

- (1) *Better student learning outcomes.* Obviously WIL interns benefit directly from WIL experience, and WIL supervisors can apply their experience to improve the WIL program itself. But the extent of institutional insight into local industry stakeholders derived from WIL interactions can be shared with academics teaching across disciplines, and industry relationship networks extended to incorporate teaching staff, resulting in teachers with greater knowledge of local industry and professional bodies. Brown (2010) called on universities to recognise the tremendous potential for WIL to enable staff to share cross-disciplinary knowledge and experience with the aim of enhancing student learning. Particularly in transnational operations, establishing and utilising WIL industry partnerships and networks to support all teaching staff to become familiar with local industry practice helps deliver relevant, locally applicable learning outcomes to all students.
- (2) *Sharpened practical focus through transnational WIL research.* Gutierrez (2011) provided a model of the interaction between research and teaching practice and elaborated on the benefits research can contribute to teaching improvements. Similarly, a research approach to transnational WIL can align with a practical focus to improve teaching practice on both the home and host campuses. Collaborative research insight generated and shared across campuses can elevate research output as well as learning benefits across the entire institution.

- (3) *Becoming an International University*. Skidmore and Longbottom (2011) claimed that future universities must develop as international universities; part of a highly networked globalised education system, involving collaborations of a multi-partner network that will give students the best elements of a global education combined with practical relevance applied to the student's environment. RMIT University aligns with this stance on its website, positioning itself as "global in focus and practical in application" (RMIT, 2014). Skidmore and Longbottom anticipate that the traditional flow of knowledge or expertise from first-world higher education providers to their offshore locations will evolve into multi-directional exchanges enabled by technology as well as a more global approach that they claim is already "commonplace among industry and the professions". Knight (2015) concurs; innovative approaches not wedded to any specific template or path will be normal in the international education environment of the future. Transnational WIL, with its mutual dependence on collaboratively-linked stakeholders that can share valuable industry and practice knowledge across borders, represents a worthwhile investment for transnational universities to advance their capability and reputation as truly international.
- (4) *Benefits for home campus international work experience programmes*. As the perceived advantages of a global education gain prevalence, interest in international work experiences and internships is increasing (Byrne, 2014). A qualitative study measuring perceptions towards international experiences and graduate employability indicated that academic, student, and employer participants linked international experience with employability-related outcomes such as cultural understanding, network-building, language learning and personal adaptation (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). Similarly, Blackmore et al. (2014) found a clear link between employability and international WIL experience. In Australia, the New Colombo Plan introduced by the Australian government aims to increase the number of Australian students doing



overseas placements (International Education Advisory Council, 2013). A relevant incidental benefit of transnational WIL is that relationships developed in the offshore environment provide a network of internship partners with whom to establish international work experience opportunities for students across all institutional campuses. Lloyd et al. (2015) highlighted the gap in research from the perspective of host organisation partners in WIL service learning, and revealed a particular need to ascertain WIL benefits from international partner perspectives. Knowledge gained from transnational campus WIL activities and shared throughout the institution would supply the institution with more accurate insight into perceptions and expectations of prospective international WIL partners.

- (5) *Institutional reputation for quality*. The potential of an effectively run and publicised transnational WIL strategy to impact on the institution's reputation for quality is outlined in the next section.

### ***WIL as a potential quality indicator***

The Australian Government-commissioned report on higher education (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) made commitments to international student customers (both onshore and offshore) that Australian universities would be held to the same level of quality for both domestic and international students. The branding strategy for Australia's international education, Future Unlimited, extended this promise to focus "on the outcomes of an Australian education. The new positioning highlights the global relevance, practicality and quality of our institutions, along with their innovation, creativity and focus on the future" (Austrade, 2011). The National WIL Strategy jointly released by the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN), Universities Australia, and other industry groups (Universities Australia, 2015) supports the proper accreditation of offshore work experience. Australian universities' offshore efforts to make relevant WIL opportunities a standard practice would

contribute to Austrade's vision to be a quality provider of choice (Austrade, 2015).

As Shams and Huisman (2012) state, most TNEs do support the idea of adapting curriculum and operational elements of the offshore branch campus to best meet the local host campus environment and deliver a locally-perceived quality education for students. However in practice Shams and Huisman (2012) articulate an "underlying challenge" (p. 114) that creates either discord or inertia in moving to adapt elements of system/practice while simultaneously maintaining "academic norms, routines, and values" (p. 114). Given the resource-intensive nature of WIL, coupled with financial constraints that may frame the offshore strategy, an important concern relevant to maintaining quality transnational WIL is that this discord and inertia might prevent adequate resource allocation and innovative WIL implementations to reach offshore locations.

However, perceived quality of a transnational degree by parents in China was driven in part by the conviction that the transnational degree would be an advantage over a local degree for their children to get better jobs and lead better lives (Moufahim & Lim, 2015). Ling et al. (2013) proposed that the perceived quality of an offshore campus is an important factor in parents' decisions to invest in an offshore campus education over the alternative to invest considerable more money funding an overseas education. Transnational students expect to receive the same quality in terms of curriculum, staff and content (Shams & Huisman, 2012); therefore, if WIL is offered in the home campus, they will likely expect it also in the TNE campus. Gault et al. (2000) emphasised that ensuring "quality" of the internship programme so that stakeholders –students, parents, and the organisation sponsoring the interns – perceive benefits is important. In order to maintain a reputation for quality, WIL partnerships need careful investigation, cultivation, effective communication, and monitoring to ensure student interns are not exploited. At the same time, universities must dedicate resources to properly preparing students to take responsibility as intern members of the host organisation – this is an important aspect of WIL internships that differentiates them from

inadequately planned workplace experiences. Establishing and maintaining quality is clearly very important at the starting up of a foreign university presence, and is similarly crucial in the introduction of a new WIL programme.

Critics of the trade in international education warn about possible loss of quality resulting from private providers and institutional partners oriented mainly towards profit-taking that governments in developing countries lack resources to control (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2006). This concern over quality has been addressed through a focus on standards – admissions, accreditation, and assessment moderation. Due to the resource-intensive nature of providing effective and sustainable WIL operations, and that private providers without home institution anchors would not stand to gain from wider institutional benefits of transnational WIL that flow back into the home institution, providers focused largely on profit may be unlikely to make resource investments required for quality WIL programme establishment and maintenance. Therefore, TNE institutional providers may gain long-term reputational advantages by investing in measures to establish and maintain high-quality transnational WIL.

Maintaining continual vigilance throughout all stages of partnership development is crucial for WIL programmes (Gault et al., 2000). Organisations change and business structures fluctuate. Staff (academics in transnational locations and intern supervisors in some workplace settings) can be highly mobile, making clear, communicable and consistently evaluated procedures essential. As advocated by Abeysekera (2006), transnational WIL quality needs to be continually measured and assessed from the point of view of local host environment stakeholders to maintain quality learning outcomes for students.

### ***Obstacles and barriers***

Potential barriers particularly critical to transnational WIL operations include: its essential resource-intensiveness; understanding and collaborating with offshore industry managers and work supervisors; lack of clear WIL frameworks that address possible conflict and power

issues; and regulatory and legal constraints on WIL.

Naylor et al. (2010) identified resource challenges as the final, overarching consideration to implementing WIL programmes in multi-campus environments. Costs depend on the nature and setting of the WIL program, but transaction costs of maintaining partnerships with many employers, sourcing WIL opportunities, developing and evaluating curriculum for WIL, maintaining ongoing quality and supporting a body of students who are globally dispersed are considerable.

WIL places responsibility on industry as well as on universities to train work ready students; therefore, barriers often exist on the industry end (AWPA, 2013). Industry practitioners view universities as responsible for training graduates to be ready for work (Tran, 2013); academics may however not perceive that their purpose is to train students to be work-ready cogs for corporate wheels. This is magnified in TNE environments such as Vietnam (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015; Cam, 2015; T.T. Tran, 2014) and Cambodia (Sam & Dahles, 2015) due to systemic disconnections between industry and higher education.

As outsiders in this systemic legacy, foreign universities in countries such as Vietnam and Cambodia are not tied to regulation of curricula that restricts most local public universities. Although they may not have strong local industry connections when launching the transnational campus, they can mobilise connections with international organisations, or from the institution's home country, to establish partnerships for WIL activities.

Naylor et al. (2010) identified solid frameworks as crucial to WIL; delivering WIL offshore without these frameworks compounds obstacles to its effectiveness. Part of the framework is the institutional focus on the WIL program. Commitment to establishing and maintaining a solid framework for WIL requires attention and resources in offshore locations and therefore may be at odds with the home institution orientation. "As in any unequal power relationship, the margins have to know the centre whereas the centre can be indifferent to, even unknowing about, the margins" (Nguyen & Leihy, 2015, p. 503).

Power and control over curricula, teaching methods, and research tightly held by the home institution limits opportunities for transnational WIL to achieve its full potential. Lundberg (July, 2013) debated whether offshore campuses are outpost satellites, with limited connection to the knowledge culture of the home institution and limited power to create and generate recognised valuable resources, or networked rhizomes that generate and share knowledge and resources. Ling et al. (2013) identified how aspects of tight centralised control form conflict points between home and host campuses that limit effective operations. The challenges of delivering appropriate and effective WIL in the offshore environment bring this dilemma to the fore; a framework for WIL that incorporates host campus staff as equal contributors to WIL offshore strategy is a key element of transnational WIL.

### **Overcoming offshore regulatory constraints on WIL internships**

Laws that restrict work and internship opportunities for international students constrain transnational institutions from offering non-national students internships in some offshore locations, as the snapshot outlining the situation of four Australian institutions' offshore location in Table 1:

Table 1: Legal environment for internships in four TNE offshore locations

<p><b>Singapore</b> – Foreign students on a Student Pass can work up to 16 hours a week if their institution is on the list of approved institutions. Training passes allow foreign students to work for up to 3 months if their institution is on another list of approved institutions. However none of the Australian universities with transnational campuses is currently on either list (Singapore Ministry of Manpower, 2015). Working holiday visas are available for students between 18 and 25 from a list of 9 countries, however restrictions mean they won't apply to most foreign students.</p>
<p><b>Malaysia</b> – Although foreign students are allowed to apply for a permit to work up to 20 hours a week, work is restricted to restaurants, petrol kiosks, mini markets and hotels during semester breaks and holidays, making the cost and administration required to obtain the permit unviable for WIL internships.</p>
<p><b>Vietnam:</b> There are comparatively few foreign students studying at the Vietnam campuses of Australian transnational institution RMIT. At RMIT, over 90% of students are local students but regulations do not prevent international students from taking internship electives offered in business courses (personal communication, 2016).</p>
<p><b>United Arab Emirates:</b> “Currently, United Arab Emirates labour law does not allow students on University sponsored visas to do any paid work. These students may carry out unpaid internships but must obtain permission from the University before commencement” (Heriot-Watt Dubai, 2016). However, the University of Wollongong does not incorporate internship provision into its business courses offered at its Dubai campus (personal communication, 2016).</p>

At universities such as JCU Singapore that allow and encourage students to experience a semester of their degree by studying at another campus for a maximum of two semesters, foreign students could do the internship in Australia, where international student visas give students an opportunity for internship work placements provided they fulfil the prerequisites for internship units.

Clearly, since work experience is not always feasible the transnational institution needs to consider appropriate alternative WIL activities that do not need to be done as a workplace internship, such as industry projects, field studies, simulated workplace environments and industry-partnered events. Besides visa restrictions, other macro-environmental factors impact on a university's ability to offer WIL internships: economic, industry structure, and sociocultural concerns in the offshore environment may differ from those in the home institutional environment. For example, Wolf and Yong (2009) reported on an industry project unit in Public Relations (PR) offered at both the Australian and Sarawak locations of an Australian university, noting that due to earlier-stage development of PR and fewer numbers and types of PR firms in the offshore location, the range and depth of projects

in the offshore location could not match those offered in Australia. Naylor et al. (2010) pointed out that in addition to visa restrictions, international students at JCU's Singapore campus may face language and sociocultural issues that make alternative, scaffolded activities preferable to work placements.

Fong and Sims (2010) claimed that information technology (IT) can not only "liberate education from the constraints of time and distance" (p. 46), but that use of IT promotes more inclusive practice in WIL, as reported in their E-WIL project. WIL-related innovations that use ever-evolving technologies to create alternative E-WIL projects and activities that allow industry projects and simulations to incorporate increasing levels of participation between students, industry, disciplines and faculties, and campus locations, thereby increasing the quality and benefits to students, clearly have great potential for transnational WIL. As the Lee, McGuiggan and Holland (2010) study on an industry project that involved 35 students from seven disciplines to design and implement an online financial skills training program for small business owners demonstrates, a great deal of planning and project management resources are required to successfully deliver these alternative WIL projects. Although Welch et al. (2012) reported student satisfaction with learning in a WIL simulation project offered by an Australian university in Vietnam, the project was evaluated as unsustainable due to high resource demands. Effective collaboration needs to be nurtured across boundaries between industry, staff, students from different disciplines, and across campuses to develop successful alternative types of WIL experiences in transnational environments.

### ***Conclusion***

Although WIL is undoubtedly resource-intensive and presents an array of challenges to transnational institutions, making WIL part of the offshore campus strategy not only enables the home institution to fulfil obligations to provide its offshore students with locally-relevant workplace learning, but represents additional wider-range opportunities. Empowering offshore campus students, academics, and administrative staff to collaborate with industry

staff at front-line executive and supervisory levels enables students to apply their foreign university theory to local work environments, and promotes engagement and knowledge-sharing that translates into a greater insight into the offshore employment environment for the institution. As transnational universities often employ international academics unfamiliar with local industry, involvement in WIL generates local industry knowledge and understanding of local practice that does not only enhance useful teaching but incubates relationships between academics and local industry practitioners that can enrich the curriculum. These relationships hold the potential to enhance the university's reputation especially in Asian countries where attending to intricacies of network building is essential.

Although perceived benefits of WIL can differentiate the offshore campus in the local market, particularly in Asian countries such as Vietnam that lack historical collaboration between industry and universities, there is an evident lack of extensive transnational WIL research output. Cultivating trust levels is a necessary precursor to transnational WIL implementation. If WIL is to be an effective boundary spanning vehicle in TNE, institution leaders need to support and facilitate that trust building from the emergence of the offshore location strategy. Future research should focus on local stakeholders' perceptions of the value of WIL, and incorporate local industry insight into practice. Where the legal environment makes it difficult to arrange internship work placements for all students, especially for offshore campuses enrolling substantial numbers of international students, alternative WIL arrangements such as industry projects, simulations and events should be integrated into the curriculum after consultation with local academic staff and industry. Technology can be used to facilitate greater authenticity and boost collaboration across campuses. Research measuring benefits of WIL for TNE host stakeholders – government, industry and graduates – is required. Ultimately, the paper advocates WIL as part of a globally networked, learning approach to transnational higher education, and underscores the importance for transnational education providers to maintain effective, locally-relevant WIL.



## ***References – article one***

- Abeysekera, I. (2006). Issues relating to designing a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program in an undergraduate accounting degree program and its implications for the curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 7(1).
- Aldrich, H., & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary spanning roles and organization structure. *Academy of Management Review*, 2(2), 217-230.
- Austrade. (2011). About Future Unlimited. Retrieved Feb 1, 2016, from <https://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Future-Unlimited>
- Austrade. (2015). Australian International Education (AIE2025) Consultation Workshops Report. Canberra Australia: Australian Government.
- Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency. (2013). Work integrated learning: AWPAs scoping paper (pp. 1-34): Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843. doi: 10.1080/03075070802706561
- Bilsland, C., & Nagy, H. (2015). Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 3(16), 185-198.
- Blackmore, J., Gribble, C., Farrell, L., Rahimi, M., Arber, R., & Devlin, M. (2014). Australian International Graduates and the transition to employment (Final Report). Melbourne, Australia. Deakin University.
- Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education Final Report. Canberra Australia: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Brink, R., Mearns, M., & Du Plessis, T. (2014). Managing information for work-integrated learning at higher education institutions. *Mousaion*, 32(3), 13-28.
- British Council. (2014). Impacts of transnational education on host countries: academic, cultural, economic and skills impacts and implications of programme and provider mobility. *Going Global*. UK: British Council.
- Brown, N. (2010). WIL[ing] to share: an institutional conversation to guide policy and practice in work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 507-518. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502219
- Byrne, C. H. R. (2014). International Education as Public Diplomacy. In I. E. R. Network (Ed.), *Research Digest*. Australia: International Education Association of Australia.

- Cam, K. T. H. (2015). Internationalising tourism education in Vietnam: an evaluation of the work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs. (Doctor of Philosophy), RMIT University, Australia.
- Campbell, A. (2010). Developing generic skills and attributes of international students: the (ir)relevance of the Australian university experience. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32(5), 487-497. doi: 10.1080/1360080X.2010.511121
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/03075070600572041
- Crossman, J. E., & Clarke, M. (2010). International experience and graduate employability: stakeholder perceptions on the connection. *Higher Education*, 59(5), 599-613. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9268-z
- Fallows, S., & Steven, C. (2000). Building employability skills into the higher education curriculum: a university-wide initiative. *Education + Training*, 42(2), 75-83. doi: 10.1108/00400910010331620
- Flinders University. (2015). Benefits of work integrated learning. Retrieved from <https://www.flinders.edu.au/teaching/teaching-strategies/work-integrated-learning/benefits-of-work-integrated-learning.cfm>
- Fong, M. W., & Sims, R. (2010). e-WIL in Student Education. *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects*, 6(1), 45-60.
- Gault, J., Redington, J., & Schlager, T. (2000). Undergraduate business internships and career success: are they related? *Journal of Marketing Education*, 22(1), 45-53. doi: 10.1177/0273475300221006
- Gutierrez, A. (2011). Research-Teaching-Practice linkages: A challenge for Business Schools. (Border crossing: transnational working paper no. 1103). Retrieved from [www.regents.ac.u./rcts](http://www.regents.ac.u./rcts).
- Heriot-Watt University. (2016). Heriot-Watt Dubai Campus Careers. Retrieved Feb. 3, 2016 from <http://hwudubai-careers.hw.ac.uk/>.
- International Education Advisory Council. (2013). Educating Globally. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.
- Knight, J. (2015). International Universities Misunderstandings and Emerging Models? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 19(2), 107-121. doi: 10.1177/1028315315572899
- Kramer, M., & Usher, A. (2011). Work-Integrated Learning and Career-Ready Students: Examining the Evidence. Toronto: Higher Education Strategy Associates.

- Lee, G., McGuiggan, R., & Holland, B. (2010). Balancing student learning and commercial outcomes in the workplace. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 561-574. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502289
- Leggott, D., & Stapleford, J. (2007). Internationalisation and employability. In E. Jones & S. Brown (Eds.), *Internationalising Higher Education* (pp. 120-134). London: Routledge.
- Lien, D., & Wang, Y. (2010). The effects of a branch campus. *Education Economics*, 20(4), 386-401. doi: 10.1080/09645292.2010.488488
- Ling, P., Giridharan, B., Mazzolini, M., Yeo, S., Goerke, V., & Lueckenhausen, G. (2013). Your place or mine: transnational education and the locus of control. In *Research and Development in Higher Education: The Place of Learning and Teaching*, proceedings from the 36<sup>th</sup> annual conference, Higher Education Research and Development Australasia (HERDSA) (pp. 290-301). Auckland: HERDSA.
- Lloyd, K., Clark, L., Hammersley, L., Baker, M., Rawlings-Sanaei, F., & D'ath, E. (2015). Unintended outcomes of university-community partnerships: Building organizational capacity with PACE International partners. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*. 16(3), 163-173.
- Lundberg, A. (2013, July). Offshore: A Cartography from outposts to rhizomes. Paper presented at the International Conference on Managing the Asian Century, Singapore.
- McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2006). *Transnational education: issues and trends in offshore higher education*. Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Moufahim, M., & Lim, M. (2015). The other voices of international higher education: an empirical study of students' perceptions of British university education in China. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 13(4), 437-454. doi: 10.1080/14767724.2014.959476
- Naylor, S., Bhati, A., & Kidd, P. (2010). Multiple campus operation-challenges and opportunities in implementing Work Integrated Learning (WIL). In Proceedings of the Australian Collaborative Education Network Conference (pp 342-351): Perth, Australia.
- Nguyen, T. N., & Leihy, P. (2015). Vietnam, the West and the generalized Self in transnational education. In H. Zhang, P. W. K. Chan, & J. Kenway (Eds.), *Asia as Method in Education Studies: A Defiant Research Imagination* (pp.82-96). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Orrell, J. (2011). Good Practice Report: Work-integrated Learning. Sydney: Australian Learning and Teaching Council.

- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants\\_project\\_wil\\_finalreport\\_jan09.pdf](http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants_project_wil_finalreport_jan09.pdf).
- Peach, D., Cates, C., Jones, J., Lechleiter, H., & Ilg, B. (2011). Responding to rapid change in higher education: Enabling university departments responsible for work related programs through boundary spanning. *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships*, 45(1), 94-106.
- Peach, D., Ruinard, E., & Webb, F. (2014). Feedback on student performance in the workplace: The role of workplace supervisors. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(3), 241-252.
- Pham, A. T. N. (October 2015). *Transnational education and employability: failure to deliver or failure to measure?* Paper presented at the IEAA (International Education Australia Association) conference, Adelaide Australia.
- Reeders, E. (2000). Scholarly practice in work-based learning: Fitting the glass slipper. *Higher education research and development*, 19(2), 205-220. doi:  
 10.1080/072943600445655
- Richardson, J., Jackling, B., Henschke, K., & Tempone, I. (2013). Developing a collaborative model of industry feedback for work placement of business students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 14(1), 28-43.
- RMIT University. (2014). International Mobility. Retrieved Feb. 1, 2016 from  
<https://www.rmit.edu.vn/international-mobility>.
- Sam, C., & Dahles, H. (2015). Stakeholder involvement in the higher education sector in Cambodia. *Studies in Higher Education*. Advance online publication. doi:  
 10.1080/03075079.2015.1124851
- Shams, F., & Huisman, J. (2012). Managing Offshore Branch Campuses: An Analytical Framework for Institutional Strategies. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), 106-127. doi: 10.1177/1028315311413470
- Singapore Ministry of Manpower. (2015). Work pass exemption for foreign students. Retrieved from <http://www.mom.gov.sg/passes-and-permits/work-pass-exemption-for-foreign-students>
- Skidmore, M., & Longbottom, J. (2011). The Future of Transnational Education. *Borderless Report, November 2011*. 6/21. UK: Observatory of Borderless Education. Retrieved from

[http://www.obhe.ac.uk/newsletters/borderless\\_report\\_november\\_2011/future\\_transnational\\_education](http://www.obhe.ac.uk/newsletters/borderless_report_november_2011/future_transnational_education)

- Smith, C., & Worsfold, K. (2015). Unpacking the learning–work nexus: ‘priming’ as lever for high-quality learning outcomes in work-integrated learning curricula. *Studies in Higher Education*, *40*(1), 22-42. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2013.806456
- Smith, M., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., McIlveen, P., Torjul, P., & Tyler, J. (2009). *Career development learning: maximising the contribution of work-integrated learning to the student experience*. Australian Learning & Teaching Council Final project report. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.
- Smith, R., Mackay, D., Challis, D., & Holt, D. (2006). Seeking industry perspectives to enhance experiential education in university-industry partnerships: Going beyond mere assumptions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, *7*(2), 1-9.
- Tran, T. T. (2013). *Enhancing Graduate Employability: the perspectives of Vietnamese university students and graduates*. (Doctor of Education), La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). *Graduate employability in Vietnam: a loose relationship between higher education and employment market*. London: Anchor Academic Publishing.
- Universities Australia. (2015). *National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education*. Canberra: Universities Australia.
- Wolf, K., & Yong, K. H. (December 2009). Industry ready graduates for a global job market– a reflection on transnational education. Paper presented at the Curtin Business Conference, Miri Malaysia.



**Article Two – Building employability skills in Vietnamese business graduates: the case for work integrated learning.**

This paper was presented at the 5th Engaging with Vietnam conference, December 2013 (Thai Nguyen, Vietnam) and accepted for inclusion in the peer-reviewed proceedings. I have revised the paper to incorporate several important references that have been published since 2013.

This is a concept paper that informs on the WIL-related educational environment that now exists in Vietnam. It serves as a backdrop to the research focus, an Australian university delivering work integrated learning in Vietnam, and serves as literature review on employability in Vietnam. Vietnam, a rising player in the context of a global economy is a recently-opened ASEAN economy with a history of reverence for education. As stated by Kristy Kelly, former Director of the International Institute of Education (IIE) in Vietnam:

Education is an important part of the society. It is a major preoccupation of government and is a highly valued and respected activity in Vietnamese society. The Vietnam education and training sector is large, present in almost every village and touches virtually every family (Kelly, 2000)

However, it has been left with a systemic legacy of separation between industry and education. This has contributed to a chronic mismatch of skills desired by graduate employers and those demonstrated by graduates. The Vietnamese government, as well as economic and social organisations such as the World Bank, Asia Development Bank, McKinsey Consultants and other investigative bodies have identified the need for higher education reform if Vietnam is to make further economic and social progress.

# **Building employability skills in Vietnamese business graduates: The case for Work Integrated Learning**

## ***Introduction***

This paper is concerned with how Work Integrated Learning (WIL) can be usefully integrated into higher education business curricula in Vietnam. It starts by describing the increasing need for higher education to equip graduates with relevant employability skills. The situation in Vietnam is reviewed, revealing a mismatch of skills expected from Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese graduates. This in itself is not unusual; reports of graduates lacking soft skills come from employers around the world. However, this paper highlights the lack of connections between higher education and industry that exists in Vietnam that are crucial for effective Work Integrative Learning activities to be implemented and continually enhanced. Despite the challenges, several industry partnerships are setting the groundwork for more relevant employability skill development in Vietnamese graduates.

## ***The case for building employability skills in higher education***

Examples of employability skills are communication, interpersonal, teamwork, self-management, organisation, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. These skills are not industry-specific; they are valued by organisations across all industries and disciplines. They are also transferable throughout a graduate's career, regardless of industry or workplace setting.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s skill initiatives (2011) focus on actions that develop employability skills for both the short term and the long term – this incorporates nurturing life-long learning approaches, and getting education and industry to act as partners, in collaborations to maximise not only productive skill development for the present but for the longer term. The OECD 2013 Skills Outlook report, derived from studies on 24 countries, states:



In addition to mastering occupation-specific skills, workers in the 21st century must also have a stock of information-processing skills and various "generic" skills, including interpersonal communication, self-management, and the ability to learn, to help them weather the uncertainties of a rapidly changing labour market (OECD 2013, p. 46).

In the UK, Yorke (2006) reported human resource managers' feedback that academic qualifications are crucial for graduates to be considered for openings, but that the generic or soft skills (communication, teamwork, and organisation) were important higher-level selection factors. Yorke claimed that industry employers expected graduates to have developed higher level skills in abstraction, system thinking, experimentation and analysis, and communication and teamwork (p. 5).

### ***Employability skill gaps in Vietnam***

Forestier (2013) reviewed the workforce skills gap that poses challenges for countries in ASEAN and in China. Similar disconnects between required skills and graduate capability exist in most countries. A World Bank (2012) publication about higher education in the East Asia region identified two fundamental problems in the region: disconnection between higher education and industry, and a lack of connections between institutions. The British Council (2013) discussed the urgency for ASEAN member countries to address these issues given the ASEAN economic integration policy of 2015.

In Vietnam, although access to higher education has improved (World Bank 2008), as a result of these disconnects between industry and institutions graduates often lack relevant and applicable technical skills. More fundamentally, however, they also lack the motivation, attitude and critical thinking skills to apply their learning and to be trained effectively in technical skills. Failure to address this gap will put the development of ASEAN countries at risk. The World Bank report (2013) highlighted feedback from Vietnam in particular – not only did Vietnamese employers report that they have to retrain graduates in technical skills, they also felt that graduates lacked adequate critical thinking and conscientiousness.

Singapore and South Korea were cited as countries that had achieved progress in addressing skills gaps through higher education reform; ASEAN countries should take lessons from these countries' practices (World Bank, 2013).

In Vietnam, various research studies (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Kamoche, 2001; Luong, 2010; Montague, 2013; Nguyen 2011; Trung & Swierczek, 2009) report similar issues.

Vietnamese employers seek staff with both technical and generic employability skills, such as communication, problem solving, ability to work effectively in teams, and professionalism in areas such as responsibility, attitude, and time management; graduates do not however meet the desired standards.

Surveys conducted by international organisations over recent years indicate that this gap is entrenched at the macro level. UNESCO's report on Higher Education in the ASEAN region (2006) stated that levels of communication, teamwork, problem-solving, evaluation, creative and lifelong learning skills were inadequate in Vietnam. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) showed that employers needed graduates with more relevant skills (VCCI/ILO 2007). The World Bank's Vietnam Development Report of 2006 found that inadequate labour skills and education were serious constraints to doing business in Vietnam, especially when compared to other developing nations. (World Bank, 2008, p. 103). The report advised that addressing this situation should be made a high priority in order for Vietnam to proceed successfully with its global economic integration and growth goals. Vallely & Wilkinson (2008) of the Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Institute reported on a "crisis in Vietnamese Higher Education" based on their experience in Ho Chi Minh City and participation in a Vietnamese research partnership that investigated higher education reform. Concurrent with the VCCI/ILO (2007) and World Bank (2006, 2008) reports they not only concluded that Vietnam needed to make fundamental changes to research and teaching in its higher education sector – a big enough undertaking in itself, but stressed that this overhaul was a matter of urgency. The divisions

between research and teaching institutions, and the low level of research activity, were identified as key priorities. The third area, especially relevant to this paper, was the lack of connection between higher education and industry.

A subsequent report (World Bank, 2013) expanded on the importance of addressing these concerns. The report highlighted that the trend in Vietnamese economic development in recent years was towards capital investment over productivity. Considered in tandem with the future demographic of an aging Vietnamese population, the World Bank report identified this trend as unsustainable. This conclusion supports earlier comments by Professor Hoang Tuy (in Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008) that previous preoccupations with capital efficiency were severely outdated, and that Vietnam needed to abandon its “make and sell” orientation for a “sense and respond” capability (p. 11). For this to happen, Tuy articulated the need to not only attend to many systemic practices in Vietnamese science and higher education that needed urgent attention, but to incorporate greater strategic vision into addressing these systemic faults and creating a more innovative, adaptive orientation within higher education.

More recently, while recognizing the notable improvements in the Vietnamese education system in bringing literacy and numeracy rates up to impressive levels, a follow-up World Bank report (2013) still found that employers could not source employees equipped with adequate skills, both technical and soft. The report proposed a three-step approach towards achieving skill goals – the third step being to connect higher education more closely with industry in order to establish and maintain relevance in a changing global and local economy. Of particular interest to work integrated learning practice, the World Bank report advocated government action to form closer relations between education and industry, enabling students to experience relevant work-related learning throughout their education.

Other reports have concluded that in Vietnam higher education providers need to form closer links with industry and become more responsive to their needs (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Kelly, 2000; Tran & Nguyen, 2010; Asian Development Bank, 2010; Thang &

Wongsurawat, 2015). Qualitative research with university students and graduates (Tran, 2010) revealed that students themselves did not perceive that their university education equipped them for work; Tran advocated greater linkages with industry as one element of a strategy to address the students' concerns. Remarkably, Thang and Wongsurawat (2015) mentioned neither connections with industry nor employability-related features as factors of choice in their study of the criteria applied by Vietnamese IT students when selecting a university. This could be due to the lack of employability-related curricular content and industry connections that currently exist in Vietnamese IT programmes, and hence their omission from the survey instrument and absence as recognized choice factors.

## **Work integrated learning – building employability skills**

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) integrates classroom learning with workplace practice and application (RMIT, 2016). In work placement activities, students also see real-world consequences for their actions and decisions (Nagy, Bilsland, & Smith, 2013). For students, the typical WIL activity involves some form of direct workplace involvement, such as an internship or work placement. Other activities that can be defined as WIL include service learning, industry projects, industry-sponsored career seminars, and competitions and cross-training, research and project activities between university and industry employees. For example, Macquarie University in Australia mandates that students across degree programmes earn Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) credits; students have a variety of options for doing this, including local and international internships, industry research projects, service learning projects, and community-based activity. PACE initiatives are designed to offer students flexible vehicles to develop and apply employability skills, as well as a way for the university to respond quickly, appropriately and effectively to external stakeholder requirements.

Internships as learning activities are the main focus of this chapter. However, to grow comprehensive WIL programmes that offer students enhanced opportunities to expand their work-related skills in the long term, the relationships established and developed through effective internship partnerships must form an important goal of stakeholder strategy. Therefore, developing stakeholder relationships in the Vietnamese context is reviewed in section 3 of this paper.

Effective Work Integrated Learning (WIL) initiatives are increasingly seen as valuable practical ways to develop students' employability skills. Raelin's model of work-based learning (1997) recognised the role of action and continuous practice in learning not just how to do tasks or jobs, but in learning how to work.

Knight & Yorke (2003) maintained that work integrated learning should instil employability skills that not only enhance graduates' ability to find jobs and perform in the workplace, but that also contribute to their lifelong occupational success. This view implies that the value of internships for students stems not only from gaining work skills that contribute to work-readiness after graduation, but also from building a solid foundation for their future. Therefore, as WIL prepares graduates to be more "work ready", as well as to set the course for a rewarding role in society, its potential is being increasingly recognised by governments, employers, and higher education institution stakeholders. By 2005, approximately 60% of university courses delivered in Australia incorporated some form of Work Integrated Learning (Bates, 2005).

### **Growing interest in Work Integrated Learning**

The role of work integrated learning in delivering graduate outcomes that are relevant and valuable to students, industry and society has increasingly attracted specialised research over the past 10 -15 years. Modern WIL research builds on Raelin's (1997) interpretation of work-based learning by incorporating how learners should approach working tasks, together with how they develop capabilities to manage their learning, and career and personal development.

Associations of WIL practitioners that aim to develop networks, share work integrated learning strategies and best practice, further professional development in the field, and support research activities include the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE), Cooperative Education and Internships Association (CEIA), Canadian Association for Cooperative Education (CAFCE), and Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN). An expanding body of research looks at the impacts and challenges of various WIL initiatives – internships, co-op education, service learning, and industry partnerships and projects. Research is published in a range of journals and publications. Journals targeting WIL include *the Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships* (since 1963) and the regional

*Asia Pacific Journal for Cooperative Education* (1999), as well as various conference proceedings and publications (ACEN, WACE, CAFCE). Relatively new journals such as the *Journal of Teaching and Learning Graduate Employability* (started in Australia in 2010) illustrate the growing concern that universities should integrate appropriate levels of graduate employability into their programmes.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary impact of WIL research is shown by the spread of WIL-related publications in higher-education related journals (*Higher Education Research & Development; Quality in Higher Education; Journal of Studies in International Education; Education & Training; Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*), management and human resource management journals (*Journal of Work and Society; Work, Employment and Society; Journal of Management Development; Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources; Asia Pacific Business Review*), commissioned reports on graduate skills (Patrick et al., 2008), and reports by various non-governmental organisations (Asian Development Bank, 2010; World Bank, 2008, 2012, 2013; British Council, 2012) as well as private consulting organisations (Manpower, 2011; Precision Consulting, 2007). Although most of the research related to this issue of graduate employability comes out of the West, there is a growing body of research from countries such as Sri Lanka (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010); China (Rose, 2013); Japan (Sugahara & Coman, 2010); Thailand (Thonglek, 2015) and South Africa (Pop & Barkhuizen, 2010).

### **Work Integrated Learning Stakeholder Relationships**

Jackson, Sibson & Riebe (2013) discussed how to evaluate the effectiveness of graduates' employability skill levels. Their suggested approach highlighted the importance of systematic frameworks for universities to establish and communicate process and report outcomes between institutions and industry. In Vietnam, achieving this appears to be problematic due to the fragmented institutional systems historically apparent in the country (Tran, 2010).

Fragmented systems are not conducive to a stable framework for planning and implementing effective WIL programmes. According to Bates (2005), work integrated learning is a partnership between the student, the university and the employer organization. Figure 1 illustrates the optimal stakeholder relationship environment for WIL, and frames the critical importance of collaborative relationship systems that underpin effective WIL activities.

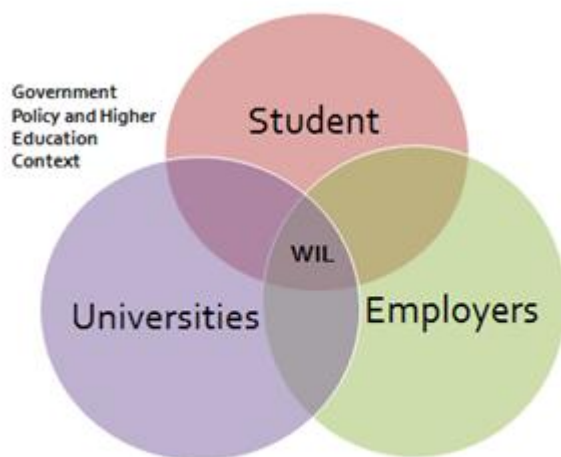


Figure 1: WIL Stakeholder Relationships (adapted from Patrick et al., 2008)

Thus, effective relationships between industry and higher education stakeholders that deliver effective graduate outcomes are key drivers of work integrated learning. Moreover, the implementation of work integrated learning activities creates a cumulative bank of goodwill between universities and their industry counterparts when they work together effectively. Sharing valuable knowledge and achieving successful outcomes result in increased trust between stakeholders and stronger relationship networks.

The next section will review aspects of higher education that have created a stakeholder environment in Vietnam which inhibits local universities' capacities to build WIL programmes that fully support students in building and developing their employability skills.



### ***Background of higher education in Vietnam***

Much literature about higher education in Vietnam discusses a lack of updated curricula, ineffective teaching and learning methods, and academic performance, compensation and motivation-related factors. Tran (2010) reviewed the environment in Vietnam with respect to higher education's performance in delivering adequate employability skill levels and found that the demand for fully-rounded, work-ready graduates is recognized by all stakeholders including government, industry, higher education and the wider community, and that this recognition is reflected in stated missions and desired outcomes. In practice, however, higher education fundamentals – such as curriculum modifications, assessment practices and teaching methods – have not been adapted to incorporate this awareness; this resistance to change has deep roots in a lack of infrastructure, funding, and in Vietnam's political environment. Although all these factors are clearly relevant to developing skills that students bring to the working environment after they graduate, this paper will focus on factors more directly related to the difficult WIL stakeholder relationship environment that currently exists in Vietnam.

In terms of research and development, Tran and Nguyen (2010) state that Vietnamese firms are more likely to innovate in collaboration and competition with each other, rather than with higher education and research institutions. This leaves academic institutions somewhat outside the innovation environment, missing out on the most current research opportunities and less able to teach current and innovative practice to students. Although not strictly related to employability skill development, this situation reflects the overall higher education system's position out of the industry loop that hinders the development of effective WIL practice.

Nguyen (2009) reviewed the history of skill development focus in Vietnamese education, a focus not given priority until 1991, and educational development strategy not formalised until 2002. Since then, foreign agencies and institutions have contributed to the

development of skills-related or skills-based education (for example, competency-based programmes in the vocational education and training sector) by Australian bodies (p. 7). The list of projects, donors and sponsors is extensive; as Nguyen points out, there are simply too many to list. He concluded that after a “long and painful process” (p. 15), Vietnam has recognised the need for and critical importance of skills development. Truong and Laura (2013) noted the tendency of Vietnamese universities to focus on training for technical “hard” skills at the expense of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership and customer service skills.

One way that Vietnam has been acting to address a critical lack of skills is to offer incentives for companies to run executive courses that combine study and work experience for their employees (Nguyen, Truong, & Buyens, 2011). Foreign institutions with credentials in various types of training have also been encouraged to establish themselves in Vietnam. In terms of regulatory frameworks for prospective foreign education providers, McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) cite Verbik and Jokivirta’s (2005) categorising of Vietnam as “moderately liberal; actively licensing and accrediting transnational providers” (p. 77).

Australia has continuously collaborated with Vietnam in education and training initiatives since signing its original Memorandum of Understanding with Vietnam’s Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in 1994. Australia’s Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) is an example, and was the first fully foreign-owned university to set up a campus in Vietnam in 2001. Wilmoth (2004) summarised Vietnam’s historical tradition of pursuing academic excellence through international collaborations. He maintained that Vietnam has not been recognised for its determination to provide youth with high-level education by opening health, science research and education markets to foreign investors. Wilmoth’s article on the establishment of RMIT Vietnam (2004) states the obligation of RMIT Vietnam to address real-world issues, among other things, and in doing so to contribute to Vietnam’s economic and social progress.

## **Current disconnect between stakeholders**

As in the rest of the world, higher education systems in Vietnam generally operate in large bureaucracies that are inherently slow to change (Huisman, 2009; Tran & Marginson, 2014). However, one major difference in Vietnam's movement towards change is its lack of connectedness between universities, and between universities and industry (Kelly, 2000; Tran, 2012; British Council, 2012; di Gropello, 2007; Ashwill, 2010).

In conjunction with this shift in the perspective on what Vietnamese higher education should provide, increasing interest in deeming, establishing and measuring desired “graduate attributes” is unfolding in Vietnam. The discussion surrounding these graduate attributes – not merely about what business graduates should be able to do, but what they should be – is progressing along a controversial road in many Western countries. This incorporates, to varying degrees, graduates' preparedness for contributing to their own career development and lifelong learning, and to a better future for society. This has led to an abundance of research that investigates what graduate attributes are and how they should be measured. Researchers have questioned the adequacy of a graduate attribute approach to address authentic needs of complex and dynamic stakeholder environments (Bosanquet, 2011). In Vietnam, Tran (2014) expressed doubts about trends to adopt Western-developed skill lists into the Vietnamese education and training context. Investigating diverse notions over a relevant conceptualisation of employability in Vietnam, Nhuan and Van (2009) proposed a holistic definition that goes beyond the ability to find a job and be employed to encompass a range of skills, abilities and qualities that equip graduates for career success and “benefit themselves, the workplace, the community and the economy” (p. 35).

The Vietnamese government's Higher Education Reform Agenda slated for implementation 2005-2020 aims for “a highly competitive, first-class higher education system of international standing ‘appropriate to the socialist-oriented market mechanism’” (Harman & Nguyen, 2010, p. 67). This agenda forms the backdrop to new regulations that enable

privatized education and training institutions, foreign institutions, and foreign education and training advisory initiatives to proceed, reported by Altbach and Knight (2007), that are designed to improve, among other things, graduate skill capability (British Council, 2012). According to Jackson et al. (2013), even in Australia, with its national standards frameworks, universities have had a haphazard, institutional-specific (and even faculty-specific) response (pp. 6-7) to interpreting and implementing graduate employability standards. Therefore, in a country such as Vietnam, with no such frameworks, it will not be a quick or easy undertaking to establish effective employability skill development in higher education, or to quickly develop systemic stakeholder relationships. Progress is however visible, and the next section will outline WIL-relevant examples currently taking shape.

### ***Current Work Integrated Learning developments in Vietnam***

Popular media articles showed several examples of increased interest in work integrated learning initiatives taking place in Vietnam (Anh, 2014; TuoiTreNews, 2013). Internships without commitment of partners do not always benefit participants; therefore, instances of apparent exploitation have been reported (VietNamNet Bridge, 2010).

Before opening a plant in Vietnam, Intel discovered that prospective graduate employees lacked adequate skills; subsequently, Intel implemented training activities in partnership with international education and training institutions, and reported encouraging results as of 2014 (Bloomberg News, 2014). Other organisations such as TMA Solutions are creating internships, and Siemens is reviewing changes to training provision (Bloomberg, 2014). Luong (2009) reported on a Ho Chi Minh City university partnership with education stakeholders to enact curriculum revision with eight Vietnamese medical schools (Luu et al., 2009). Lam (2013) reported that Vietnamese universities such as Ho Chi Minh City's University of Economics & Finance and Hanoi's Foreign Trade University are starting to develop education and training partnerships with local business to boost relevant graduate

skill levels. Foreign Trade University implemented internship courses that incorporate five weeks of placement for third-year students and 10 weeks for final-year students. Nearly 400 students have joined since the programme's introduction in early 2013.

A case study approach (Cam, 2016) investigated internship arrangements across six tourism training institutions located throughout Vietnam, concurring with Bilsland and Nagy's (2015) findings of tenuous links between training providers and industry placement hosts, and a resulting lack of effective internship learning coordination. In addition, Cam (2016) found that although the Vietnamese government controls most aspects of curricula and institutional operations, it is largely absent from the WIL arena.

This lack of regulatory and procedural support also contributes to a WIL environment that leaves interns open to exploitation, and positive learning outcomes obtained by chance. Marginson & Tran (2014) state that teaching methods and curriculum do not develop students' abilities to use the practical reflexive skills that are widely recognised as essential accompaniments to experiential learning in general (Kolb, 1976; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Ryan & Ryan, 2013), and to WIL in particular (Lucas & Fleming, 2012; Sykes & Dean, 2013).

Besides internships, other initiatives in the WIL-related realm that hiring companies rate highly when selecting graduates are extra-curricular activities. Universities such as Hanoi National University, Foreign Trade University, National Economics University, and other business-related education institutions increasingly offer students opportunities to join in global organisations such as AIESEC (in Vietnam since 2006) and Enactus (previously known as SIFE – Students in Free Enterprise – in Vietnam since 2007). Universities in Vietnam also offer students opportunities to gain experience in work-related skills through industry-related clubs (Business, Accounting, Entrepreneur, etc.), service-oriented clubs, and sports clubs. Tran (2014) reported that many students in Vietnamese universities were either not interested in these activities, or felt that parents would not approve of their taking time

from study to participate, although in retrospect, the graduates she interviewed valued these activities as opportunities to develop soft skills.

### ***Discussion and conclusions***

Although development of a collaborative environment between industry and higher education that maximises WIL benefits may be difficult, the literature presented in this paper shows that researchers as well as industry practitioners believe that it is crucial for Vietnam to establish links and connections between these stakeholders.

Many universities offering business degrees in Vietnam do offer internships, but many of these don't involve communication between industry and the higher education institution. Internships are valuable opportunities for graduates to gain practical exposure, and to learn how to adapt to the working environment. The university gains by enhancing its graduates' capability. Employers benefit by screening potential recruits, having additional resources to help out at busy times, and through introducing a youthful perspective and drive to learn into the workplace. All three stakeholders benefit by enhancing their networks. Although internships are valuable, they need committed partnerships to ensure that all participants do benefit. While the employer has a moral obligation to ensure that the intern is not simply exploited as cheap/free labour, the student must commit to act professionally and responsibly. The university has the responsibility for preparing the student to be professional, but also that of making sure the employer is properly briefed and offers an acceptable working environment.

Delivering effective internships is a resource-intensive exercise for universities. It is challenging to secure sufficient suitable placements every single semester, and to adequately supervise and support all interns. Developing relationships with industry enables other WIL initiatives to be offered throughout the programme and across disciplines to give students ongoing industry exposure. For example, once a collaborative relationship is established with

employing organisations through internships, they may be able to provide industry case studies, research projects, sponsor student competitions, act as guest speakers or seminar leaders, or host a tour of their operation, even if they cannot host an intern every semester. Involvement in student-based clubs and organisations is also an important and growing area for organisations to partner with universities and assist students to develop relevant work-related capability.

It could be argued that Vietnam already has a strong culture of interpersonal relationship networks. This paper does not propose that these be ignored; it suggests that by pursuing stronger relationships across education and industry, better graduate capability can be achieved. Furthermore, work integrated learning initiatives will not only improve graduate capability, they will contribute to the continued strengthening and effectiveness of these cross-stakeholder relationships in Vietnam.

### ***References – article two***

- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3) 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542
- Anh, N. (2014). Vietnam hopes POHE can help solve problem of jobless university grads. VietnamNetBridge. Retrieved 4.5.2015.  
<http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/119631/vietnam-hopes-pohe-can-help-solve-problem-of-jobless-university-grads.html>
- Ashwill, W. (2010). Vietnam: A Rising Star on the US Higher Education Scene. *World Education News and Reviews* July/August 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/PF/10aug/pffeature.htm>
- Asian Development Bank. (2010). 'Proposed Loans Socialist Republic of Viet Nam: Skills Enhancement Project' Project 41339. Manila: Asian Development Bank. Retrieved from <http://www.adb.org/projects/41339-013/main>.
- Bates, L. (2005). *Building a bridge between university and employment: Work-integrated learning*. Research brief 2005/008. Brisbane: Queensland Parliamentary Library. Retrieved from <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/explore/ResearchPublications/ResearchBriefs/2005/200508.pdf>

- Bilsland, C., & Nagy, H. (2015). Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 3(16), 185-198.
- Bloomberg News. (2014, January 15). Intel's Vietnam success begins with building paper towers. Retrieved from <http://mobile.bloomberg.com>
- Bosanquet, A. (2011). Brave new worlds, capabilities and the graduates of tomorrow. *Cultural Studies Review*, 17(2), 100–114.
- British Council. (2012). Vietnam main page, Lifelong Learning Strategies. Retrieved 19.7.2012 from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>
- British Council. (2013). The shape of things to come: the evolution of transnational education; data, definitions opportunities and impacts analysis. *Going Global*. Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/going-global/programme/sessions/developments-trends-transnational-education>.
- Cam, K. T. H. (2016). Work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs in Vietnam: Voices of education and industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 17(2), 149-161.
- Di Gropello, E. (2007, December). Vietnam-Higher Education and Skills for Growth. Paper presented at the Malaysia Higher Education Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
- Duoc, T. Q., Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Forestier, K. (2013). *ASEAN, China must bridge HE and workforce skills gap*. [University World News Issue no. 263 16 March 2013] Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20130314162925768>
- Harman, K., & Nguyen, B. (2010). Reforming teaching and learning in Vietnam's higher education system. In G. Harman, M. Hayden, & T.N. Pham (Eds.), *Reforming higher education in Vietnam* (pp. 65-86): London, UK: Springer.
- Huisman, J. (2009). International perspectives on the governance of higher education: Alternative frameworks for coordination. New York: Routledge.
- Jackson, D., Sibson, R., & Riebe, L. (2013). Delivering work-ready business graduates - keeping our promises and evaluating our performance. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*. 4(1), 2-22.



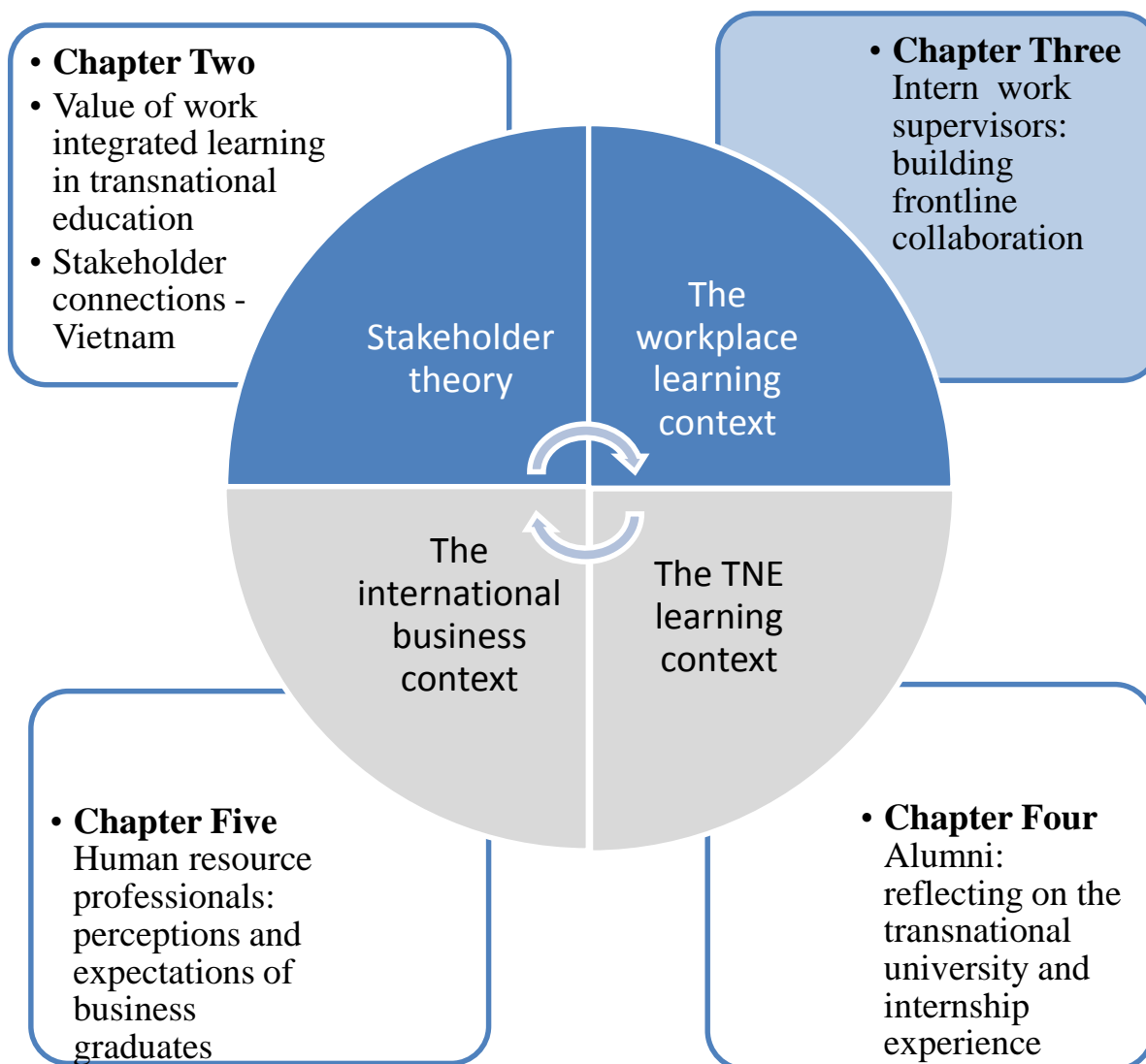
- Kamoche, K. (2001). Human resources in Vietnam: The global challenge. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(5) 625-650. doi: 10.1002/tie.1019
- Kelly, K. (2000). *The Higher Education System in Vietnam*. [World of Education News and Reviews, 1 May 2000]. Retrieved from <http://wenr.wes.org/2000/05/ewenr-mayjune-2000-the-higher-education-system-in-vietnam>
- Knight, P., & Yorke, M. (2003). *Employability: Judging and communicating achievements*. Learning & Employability Series One. UK: Higher Education Academy.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212. doi: 10.2307/40214287
- Kolb, D. (1976). *Learning styles inventory*. Boston: Wiley.
- Lam, T. (2013, August 30-31). Sowing seeds. *Vietnam Economic Times Special Report*.
- Lucas, P., & Fleming, J. (2012). Reflection in sport and recreation cooperative education: Journals or blogs. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(1), 55-64.
- Luong, B. (2010). *Students in Ho Chi Minh City are weak in soft skills*. [OneVietnam.org post]. Retrieved from <http://talk.onevietnam.org/students-in-ho-chi-minh-city-are-weak-in-soft-skills>
- Luu, H., Nguyen, L. V., van der Wilt, G. J., Broerse, J., Ruitenbert, E. J., & Wright, E. P. (2009). Motivation of university and non-university stakeholders to change medical education in Vietnam. *BMC Medical Education*. 9(14). doi:10.1186/1472-6920-9-49.
- Manpower Group. (2011). *Building a high-skilled economy: the new Vietnam*. Hanoi, Vietnam: Manpower Group.
- Montague, A. (2013) Vocational and skill shortages in Vietnamese manufacturing and service sectors, and some plausible solutions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 51(2), 208-277. doi: 10.1111/j.1744-7941.2012.00060.x
- Nagy, H. Bilslund, C., & Smith, P. (2013). Exporting Work Integrated Learning to Asian Environments. In P. Mandal (Ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Managing the Asian Century* (pp. 3-12). Singapore: Springer.
- Nguyen, L. (2009, June). *International and National Skills Development Approaches in Vietnam*. Presented at the “Policy transfer or policy learning: Interactions between international and national skills development approaches for policy making”. NORRAD conference: Geneva.
- Nguyen, M. (2011). Vietnamese Students Employability Skills. *International Education Studies*, 4(4), 175-191. doi: 10.5539/ies.v4n4p175

- Nguyen, T.N., Truong, Q., & Buyens, D. (2011). Training and firm performance in economies in transition; a comparison between Vietnam and China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 17/1, 103-119. doi: 10.1080/13602381003773982
- Nhuan, M., & Van, H. (2009). Enhancing Graduate Employability at Vietnam National University, Vietnam: a case study. In *Country Reports- Enhancement of Graduate Employment, ASAIHL 2009* (pp. 35-41). Sri Lanka: University of Kelaniya.
- OECD. (2011). The OECD Skills Strategy. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/47769132.pdf>
- OECD. (2013). The Skills Needed for the 21st Century. Skills Outlook 2013: First Results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Retrieved from [http://skills.oecd.org/documents/SkillsOutlook\\_2013\\_Chapter1.pdf](http://skills.oecd.org/documents/SkillsOutlook_2013_Chapter1.pdf).
- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from: [http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants\\_project\\_wil\\_finalreport\\_jan09.pdf](http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants_project_wil_finalreport_jan09.pdf).
- Pop, C., & Barkhuizen, N. (2010). The relationship between skills training and retention of graduate interns in a South African information, communication and technology company. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal*, 1(2), 113-122.
- Precision Consulting. (2007). Graduate employability skills. Final Report. Melbourne: Business, Industry and Higher Education Collaboration Council.
- Raelin, J. (1997). A Model of Work-Based Learning. *Organization Science*, 8(6), 563-578.
- RMIT (2016). Work integrated learning. Retrieved from <http://www1.rmit.edu.au/bus/wil>
- Rose, P. (2013). Internships: Tapping into China's next-generation of talent. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 14(2), 89-98.
- Ryan, M., & Ryan, M. (2013). Theorising a model for teaching and assessing reflective learning in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(2), 244-257. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2012.661704
- Sugahara, S., & Coman, R. (2010). Perceived Importance of CPA's Generic Skills: A Japanese Study. *Asian Journal of Finance & Accounting*, 2(1), 1.
- Sykes, C., & Dean, B. A. (2013). A practice-based approach to student reflection in the workplace during a Work-Integrated Learning placement. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 35(2), 179-192. doi: 10.1080/0158037X.2012.736379

- Thang, P. V. M., & Wongsurawat, W. (2016). Enhancing the employability of IT graduates in Vietnam. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning*, 6(2), 146-161. doi: 10.1108/HESWBL-07-2015-0043
- Thonglek, S. (2015). *Maximising Stakeholders' Benefits of Work Integrated Learning Programs: Schools of Chemical Engineering*. (Doctor of Philosophy). University of Queensland, Brisbane.
- Tran, L., & Marginson, S. (2014) Education for Flexibility, Practicality and Mobility. In L. Tran and S. Marginson (Eds.), *Higher education in Vietnam: Flexibility, mobility and practicality in the global knowledge economy* (pp.3-28). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tran, N. C., & Nguyen, V.H. (2010). Vietnam: Current Debates on the Transformation of Academic Institutions. In B. Goransson & C. Brundenius (Eds.), *Universities in Transition: the Changing Role and Challenges for Academic Institutions*. UK: Springer.
- Tran, T. T. (2010, November). Enhancing Graduate Employability: challenges facing higher education. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne.
- Tran, T. T. (2012). Graduate employability: Interpretation versus expectation. In N. Brown, S.M. Jones, & A. Adam (Eds.) *Research and Development in Higher Education: Connections in Higher Education* (pp. 317 – 325). Hobart: Higher Education Research and Development Society.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). Is graduate employability the ‘whole-of-higher-education-issue’? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28 (3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Trung, T.Q., & Swierczek, F.W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4) 456-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175.
- TuoiTreNews. (2013). Microsoft kicks off internship program for Vietnamese students, Tuoi Tre News.vn. Retrieved from <http://tuoitrenews.vn/education/7606/microsoft-kicks-off-internship-program-for-vietnamese-students>
- UNESCO. (2006). *Higher Education in South-East Asia*. Asia-Pacific Programme of Educational Innovation for Development, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Bangkok: UNESCO.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>

- Verbik, L., & Jokivirta, L. (2005). *National regulatory frameworks for transnational higher education: models and trends, Part 1*. London: The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education.
- Verbik, L., & Jokivirta, L. (2005b). National regulatory approaches to transnational higher education. *International Higher Education* (41) 6-8.
- VCCI/ILO. (2007). *Youth Employment in Vietnam: A Project with Employers' organizations 2007-09*. Hanoi: Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI) and International Labour Organisation (ILO). Retrieved from [http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/projects/youth/vietnam\\_reportv5.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actemp/downloads/projects/youth/vietnam_reportv5.pdf).
- VietNamNet Bridge. (2010, October 22). *What do students do during internships?* Retrieved from <http://m.english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/577/what-do-students-do-during-internship-.html>
- VietNamNet Bridge. (2012, January 16). *Soft skills now taught at universities*. Retrieved from <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/17393/soft-skills-now-taught-at-universities.html>
- VietNamNet Bridge. (2013, November 20). *Businesses criticise universities' training quality*. Retrieved from <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/89558/businesses-criticize-universities--training-quality.html>
- Wickramasinghe, V., & Perera, L. (2010). Graduates', university lecturers' and employers' perceptions towards employability skills. *Education+ Training*, 52(3), 226-244. doi: 10.1108/00400911011037355
- Wilmoth, D. (2004). RMIT Vietnam and Vietnam's Development: Risk and Responsibility. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 8(2) 186-206. doi: 10.1177/1028315303260829
- World Bank. (2008). *Vietnam: Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report* Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2012). *Putting Higher Education to Work: Skills and Research for Growth in East Asia*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2013). *Skilling up Vietnam: Preparing the workforce for a modern market economy*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not. In M. Yorke (Ed.), *Learning and Employability*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy (HEA).

## Chapter Three: Intern work supervisors; building frontline collaboration





### **Chapter Three: Intern work supervisors; building frontline collaboration**

This chapter presents one conference paper and one journal article that examine the first of the three stakeholder groups interviewed – work supervisors of a foreign university in Vietnam’s (hereafter referred to as the FUV) interns. Therefore, stakeholder concepts were examined in the context of workplace learning theory (Billett, 2002; Guile & Griffiths 2001) and work integrated learning theory (Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010; Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher, & Preto, 2008). As possibly the first work supervisor the intern has experienced, the intern work supervisor plays an instrumental role in WIL. Since the WIL internship environment in Australia is very different than in Vietnam, where internships are done with little if any contact with university staff or academics, we cannot assume that work supervisors will perceive internships, interns, and their own role in the intern’s learning in the same way as has been documented in Australia and other Western countries, where formalised internship partnerships and agreements are routinely implemented. There is little published research that investigates supervisors’ views of their roles as intern supervisors, particularly in external locations of a transnational university’s programme. In Vietnam, it was discovered that although internships routinely occur in business degree programmes, they are largely unplanned, uncoordinated in terms of learning expectations and assessments, and there is little or no communication between the university and the supervisor.

Therefore, the research questions driving the work supervisor research depicted in Articles Three and Four incorporate exploring work supervisor perceptions around internships in general, differences between local university internships and the FUV’s WIL internships, how they viewed their role in intern learning, and how the FUV could provide further support.

The FUV’s Australian ethics review board approved an ethics application to interview work supervisors of FUV interns in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi (see Appendix Two). Interviews continued to the point of theoretical saturation (Patton, 2002) consistent with

grounded theory approaches (Glaser, 2002). A description of the sample details are provided below (Table 3.1).



Table 3.1. Work supervisor sample details

.Organisation	Location*	Industry type	Gender	
			WS	Date
1	S	Insurance	F	15-August-2013
2	S	FMCG **	M	20-August-2013
3	S	Advertising, PR, Digital, Social Media	M	22-August-2013
4	S	Banking, Finance (Investments, Audits)	M	22-August-2013
5	S	FMCG	F	27-August-2013
6	S	IT Software	F	01-September-2013
7	S	FMCG	F	12-September-2013
8	S	Government	M	12-September-2013
9	S	Human Resource & Consultancy	M	13-September-2013
10	S	Human Resource & Consultancy	F	25-September-2013
11	H	Advertising, PR, Digital, Social Media	F	06-November-2013
12	H	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	F	19-November-2013
13	H	Banking, Finance (Investments, Audits)	M	20-November-2013
14	H	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	M	27-November-2013
15	H	Other (Professional Services-Association)	F	28-November-2013
16	H	Construction/Property Development/Real Estate	M	05-December-2013
17	S	Banking, Finance (Investments, Audits)	F	06-December-2013
18	H	Banking, Finance (Investments, Audits)	M	09-December-2013
19	S	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	F	10-December-2013
20	S	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	F	13-December-2013
21	S	Human Resource & Consultancy	F	17-December-2013

\*S=Ho Chi Minh City; H=Hanoi; \*\*Fast-moving consumer goods

An internal research grant funded two sets of portable interview recorders, participant gifts

(USBs), transcription for Ho Chi Minh City interviews, and travel expenses. I was lead author for both articles and contributed 75% of the publication work including conducting and transcribing seven interviews in Hanoi, the literature review, Nvivo data analysis, and writing the conference paper and article.

The conference paper (Article Three) “Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: a qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam” aligned with the conference theme of building capacity and collaboration in WIL environments. The paper was selected for expansion into a journal article (Article Four) for inclusion in a special issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*.

Both published papers have been re-formatted to the thesis template. However, the referencing, spelling, table, figure and appendix captioning are unchanged from their published versions. Therefore, tables, figures and appendices do not appear in the thesis lists of tables, figures, and appendices.

### ***References – Chapter Three introduction***

- Billett, S. (2002). Toward a workplace pedagogy: Guidance, participation, and engagement. *Adult education quarterly*, 53(1), 27-43. doi: 10.1177/074174302237202
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. UK: Routledge.
- Guile, D., & Griffiths, T. (2001). Learning through work experience. *Journal of Education and Work*, 14(1), 113-131. doi: 10.1080/13639080020028738
- Patrick, C.J, Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

### **Article Three – Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: a qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam**

As the social learning context is a pivotal element of internships, the work supervisor's role in WIL internships is critical, yet beyond the university's sphere of influence. Therefore an important aspect of building the capacity for interns to maximise effective learning is to establish collaborations with work supervisors in order to extend capacity for intern learning. In Vietnam collaboration between universities and intern host companies is not generally incorporated into internships. Therefore this paper questioned how the WIL approach of the FUV with its incorporation of academic visits to the workplace, communication with the work supervisor and involvement of the work supervisor with goal setting assessments were perceived.

Citation:

Bilsland, C., Nagy, H. (2014). Building capacity in transnational WIL environment: a qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam. In Conference proceedings of the 2014 Australian Collaborative Education Network National Conference Work Integrated Learning: Building Capacity, p.133-137. Springvale, VIC: Australian Collaborative Education Network.

## **Building capacity in a transnational WIL environment: a qualitative inquiry with intern work supervisors in Vietnam**

This paper explores the role of intern work supervisors in Vietnam. Bates (2005) stated that effective internship placements are contingent upon collaborations between the student, academic supervisor and work supervisor. In offshore education, in order for the university to establish this collaboration, it must understand the work supervisor's perception of their role, as internships may differ between the university's home setting and the offshore environment. In Vietnam, although many local universities incorporate internships as a degree component, usually the contact between the university academic and the intern's workplace is minimal or non-existent. Therefore, the authors, from a foreign university in Vietnam that delivers a 12-week internship elective for business undergraduates, conducted 21 interviews with intern work supervisors in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. Two themes of inquiry developed from the interview results indicated that work supervisors valued the contact with the university, were supportive of the interns' goals, and comfortable in their role as intern assessors. Supervisors also wanted information about the intern before the intern started, and suggested that the university prepare the intern to set goals at the start of the internship.

Keywords: Work integrated learning (WIL); transnational education, cross-cultural collaboration, intern work supervisors, industry collaboration, industry partnerships

### ***Introduction***

Although many universities incorporate Work Integrated Learning (WIL) components into degree programs, there is little research on how WIL elements can be effectively and appropriately integrated into degree delivery in offshore markets (transnational education). This paper focuses on collaboration with work supervisors of business undergraduate interns in a transnational WIL context – a foreign university in Vietnam (FUV).

Links between higher education and internship organisations are weak and undeveloped in Vietnam (World Bank, 2008; Tran, 2010; British Council, 2012; Tran, 2012; Tran, 2014; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). In phase one of an ethics-approved research project, we analysed work supervisor ratings given to interns after their 12-week placement. This paper forms part

of the second phase of the project: a qualitative inquiry into work supervisors' internship experiences. The paper examines interview feedback from 21 intern work supervisors in two collaboration-related areas: support of intern learning, and perceptions of academic visits to the workplace.

### ***Importance of WIL stakeholder relationships***

To ensure that degree programs delivered in offshore markets provide graduates with WIL experiences that are equivalent to those provided to students on the host domestic campus but also relevant to local industry, universities need to understand local industry orientations towards work integrated learning. Figure 1 – adapted from Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher, & Pretto (2008) – illustrates the optimal stakeholder relationship environment for WIL, and frames the critical importance of collaborative relationship systems that underpin effective WIL activities.

A transnational education provider must investigate and understand all elements of the stakeholder environment (Healey, 2014). Effective work integrated learning must involve partnership between all stakeholder groups (Bates, 2005). However, the disconnect between higher education institutions and industry in Vietnam (Ashwill, 2010) undermines the foundations of capacity building and collaboration between universities and employers that, as illustrated by Figure 1, are requisite for effective WIL internships. Work supervisors are positioned at the critical, intersected point (represented as Work Integrated Learning in Figure 1). As front-line Employer stakeholder participants, they directly interact with the Student interns at the workplace, as well as with the University stakeholders – academic supervisors. Therefore, their perceptions warrant exploration. The next section summarises relevant research into the importance of the work supervisor.

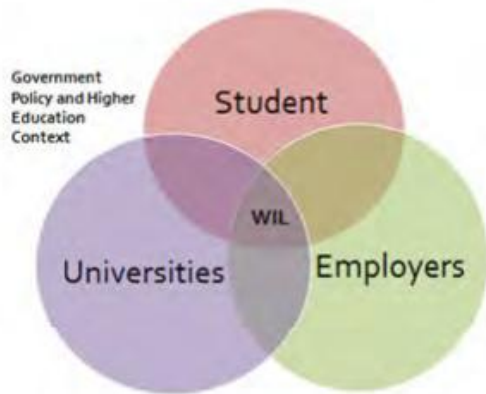


Figure 1. Adapted from Patrick et al. (2008).

### **The internship work supervisor – their role in transnational WIL**

Various researchers allude to both the critical role of the work supervisor, possibly the first an intern has ever had, and to the importance of collaboration between the university and the employer (Billett, 2009; Bates, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Henschke, 2013). Jackson’s proposed model of graduate skill transfer (2014) identifies workplace characteristics, integrated with program characteristics, as important for skill transfer and personal development.

Accordingly, Smith and Smith (2010) state the need to understand industry stakeholders as crucial co-contributors to a work-as-learning culture.

However, collaboration in WIL programs can be problematic for work supervisors if they lack clear understanding of their role with respect to academic elements of WIL, such as assessments, reflections, etc. (Rowe, Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2012). Smith, Mackay, Challis and Holt (2005) claim that academics cannot assume that work supervisors do have this understanding. As collaboration between work supervisors and universities is rare in the Vietnamese higher education environment, this paper explores two possible influential differences in Vietnamese work supervisors’ WIL-related perceptions.

## **Two themes of inquiry into work supervisors' perceptions of WIL collaboration**

Tran (2014) maintained that higher education in Vietnam is a scapegoat for the low level of employability skills evidenced by Vietnamese university graduates; a dilemma deeply rooted in the historically disconnected stakeholder environment. If work supervisors share this perception, we would not be surprised if they lacked motivation to collaborate with the university. Therefore, one theme of inquiry dealt with work supervisors' perceptions about collaborating to support intern learning.

In the UK, Hejmadi, Bullock, Gould and Lock (2012) found agreement amongst academic supervisors that workplace visits form part of a university's effective communications strategy. In Vietnam, direct communication between academics and workplace supervisors is rare; workplace visits, rarer still. Effective capacity building requires effective communication; therefore our second theme of inquiry addressed work supervisors' perceptions of academic visits to the workplace. If supervisors didn't perceive visits as beneficial, the university could consider crafting a locally-appropriate WIL communications strategy.

### ***Methodology***

The authors conducted ethics-approved, semi-structured 30-minute interviews with a convenience sample of 21 work supervisors responsible for the FUV interns in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City as part of a wider project on WIL implementation by the FUV in Vietnam. To address this paper's two themes of interest, an inductive approach consistent with exploratory research was taken due to a lack of available research in the Vietnamese context. However, inevitably the authors were influenced both by extant literature and by their experience as academic intern supervisors at the FUV. Therefore, NVivo 10 selective coding (as opposed to purely inductive in vivo coding) was initially used to code interview comments into this paper's two themes of interest. Question item topics that generated the largest volume of

coded responses relevant to positive work supervisor perceptions of collaboration in intern learning and work place visits appear in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Question item topics with highest volume of selectively-coded references

Question item Topic	# Sources coded (total 21 sources)	#References to perception of role in intern learning	#References to perception of work visit
Coaching/ mentoring	20	111	0
Overall experience with FUV	19	60	2
Suggestions for improvement	18	49	4
Goal setting	17	45	0
Perception-academic work visit	20	4	47

### *Discussion of interview results*

Perception of the intern – temporary tea maker, free labour, or learner participant?

Weber reported US employer perceptions that college internships could not prepare graduates sufficiently because the interns did “grunt work” and little more (2014); articles in the Vietnamese popular media reflect similar observations (Lam, 2013; VietNamNet Bridge, 2013). Given the unstructured nature of business university internships in Vietnam, we wanted to know whether work supervisors perceived that interns were there to learn, not just to make tea, copies and do other routine tasks. The interview responses showed commitment to coaching and mentoring – activities were explicitly outlined in many cases as reflected in the large number of coded references in Table 1.

Two responses indicated that interns with customer interface responsibility were not just free labour, but carried out critical duties and therefore needed to be provided with the best learning environment, not only for their own benefit but to ensure satisfactory business and client outcomes.



*Perception of role — is it my job to support interns and help maximise their learning?*

It was encouraging to find that although supervising interns was not usually part of the work supervisors' job description they were enthusiastic about giving feedback and mentoring students:

“During their work on the project we guide and mentor them and teach them how to solve the problem, this is our common practice to work with the internship, especially the internship with FUV... I appreciate that and I enjoy my role.”

A quote representing some work supervisors' opinion that although it is not part of their official job description, coaching interns forms part of their own personal and professional development and is therefore seen as a worthwhile endeavour:

“It's extremely comfortable because I can see the coaching and training is a main task of a leader of a team. I myself need to improve my leadership skills and training and coaching skill is a part of the leadership.”

*Perception of academic workplace visits*

Although commonplace in Western higher education, visits by academics to intern workplaces in Vietnam are rare; therefore, it was important for us to find out whether work supervisors felt burdened, annoyed, threatened or simply confused about the purpose of the visits. However, all respondents showed support for the visits. Many respondents perceived that the work visits demonstrated professionalism, showed that the university cared for the students, reflected the seriousness of the internship placement, opened lines of communication and opportunities to discuss questions and issues:

“For me it feels intern come from a professional school, a good school because the academic supervisor they do really care.

“I think the meeting with employer like this is good because that also helps the employer to take serious about the internship or the interns from the university and be more aware

that the internship is not only about the employer gaining from the interns but also contributing and supporting the interns to get more skills, to learn more so it's not like one way but should be two ways.”

However, one comment indicates initial discomfort with the way the visit was arranged:

“...someone – I don't remember who – said there will be someone from FUV coming here to inspect how we can arrange the internship. My feeling is not good, I say 'why FUV is inspecting us?' we are very helpful and very willing to share experience with intern.”

This comment shows the need to consider a lack of familiarity with workplace visits, and to anticipate possible cultural differences in interpreting the visit's purpose. A foreign university could be perceived as insensitive, patronising or lacking in trust if basic principles of cross-cultural communication aren't given appropriate attention, especially in initial interactions with the internship organisation.

#### *Suggestions for improvement*

Most responses were concerned with improving collaboration aimed at helping supervisors to give more valuable support to interns. Several respondents requested more information on the students' backgrounds before the internship started, as outlined in the quotes below:

“I think before the internship you should give us a checklist what they did and so we can know what we have to train and how we support them.

“So if you make a visit, if you have a plan clear like this, we can work easier. We can dig out all the objectives in the plan and we can provide the feedback easily.”

Supervisors suggested that interns share goals with the work supervisor at the start of the internship placement, thus enabling the supervisor to provide more personalised and valuable support:

“For example, before going to the internship, you should have a self-assessment. After the self-assessment of that student, they know what skills they should improve and come

to (organisation), after I assign you with this or with that and you can share with her/his mentor.”

An encouraging finding was that many supervisors requested additional communication in order to improve collaborative action to improve internships:

“So I suggest that when employee finish their internship do we have a review with university.”

### ***Conclusions***

In Vietnam, workplace supervisors supported the FUV’s internships activities. Work supervisors perceived that visits showed care to students, and reflected the serious approach of the internship program and professionalism of the university. Work supervisors showed interest in guiding interns’ progress and in supporting their academic internship assessments, although this was rarely part of their official job description. They requested more detailed information about intern backgrounds and goals prior to the internship placement that would enable supervisors to provide interns with a better learning experience.

Interview responses, including suggestions for improvement, indicated positive orientations towards collaboration, and an interest in building future capacity. Universities offering WIL transnationally could provide guidelines such as those provided in the Innovative Research Universities’ Guidelines for WIL publication (2012) to their offshore WIL industry partners – adapted to maximise relevance to the local business and cultural context and establish clear guidelines for work supervisors.

Finally, in an offshore environment that is unfamiliar with WIL internships, we recommend that transnational universities introduce internship activities – particularly the role of workplace visits as a method of developing collaboration for mutual benefit – carefully, in order to avoid misinterpretation due to cultural and experiential differences.

### **References – article three**

- Ashwill, W. (2010). Vietnam: A Rising Star on the US Higher Education Scene. *World Education News and Reviews*, July/August 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/ewenr/PF/10aug/pffeature.htm>
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education, *Studies in Higher Education*, 34 (7), 827-843.
- British Council. (2012). Vietnam main page, Lifelong Learning Strategies Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning- skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>
- Harvey, L. (2005). Embedding and integrating employability. *New Directions for Institutional Research*. 2005 (128), 13-28. Healey, N. (2014). Does globalisation + higher education = transnational education? New ideas from leading thinkers from around the world about the future of higher education. Pearson Blue Skies. Retrieved from <http://pearsonblueskies.com/2014/transnational-education/>
- Hejmadi, M., Bullock, K., Gould, V., & Lock, G. (2012). Is choosing to go on placement a gamble? Perspectives from bioscience undergraduates. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. 37(5), 605-618
- Henschke, K. (2013). Feeling the Heat – Developing individual, social and professional agency for, in and through work placements. Discussion paper, WACE World conference Durban South Africa June 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.waceinc.org/durban2013/Refereed%20Papers/Australia/Kathy%20Henschke%20RMIT.pdf>
- Innovative Research Universities. (2012). *Roles and responsibilities of the work supervisor*. In *Work Integrated Learning 2012 - Toolkit for Employers and Industry*. Retrieved from <http://www.iru.edu.au/our-activities/projects/work-integrated-learning-2012-toolkit-for-industry.aspx>
- Jackson, D. (2014). Modelling graduate skill transfer from university to the workplace. *Journal of Education and Work*. 1-33 DOI: 10.1080/13639080.2014.907486
- Lam, T. (2013, August 30-31). Sowing seeds. *Vietnam Economic Times* Special Report.
- Patrick, C.J, Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.

- Rowe, A., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2012). "But I thought you were doing that"-clarifying the role of the host supervisor in experience-based learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*. 13(2) 115-134.
- Smith, J., & Smith, R. (2010). Work integrated learning: An industry partner's perspective. In *VET Research: Leading and responding in turbulent times*. Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference proceedings (pp.1-10). Gold Coast, Australia.
- Smith, R. Mackay, D. Challis, D. & Holt, D. (2006). Seeking Industry perspectives to Enhance Experiential Education in University- Industry Partnerships: Going beyond Mere Assumptions. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 7(2), 1-9.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). Is graduate employability the ‘whole-of-higher education-issue’? *Journal of Education and Work*, DOI:10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Tran, T. T. (2010). Enhancing Graduate Employability: challenges facing higher education. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, November, 2010, Melbourne.
- Tran, T. T. (2012). Vietnamese higher education and the issue of enhancing graduate employability. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 3(1), 2 – 16.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>
- VietNamNet Bridge. (2013). Businesses criticise universities’ training quality. Retrieved from <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/89558/businesses-criticize-universities--training-quality.html>
- Weber, L. (2014). Apprenticeships help close the skills gap. So why are they in decline? *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702303978304579473501943642612>
- World Bank. (2008). Vietnam: Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report World Bank, Retrieved from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEASTASIAPACIFIC/Resources/Vietnam-HEandSkillsforGrowth.pdf>

Copyright © 2014 Christine Bilsland & Helga Nagy

The author(s) assign to the Australian Collaborative Education Network Limited, an educational non-profit institution, a non-exclusive licence to use this article for the purposes of the institution, provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The author(s) also grant a non-exclusive licence to the Australian Collaborative Education Network to publish this document on the ACEN website, and in other formats, for the Proceedings of the ACEN National Conference, Gold Coast 2014. Any other use is prohibited without the express permission of the author(s).

#### **Article Four – Work integrated learning in Vietnam: perspectives of intern work supervisors**

This article builds on work supervisor perceptions of collaboration with the FUV reported in Article Three by focusing on the learning context: the specific intern learning activities work supervisors carried out; perceptions of the overall WIL internship experience; and how work supervisor support could be improved.

The article was published in a Special Issue of the *Australia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* (APJCE), sponsored by the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN). Therefore, I expanded Article Three to meet publishing requirements of the journal and double-blind review. The interview guide was added as an appendix to this journal article (see Appendix A), thus is not included in the thesis Appendix.

The resulting article was published as cited below:

Citation:

Bilsland, C., Nagy, H. (2015). Work integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*. 16/3. 185-198.

# **Work integrated learning in Vietnam: perspectives of intern work supervisors**

CHRISTINE BILSLAND

*Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

HELGA NAGY

*RMIT International University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

This paper addresses work-integrated learning program issues from the perspective of work supervisors of interns from a foreign university in an offshore market environment – Vietnam. Universities expanding their markets overseas must research all relevant aspects of the local environment when making operational expansion decisions, and continue research activities on an ongoing basis to ensure that program elements meet evolving local stakeholder requirements. At this stage in Vietnam, collaboration and communication between higher education and industry is rare. Therefore, this paper investigated work supervisors' perceptions of the university's WIL program, and their views on their own role in the intern's learning process. Their feedback about how internship processes can be improved can help guide the foreign university in Vietnam (FUV) to continue to deliver effective work integrated learning in Vietnam, as well as offer insights useful for other universities running WIL courses in overseas locations. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, Special Issue, 2015, 16(3), 185-198)

Keywords: Vietnam, internships, transnational education, work-integrated learning, work supervisors

## ***Introduction***

In Australia work-integrated learning (WIL) is being mandated in an increasing number of university programs. Controversy over the ultimate improved skills students derive from WIL balanced with the costs, risks and resources involved to establish committed partnerships and administer effective student learning puts WIL programs under pressure on the domestic front (Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher, & Preto, 2008), let alone on less familiar overseas environments. Although Naylor, Bhati and Kidd (2010) addressed the



development and sustainability of WIL initiatives in a multi-campus university (including an offshore campus in Singapore), there is little published research into the implementation of WIL offshore that considers issues from a local WIL stakeholder perspective. Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (2010) reviewed the importance of stakeholders in higher education WIL enterprises, and articulated the essential consideration of stakeholder rights and needs when envisioning and delivering WIL.

Therefore, this paper examines a foreign university in Vietnam's (hereafter referred to as the FUV) WIL offering from the viewpoint of local, Vietnamese work supervisors of the FUV interns, who are mostly Vietnamese fee-paying students. At the FUV's Centre of Commerce and Management, a WIL elective that incorporates a 12-week full time work internship placement along with an orientation and five skill/reflective workshops, where interns come together every two weeks to share their intern experiences and review their development, has been in place since 2010. The paper builds on quantitative feedback obtained from the FUV work supervisors, measured by performance evaluations of the FUV interns (Bilsland, Nagy, & Smith, 2014). Overall interns rated highly, however, the authors concluded there was a need to explore the work supervisors' perceptions in greater depth, as the context of internships in Vietnam is very different from that of countries whose institutions have a longer history of structured internships and other WIL partnerships. These contextual differences are set out in the literature review.

The role of the work supervisor in intern learning is reviewed from a WIL stakeholder perspective. The paper discusses the Vietnamese work supervisors' perceptions of their roles as intern learning facilitators, given the historical disconnect between higher education and industry/employers. Part of the research aims were to discover the work supervisors' previous experiences with internships, gain insight into what they thought internships should provide the intern, and explore their perceptions on the impact they believe they should have,

or would like to have, in terms of intern support and learning. Therefore, our first research question was:

RQ1 – How do work supervisors perceive interns and their learning activities during the internship?

We also sought feedback on various aspects of the work supervisors' experience with the FUV's WIL program, especially given the differences between the structure and communication of the FUV's program and local universities. Currently academic supervisors from the FUV visit the interns' workplaces at least once a semester, the supervisors sign off on one initial goal-setting proposal in the first three weeks of the internship, and complete an evaluation of the intern at the end of the internship. This is more commitment than is required of the local universities internships. Interns from local universities usually complete an assignment report that is not connected to the actual workplace. Unlike the academics from the FUV, local Vietnamese university academics do not visit or communicate with work supervisors of their interns. It was important to get insight into how the supervisors perceived these differences, and to get suggestions for future improvements to the WIL program. Therefore, the last two research questions were:

RQ2 – What are supervisors' perceptions of work-integrated learning internships in general; how does the intern experience with the FUV compare to local universities? RQ3 – How can the FUV further support work supervisors?

### ***Literature review***

WIL researchers contend that the context of the work-integrated learning situation has not been given adequate consideration in terms of: the learning environment affordances (Billett, 2009); potential for graduate skill transfer (Jackson, 2013); multiple stakeholders' perceptions of placement quality (Rowe & Winchester-Seeto, 2014) and in particular concerning the impact of the direct work supervisor (Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragnolini, 2014;

Vaughan, 2014) and the quality of work supervision (Henschke & Poppins 2009). Smith and Smith (2010) state the need to understand industry stakeholders as crucial co-contributors to a work-as-learning culture. Internship placements can be considered as learning endeavours that have outcomes of high importance for the three key stakeholders – first and foremost the student, but also the university and the sponsoring employer.

Therefore, given that the work placement context represents a sphere of learning that lies outside the relatively controllable, curriculum-oriented environment of the university course regime, the FUV must ensure its awareness of social and cultural influences that impact on the way WIL is delivered in the Vietnamese internship placement context.

Guile and Griffiths' (2001) typology of learning at work identifies student interns, academic supervisors, and work supervisors as joint participants transforming academic knowledge to practical application and ongoing capability development. Therefore, WIL's effectiveness hinges on genuine partnerships between industry and the higher education institution (Bates, 2005; Choy & Delahaye, 2011). Parsons, Caylor and Simmons (2005) state that both academic and workplace supervisors should understand that they need to work together if interns are to learn from the experience. However, communicative, collaborative links between higher education and internship organizations are weak and undeveloped in Vietnam (British Council, 2012; Tran, 2010, 2012, 2104; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008; World Bank, 2008).

### *Context of WIL in Vietnam*

The stakeholder shared-benefits approach of Moody (1997) was cited by Cooper et al. (2010) in their discussion of “a new paradigm of work-integrated learning” (p. 25). This paradigm is characterized by partnerships between education and industry, and includes students as participants. Cooper et al. (2010) stress the need for stakeholders to cooperate within this paradigm to ensure that mutual goals are shared, mutual benefits realized, and that students

can “work in order to learn and at the same time learn to work” (p. 25). Patrick et al. (2008) illustrated the intersection of these WIL stakeholder relationships (Figure 1a) that frames the critical importance of collaborative relationships between universities and employers in order to deliver mutual benefits to all stakeholders. As illustrated, work supervisors are positioned at the critical, intersected point (shown as the dark area in Figure 1a). As front-line employer stakeholder participants, they directly interact with the student interns at the workplace, as well as with the University stakeholders – academic advisers.

However, up until now, this diagram applied to Vietnam would resemble Figure 1b, indicating a lack of dialogue between the university and the work supervisor.

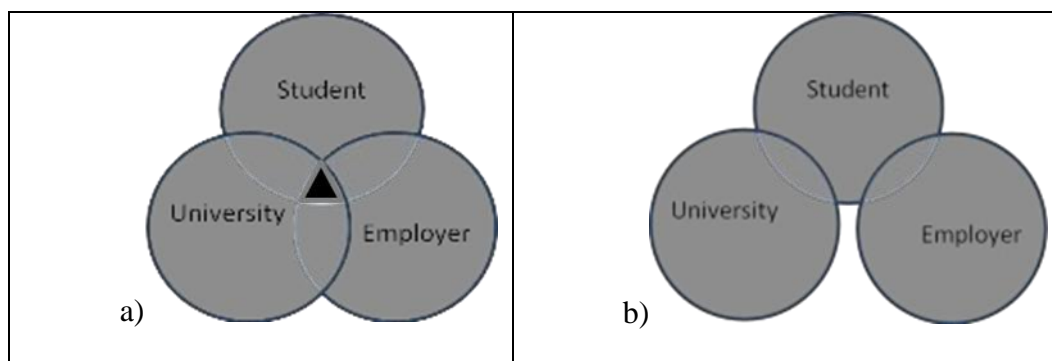


Figure 1: WIL stakeholders, Vietnam

In Vietnam, the collaboration between universities and employers that, as illustrated by Figure 1a appear essential to effective WIL internships, is not evident. As seen in Figure 1b, there is no intersection of all three stakeholders – the student interacts with the work supervisor independently and separately from the academic adviser, typically by submitting a report assignment. This fundamental disconnection between higher education institutions and industry in Vietnam (Ashwill, 2010) undermines the capacity of internship placements to deliver desired workplace learning practice and capability development to interns. Tran (2012) surveyed interns from local Vietnamese universities who claimed they were not given any real work to do, and gained neither understanding nor confidence. The lack of university involvement in the work placement establishment or process leads to unsystematic, unstructured internships. The learning experience of the intern is fortuitous rather than targeted and planned.

#### *Feedback from industry*

Trede (2012) refers to work supervisors as “workplace educators”. Parsons et al. (2005) maintain that work supervisors should not only to provide an authentic work environment, but they should create a nurturing environment for the student interns. Rowe, Mackaway and Winchester-Seeto’s model (2012) identifies four aspects to the work supervisor’s role:

support, education, administration and guardianship. Bates (2005) explicitly extends the “guardian” aspect to one of “gatekeeper” – assessing students’ maturity, values and ability to join the profession. The scope and complexity of these work supervisors roles make it highly desirable that not only should universities and industry work supervisors work together to create optimal placement environments for intern learning (Bates, 2005; Billett, 2009; Rowe et al., 2012), but that universities should actively engage in providing work supervisors with support required to fulfil these learning ambitions. Smith, Mackay, Challis and Holt (2006) found that academic staff should not assume that work supervisors perceive their role as industry mentors. Smith and Smith (2010) observed that previous experience with internships is a powerful indicator of the degree to which work supervisors can successfully deal with the multiple demands on their time as well as the challenges to provide effective guidance to interns.

Clearly, industry perspectives can add much to WIL program and assessment development (Choy & Delahaye, 2011), as well as to curriculum relevance and innovation (Bates, 2005; Ferns, Smith, & Russell, 2014; Henschke & Poppins, 2009). In addition, their suggestions can help universities improve their work-integrated learning support structures. For example, a PhillipsKPA (2014) study into industry perceptions about WIL in Australia found that many employers were unclear about what WIL is, and sought formal and explicit guidelines from universities.

### ***Methodology***

The general framework of the research was exploratory. As WIL practices are relatively undeveloped in Vietnam, existing studies on undergraduate internships in Vietnamese higher education is limited. Therefore, a qualitative approach intended to uncover fundamental insights into perceptions of a key stakeholder in intern learning, the work supervisor, was appropriate due to the lack of extant published information relevant to the context of work-

integrated learning in Vietnam. However, adhering to a strictly exploratory, inductive approach was neither useful nor possible, given our experience as academic advisers at the FUV and our exposure as researchers into effective work-integrated learning research and practice in general. As Patton (2002) maintains research activities cannot be totally divorced from the researchers' experience; as our observations as intern advisers in Vietnam drove this research project to life, they inevitably influenced its initial direction and research questions. Although we aimed to put aside our own biases and focus on unearthing perceptions and issues of importance to our respondents, especially those we might not be aware of, the research framework incorporated elements of a grounded theory approach that shaped formulation of research questions (Glaser & Strauss, 1997, cited in Lewins & Silver, 2007). As Lewins and Silver (2007) explain, researchers can work with a grounded, iterative approach that simultaneously delivers the desired elements of exploratory discovery that we aimed for.

### *Method*

Ethics-approved interviews of approximately thirty minutes were arranged with twenty-one work supervisors of FUV business undergraduate interns. Fourteen interviews were conducted in Ho Chi Minh City, where the main campus of the FUV is located; seven were done in Hanoi, where the FUV has established a newer and smaller location. Subjects who had supervised interns for at least two semesters were approached to ensure validity – responses needed to be based on familiarity and experience with the program. As we were part of a larger team of FUV academic intern advisers who communicate and meet with work supervisors, we interviewed qualifying intern work supervisors whose contacts were obtained from other members of the team in addition to those with whom we had already established relationships with in order to maintain objectivity. A semi-structured interview guide was developed and employed for the research. Semi-structured guides allow interviewers to

anchor the interview to the interviewers' research purpose, while simultaneously allowing for respondents to offer their own insights and points of view, and are effective in delivering reliable, comparative data in situations where more than one interviewer collects field data (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). See Appendix A – Interview Question Guide for a copy of the interview guide.

### ***Research Findings***

To continue from the initial results, further coding themes were developed and organized into sets representing each of the research question dimensions:

- RQ1 – Perceptions of interns and internships
- RQ2 – Overall experience with the FUV's WIL program and comparison with local university internships
- RQ3 – Suggestions for further support from the FUV

Results reflecting emphasis on the major themes that developed within the research dimension sets are summarized in Table 1.

Work supervisors perceived interns were there to learn; most of them elaborated on how they invest time in building relationships with interns. Sixteen respondents outlined formal relationship-building activities with the most frequently mentioned being formal introductions (7), team meetings and social events (7), and scheduled meetings (5). Eighteen respondents also incorporated informal relationship building activities such as informal chats (9) coffee or lunch, or just asking the intern how things were going. Three respondents commented that interns and staff were close in age, making it easier to build communicative relationships. Many responses indicated that interns were generally treated as part of the staff during their internship. Twelve respondents stated that interns from the FUV were there to work and learn. This quote illustrates how one work supervisor perceives the interns' desire to



learn, and links it with including the intern as part of the team: “We do not want that students come to (Company) just observe information, how (Company) is going, how (Company) operate their business, we also want the student to participate in the work, to join the team” (Respondent 10).

TABLE 1. Research dimensions and corresponding theme details

Research question dimension	Coding theme	Coding theme specifics	Sources (n=21)	Coded responses
Perceptions of interns and internship role	Building relationships	General	15	49
		Formal	16	24
		Informal	18	38
	Perception of intern characteristics	Positive	13	36
		Negative	8	18
Learning how to work	Positive	12	39	
Overall experience with the FUV's WIL program	Perceptions of work visit	Positive	20	43
	Different from local university	Positive	18	35
	Perceived value of WIL	Positive	15	21
	Benefits to employer	Positive	10	27
Suggestions for further support from the FUV	Information sharing and collaboration		13	25
		Goal setting for interns	17	45

Thirteen responses made positive comments about intern characteristics, referring to English skills, drive to learn, work hard, and proactive attitudes. Eight respondents made negative comments; FUV students were perceived as overconfident, lacking in office technology skill (Excel was mentioned three times), and having less drive than less-privileged students from local universities. However, negative comments were often balanced with positive comments; for example:

“Before I have a chance to work with FUV students, I think they are over-confident and they want a high salary after they graduate ...but after they come here and having a chance to work with them and know you (Academic adviser) I know they have good knowledge and have a chance to study at a good university” (Respondent 12).

Work supervisors' experiences with the FUV's internship program were uniformly positive. With the caveat that work visits are well planned and the visit's purpose made clear, 20 out of 21 work supervisors indicated that rather than being an imposition, academic visits showed professionalism, commitment and care toward students and their learning. Other comments indicated the value of information exchange and updates on intern progress and capability, appreciation for establishing direct communication, program clarification, and heightened awareness of the other elements of the intern's WIL program such as the workshops and reflective assessments.

The FUV's WIL program was clearly perceived as different from local universities' internships in a positive way. While many of the work visit comments overlapped into this theme, other comments related to the lack of communications and clear links between the academic and internship work context that characterize local university internships. A lack of clear structure of internships from local universities resulting from this disconnection was also mentioned, for example: "Sometimes internship they don't really go to the company, they just do some kind of study or report. Not really good the program from the local university and cannot get experience, help to find a job" (Respondent 05).

Respondents indicated appreciation of the program's provision of generic skill workshops and discussions aimed at assisting students adapt to the workplace: this was seen as helpful to the sponsoring workplace as well as to the interns by making transition time smoother. As one respondent said:

"I think there are two values. The first thing is your support for your students to prepare for their new work experience. Sometimes students have a lot of knowledge but when they come to work, they do not know how to work with other people, how to communicate, how to work in a team work. The second, you are supportive for the business like us" (Respondent 16).

Ten respondents articulated direct benefits of the internship to their organizations. The 27

coded responses cited the value of interns' support of team projects and other tasks; in at least two cases these were directly related to client service provision. Interns' desire to learn and complete work to a high standard was highly appreciated. Other benefits related to the input of fresh and youthful ideas and feedback; opportunities to recruit promising interns to the business; and opportunities for the work supervisors to improve their own coaching and mentoring skills.

Work supervisors were positive about the support received from the FUV, demonstrated by suggestions for further support that centred on two specific themes:

- (1) More extensive information sharing about interns' study background prior to the placement start, post-internship evaluations (either in face-to-face meetings or electronically by email) as well as guidelines and information on the FUV's WIL program provided to the employing organization;
- (2) Goal setting to be done by the intern and shared with work supervisors/academic advisers close to the placement start date, accompanied by intern self-assessments.

## ***Discussion***

### **Perceptions of Internships**

As our interviews with work supervisors confirmed, internships in Vietnam – at least in business undergraduate degrees – are often left to the student to initiate with the employer directly (Ashwill, 2010; Tran, 2012). The culture of family networks and influence often results in students securing internship placement positions from family members and contacts, but can mean that the student's learning process is unstructured and divorced from the higher education context. Therefore, it was somewhat surprising but certainly encouraging to find that the work supervisors were overall strongly supportive of intern learning and development, and willing to take a collaborative role in that process. It may appear that our

sample could have been biased. Work supervisors who had supervised interns for less than two semesters were not interviewed, so observations of new work supervisors and work supervisors who may have withdrawn participation due to negative experiences were not obtained.

However, as a foreign university in an offshore environment we sought to identify the concerns of organizations most likely to provide optimal support for a successful WIL program. Our research focused on organizations that represented desirable work environments for our intern placements in order to further the success of these internship partnerships. This may have contributed to the high level of supervisor support across research question dimensions.

Several work supervisors had been interns in local universities themselves; these supervisors had been less than impressed with that learning experience, similar to local graduates interviewed by Tran (2012), and favorably compared the communication and structure provided for the FUV interns with their own intern experience. Other respondents contrasted the FUV intern program with that of their other local university interns' programs, again favorably. Consequently, perceptions that interns were "learning how to work" emerged as a theme across respondents. Work supervisors perceived that the internship's purpose was to not simply to give students tasks to gain familiarity and practice, nor even to train them to do more complex project tasks but moreover to explore and develop a deeper awareness of "how to work". Their propensity to actively build relationships with interns in a range of ways and situations to support their development underlined this awareness.

Where the interns themselves were concerned, again generally work supervisors perceived them as hard-working, responsible, proactive and possessing desirable youthful energy. However, something for foreign universities to note was that several respondents reported initial perceptions of FUV students as difficult, overconfident, and less driven than

local university interns. Although some respondents said their perceptions had changed after actually working with the FUV interns, initially FUV students may have been stereotyped as “rich” students who did not have the grade levels required to enter the better local universities and could pay their way into a foreign university course. English skills of the FUV interns were seen to be superior to local university interns. That was not surprising; however, two work supervisors said that interns from stronger local universities such as the Foreign Trade University were gaining ground. This indicates that foreign universities cannot afford to take their apparent advantage to supply intern candidates with English speaking skills for granted.

### **Overall experience with the WIL Program**

Respondents reported the overall experience as positive. As mentioned previously, the communicative and collaborative elements of WIL – academic visits to the workplace, communication with work supervisors, and involvement with interns’ goal setting and evaluation assessments – are rare in Vietnam so the findings were encouraging.

Most of the positive comments reflected the perceived professionalism of the FUV’s WIL program, and “care” for students. It was interesting to see the concept of “care” incorporated repeatedly into interview transcripts. A text search for the term “care” (at stemmed word level) in the nodes “work visit” and “difference from local university internships” produced 12 sources and 21 references. One reference stated that the FUV work visit not only showed care for the students, but for the work supervisors as well. The support given to students to match them with suitable placements was a point of difference between the FUV and local universities; respondents also perceived this support as evidence the FUV cared about its students. An implication for foreign universities is that by reaching out to work supervisors and visibly supporting students from the start of the placement and throughout the internship, the university’s image of seriousness and care may be established within industry circles. This provides a promising foundation to establish and solidify stakeholder trust and

collaboration that may be particularly valuable in foreign higher education markets such as Vietnam, where building relationships based on connections is a key element of successful initiatives.

Results indicated willingness to invest time into greater collaboration with the FUV on making the program more effective, and doing what they could even though it is not part of their job description. This feedback was encouraging. Given the deeply rooted separation between higher education and industry in Vietnam, where industry/academic partnerships are just beginning to be established, it is remarkable that work supervisors express this level of interest in further participation and collaboration. One possible explanation is that in Vietnam, with its youthful demographic – the median age in Vietnam is 28.5 years, compared to 36.9 years in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010) – work supervisors tend to be younger than the average Western work supervisors. They may have studied overseas, and may be more familiar with or open to greater collaboration. Or as young managers, they may be motivated to develop these coaching and training skills which are becoming increasingly valued as career skills in Vietnam.

### **Suggestions to improve support**

As the workplace environment and quality of workplace supervision is clearly critical to effective WIL the extent to which work supervisors requested further formal provision of information about students, their programs and their goals for the internship was remarkable and encouraging, especially given the usual Vietnamese internship context of non-involvement. The findings support research found in our literature review - that explicit guidance and support mechanisms for work supervisors are valuable ingredients in effective WIL activities (Parsons et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2006). To meet the challenges that work supervisors new to internship practice can encounter (Smith & Smith, 2009), communicating and gathering feedback to find out guidelines and support the work supervisors require early

in the establishment of a WIL program, and ongoing to support new work supervisors coming on board in the organization, is recommended.

Tools developed in the universities' home countries to inform and guide work-integrated learning industry partners should be provided to the offshore campus work supervisors, such as those provided in the Innovative Research Universities' Guidelines for WIL publication (2012). However, universities will need to adapt guidelines in order to make them clear, relevant, and culturally appropriate to the local business environment and useful to the local work supervisors.

Work supervisors wanted more information about the interns' goals and the courses they studied – although in an interview this has probably been discussed, often this is with HR or someone other than the frontline work supervisor. Especially in large organizations, intern allocation may be done by the Human Resources Department in consultation with a senior department manager, leaving the work supervisor out of the information loop (one work supervisor from a large organization mentioned this). Our results show that most work supervisors are concerned with their ability to deliver the best learning experience for the intern; therefore, work supervisors should be included in interviews if possible, or provided with the interns' CV and degree program information.

The other major finding was the work supervisors' interest in the interns' goal setting assessment. The suggestions to have students share their internship goals at the start of the placement so that work supervisors could provide more effective support shows a genuine orientation towards assisting students to take responsibility and ownership of their internship learning throughout the whole placement (Coll et al., 2008).

Following up on these suggestions to provide more intern-related information and goal-setting to the work supervisors may also help support work supervisors navigate the time constraints that both the literature review and our research findings identified as a concern and possible barrier to providing the best learning support to interns. As PhillipsKPA

(2014) reported, barriers to providing effective workplace supervision can be overcome by helping organizations develop more effective processes over time.

### ***Limitations***

All the work supervisors interviewed except one worked in private, joint partnerships, or multinational organizations rather than state-owned organizations. State-owned organizations in Vietnam have many different organizational characteristics – age of managers, control, and adherence to hierarchy (Quang & Vuong, 2002). In addition, this paper was confined to business degree WIL internships. Future research and activities that require understanding of internships applied to a wider spectrum of employer stakeholders in Vietnam would need to consider this limitation.

### ***Conclusions and implications***

In Vietnam work-integrated learning can be a point of difference from local universities. As this paper demonstrates, the essential link between WIL stakeholders at the front lines (student, academic adviser, and work supervisor) does not currently exist. The FUV's establishment of this essential link through its WIL program which incorporates work visits and feedback from work supervisors as well as students into a structured program represents a unique business degree program asset in the local environment. This asset is apparently valued and appreciated by the Vietnamese work supervisors that we interviewed. Therefore, program effectiveness should be monitored and adapted to make it as locally-relevant and valued as possible, boosting the WIL provider's competitive advantage.

Overall, research results indicate that work supervisors' collaboration in the learning process should be valued and explicitly sought by the FUV. Encouraging greater collaboration between the frontline agents of WIL – the academic adviser and the work supervisor, and WIL administrative coordinators – may represent a useful mechanism for foreign universities to gain insight and knowledge into local industry partners' practices and



needs. As many academics who teach at the FUV and at other international university foreign locations come from a range of countries and are new to the local business context, they may not have practice and tacit knowledge of local businesses; this may take years, if ever, to acquire. Therefore, close collaboration with local work supervisors represents benefits not only for the WIL program itself; their insights and feedback can inform course development on locally-relevant content and delivery approaches, and provide potential guest speakers, event participants, and industry project sources for the foreign university.

Communicating to establish and develop work supervisor support to ensure students obtain optimal benefits from their internship (and ultimately from their university degree) is essential for a successful WIL program. Our study shows the importance of demonstrating care to students, as well as to industry partners, when conducting WIL programs; the incorporation of work visits and collaboration on intern academic activities such as goal setting were viewed positively by our respondents. Therefore, consciously developing visible vehicles of communication and collaboration with front-line work supervisors is recommended for foreign universities in offshore environments.

As providing clear and complete internship guidelines, and information on the interns' academic programs was suggested by a majority of respondents, we conclude that internship program guidelines adapted to suit the local socio-cultural and industry environment should be provided to work supervisors as well as to larger organizations' human resource representatives at the very start of the internship program. In addition, intern academic workshop and assessment material should be presented and perhaps discussed in the workplace visit for new work supervisors, workshop material provided to work supervisors, and workshop supervisors invited to participate in workshops to a greater extent.

## References – article four

- Ashwill, W. (2010, July/August). Vietnam: A rising star on the US higher education scene. World Education News and Reviews. Retrieved from <http://wenr.wes.org/2010/08/wenr-julyaugust-2010-feature/>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2010). Australian Demographic Statistics (cat. no. 3101.0). Canberra, ACT, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3201.0>
- Bates, L. (2005). *Building a bridge between university and employment: Work-integrated learning*. (Research Brief No 2005/08). Brisbane: Queensland Parliamentary Library. Retrieved from <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/explore/researchpublications/researchbriefs/2005/200508.pdf>
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843.
- Bilsland, C., Nagy, H., & Smith, P. (2014). Planning the journey to best practice in developing employability skills: Transnational university internships in Vietnam. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 15(2), 145-157.
- British Council. (2012). Skills and employability. Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.vn/en/programmes/education/skills-employability>
- Choy, S., & Delahaye, B. (2011). Partnerships between universities and workplaces: Some challenges for work-integrated learning. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(2), 157-172.
- Cohen, D. Crabtree, B. (2006). *Semi structured interviewing: Qualitative research guidelines project*. Princeton, NJ: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Coll, R. K., Eames, C., Paku, L., Lay, M., Ayling, D., Hodges, D., ...Ferkins, L. (2008, October). Putting the 'integrated' in work-integrated learning. Paper presented at the World Association of Co-operative Education Asia Pacific 2008 Conference, Sydney, Australia.
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. Oxon UK: Routledge.
- Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C-J., & Cragolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/0729436042000206636.

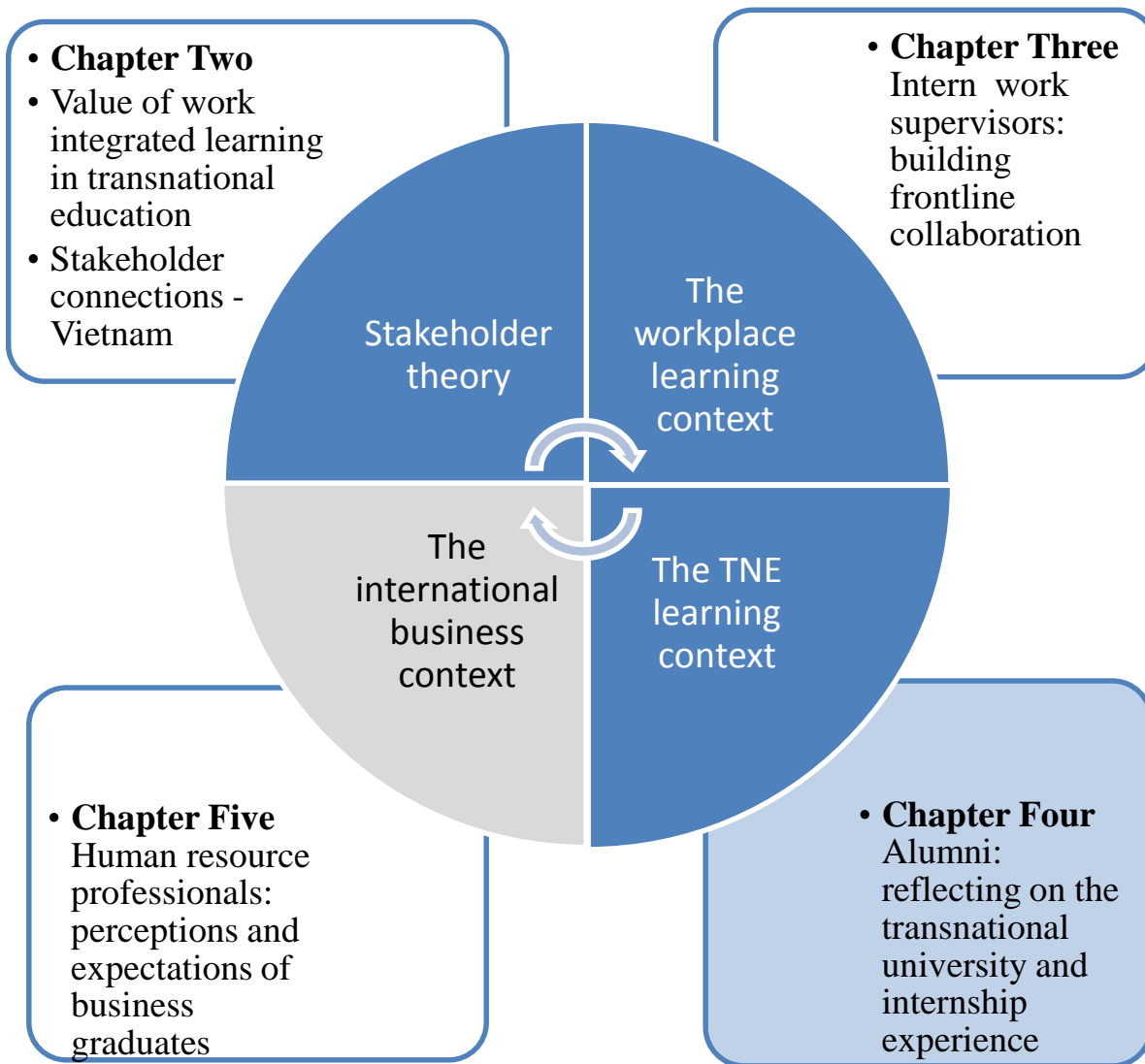
- Ferns, S., Smith, C., & Russell, L. (2014). The impact of work integrated learning on student work readiness (Final report). Sydney, NSW: Office of Teaching and Learning, Australian Government. Retrieved from <http://www.olt.gov.au/resource-impact-work-integrated-learning-student-work-readiness>
- Guile, D., & Griffiths, T. (2001). Learning through work experience. *Journal of Education and Work*, *14*(1), 113-131. doi: 10.1080/13639080020028738
- Henschke, K., & Poppins, P. (2009). Industry-based learning. In A. Tatnall, A. Visscher, A. Finegan, & C. O'Mahony (Eds.), *Evolution of information technology in educational management* (pp. 169-180). Boston, MA: Springer.
- Innovative Research Universities. (2012). *Work integrated learning 2012 – Toolkit for employers and industry*. Retrieved from <http://www.iru.edu.au/our-activities/projects/work-integrated-learning-2012-toolkit-for-industry.aspx>
- Jackson, D. (2013). Business graduate employability – Where are we going wrong? *Higher Education Research & Development*, *32*(5), 776-790. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2012.709832
- Lewins, A., & Silver, C. (2007). *Using software in qualitative research: A step-by-step guide*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Naylor, S., Bhati, A., & Kidd, P. (2010). Multiple campus operation-challenges and opportunities in implementing work integrated learning (WIL). In proceedings of *Work integrated learning: responding to challenges*. (pp 342-351). Perth, Australia: Australian Collaborative Education Network.
- Parsons, C. K., Caylor, E., & Simmons, H. S. (2005). Cooperative education work assignments: The role of organizational and individual factors in enhancing ABET competencies and co-op workplace well-being. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *94*(3), 309-318. doi: 10.1002/j.2168-9830.2005.tb00855
- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). *The WIL (Work Integrated Learning) report: a national scoping study* [Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report]. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- PhillipsKPA. (2014). Engaging employers in work integrated learning: Current State and future priorities. Retrieved from <http://www.phillipskpa.com.au/case-studies/higher-education/engaging-employers-in-work-integrated-learning-current-state-and-future-priorities>

- Quang, T., & Vuong, N.T. (2002). Management styles and organisational effectiveness in Vietnam. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 10(2), 36-55.
- Rowe, A., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2012). 'But I thought you were doing that' – Clarifying the role of the host supervisor in experience-based learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(2), 115-134.
- Rowe, A., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2013, September). What makes a good student placement: Recognising the importance of people. Paper presented at Our University, Our Future: Selected Research from Learning and Teaching Week 2013, Sydney, NSW, Australia.
- Smith, J., & Smith, R. (2010). Work integrated learning: An industry partner's perspective. In *VET Research: Leading and responding in turbulent times*. Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference proceedings (pp.1-10). Gold Coast, Australia.
- Smith, R., Mackay, D., Challis, D., & Holt, D. (2006). Seeking industry perspectives to enhance experiential education in university-industry partnerships: Going beyond mere assumptions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 7(2), 1-9.
- Tran, T. T. (2010, November). Enhancing graduate employability: challenges facing higher education. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne, Australia.
- Tran, T. T. (2012, July). Graduate employability: Interpretation versus expectation. Paper presented at the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) Conference, Hobart, Australia.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). Is graduate employability the 'whole-of-higher-education-issue'? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28(3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Trede, F. (2012). Role of work-integrated learning in developing professionalism and professional identity. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(3), 159-167.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School.  
Retrieved from  
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview112008.pdf>
- Vaughan, B. (2014, October). Student-reported quality of supervision/mentoring in Work Integrated Learning. Paper presented at the Australian Collaborative Education Network (ACEN) conference, Gold Coast, Qld, Australia.
- World Bank. (2008). Vietnam higher education and skills for growth: Human Development Department Report. Retrieved from

## **APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE**

1. Is coaching and mentoring a common practice in your organization?
  - a. If yes, can you give some examples?
  - b. How comfortable do you feel in your role as a coach or mentor?
2. How do you build up a relationship with a new intern?
3. How do you help the intern achieve goals?
4. How do you help the intern solve problems or overcome obstacles?
5. How do you provide feedback to the intern on his/her progress?
  - a. Immediately/weekly/verbally/ in writing etc....
6. Does your company have their own internship program in place?
  - a. If yes, can you describe it briefly?
7. How do you feel about the workplace visits by FUV academic supervisors?
  - a. How do those visits make a difference to interns from other universities?
8. How would you describe your overall experience with FUV's internship program?
9. What suggestions or recommendations would you like to express to improve our internship program?

## Chapter Four: Alumni; the transnational university and internship experience





## **Chapter Four: Alumni; the transnational university and internship experience**

This chapter focuses on exploration of alumni perspectives into their transition to the workplace. Stakeholder perspectives are situated primarily in the context of experiential and reflective learning (Kolb, 1976; Kolb & Kolb, 2005) and the budding field of transnational student learning experience (Pyvis & Chapman 2007; Wilkins, 2015) in the FUV post-graduate context. The primary research factor of interest is how implementation of work integrated learning and related curricula in a transnational campus is made appropriate and relevant to local student stakeholders. Alumni reflected on their decision to either follow work integrated learning elective units or not, if they did not choose work integrated learning. The interviews gave me the opportunity to explore other issues relevant to making the transition from a foreign university study environment to a local work environment. Therefore, two journal articles were produced, each exploring different research questions that built on the previous work supervisor research about the internship experience and developed focus in initial interviews, as expected in the study's overall grounded theory methodology. The first article explores alumni perceptions of transnational degree study on the adequacy of preparation to work in local organisations over three stages; as a student; as an intern or about-to-graduate student; and after graduation. The second article takes a focused look at the role internships play in a successful transition to local employment.

The role of context features prominently in both articles. The impact of the actual learning context – in terms of the academic and classroom context, the workplace context and the students' individual realms of activity (including part time jobs, volunteer work, clubs and hobbies) is central to the research, as it is in most research studies on employability and graduate transition to work. The unique element in this research is however the socio-cultural context: exploring the value of WIL internships and other aspects of the higher education learning context in supporting students' journeys from a foreign-university academic study environment to their facing a local work environment after graduation.



This chapter consists of a description of the background to the work integrated learning program and to the two journal articles; a brief explanation of the methodology as it transpired through the research process; and the two journal articles.

### ***Background of the FUV's WIL programme***

Until 2010 the FUV ran a one-course credit compulsory internship unit for undergraduate commerce degrees. The unit consisted of a 12-week full time internship placement. The unit was assessed through an industry project with three components: a proposal, a full report, and an individual presentation to a panel of industry and academic representatives. In 2010, the WIL course was revamped as a two-unit elective:

1. An internship placement of 12 weeks' industry internship, assessed by a goal proposal where the intern worked out planned goals for the internship, signed off by their work supervisor. The intern's performance was also rated by their work supervisor upon completion
2. Participation in six workshop sessions facilitated by academic staff. The main goal of the workshops was for interns to share their internship experiences and learn from each other. While various skills were the focus of the workshops, it was found that interns valued the workshops mostly as a way to learn from their cohort peers (Bilsland, Nagy, & Smith, 2014). This part was assessed through five reflective blogs submitted after each workshop, and a final reflection submitted at the end of the internship.

Both WIL elective units had to be taken concurrently. The main differences between the compulsory internship run until 2010, and the two-credit WIL internship run starting 2010 were:

- The compulsory internship unit prior to 2010 required students to create an industry project, and present and report their findings. The elective internship units post-2010 did not require an industry project; internship assessment activities were directed towards the intern's individual development, using goal-setting, reflection and sharing with other interns as part of the learning process.
- The compulsory internship unit prior to 2010 was graded using the standard numerical grade system. The two post-2010 elective internship units were non-graded units – students received either Pass or Fail.
- The academic supervisor and the workplace supervisor did not have any contact in the compulsory internship unit prior to 2010. The industry project was intended to be done from the perspective of the intern organisation, where the workplace supervisors' guidance, or at least the cooperation/assistance of the interns' colleagues would be necessary. However, the work supervisor was not involved in assessing the work, or the students' performance.

### ***Two journal articles***

As the findings data spread into two distinct thematic areas, I decided to write two articles in order to provide focused interpretation of each area. The first article (Article Five – Graduate Transitions: reflections from transnational campus alumni) centred on elements that influenced participants' adaptation to the local Vietnamese work environment. These elements incorporated general academic curriculum aspects, industry-related elements (such as internships, industry projects, guest speakers, visits, and competitions), FUV support activities through units such as the Career Centre and Learning Skills, and extra-curricular activity participation in clubs, volunteer work and other part-time work. The emerging concept of “incompleteness” was developed through findings that related to: lack of connection to the local business and socio-cultural environment; and an expressed desire to

continue the connection with the university after graduation. This article was prepared for submission to the *Journal of Education and Work* (Taylor and Francis).

Article Six “Work integrated learning internships; transnational campus alumni perspectives” specifically focused on internship experiences. Participant feedback revealed evidence for a theory of a transformational “learning journey” that applies to many facets of internships and other aspects of work-related learning as contrasted with a positional orientation fundamentally focused on getting a job. The difference between “positional” and “transformational” motivations has been investigated in the context of student motivation for studying a transnational degree in Malaysia by Pyvis and Chapman (2007). They found that domestic Malaysian students exhibited positional motivations for studying at the transnational university location, whereas students coming from other countries tended to adopt transformational learning approaches. My findings indicate that participant motivations to do internships centre on learning how to work and personal self-development. They appear “transformational” in nature, both in terms of the goals for the internship and the perceived value of the internship. This article was prepared for submission to *Education & Training* (Emerald).

## **Methodology**

Leading higher education institutions continually re-evaluate their product relevance to stakeholders. Alumni survey research enables institutions to obtain valuable related insight, and is frequently conducted due to relatively low resource costs, ease of analysis, and ability to produce conclusive quantitative results (Middaugh, 2011). Biased samples are however likely to occur since generally, satisfied and engaged alumni are much more likely to participate in the survey process (Middaugh, 2011). Although the issue of bias may appear to be irrelevant to a grounded theory methodology, nevertheless I was aware of the need for reflexivity given my position as a lecturer at the FUV. Therefore, the semi-structured

interview method was employed to probe into respondents' negative as well as positive perceptions, and to draw out rich context-related data that would be difficult to extract using quantitative data collection methods. See Appendix Eight for the interview guide.

The transcripts from the interviews resulted in two overall phenomena; perceptions of internships as a learning journey; and a generalised incompleteness around the entire transition experience from the FUV to local workplaces. Due to length constraints of relevant journals (7000-8000 words), it was decided to separate the findings into these two journal articles.

## **Sample**

Theoretical sampling was applied during the data collection phase, consistent with grounded theory methodology where data collection and analysis take an iterative approach (Patton, 2002).. The initial sampling plan included FUV alumni only, because the research project aimed to discover aspects of foreign university graduates' transition to local work environments. However, as responses from alumni repeatedly indicated the differences between local university internships and the FUV internships (differences that were also discovered during the interviews with work supervisors in Chapter Three), it was decided to include business graduate alumni from two high profile local universities. Two local alumni were recruited through local connections; their feedback about the lack of coordinated internships and about internship assessments echoed each other, triangulating the responses made by both the intern work supervisors (Chapter Three) and the FUV alumni.

Feedback from the local university alumni about other aspects of the program was not relevant to Article Five, given its overall focus was on aspects of the FUV experience that impacted on workplace transition. Therefore, data analysed for Article Five was limited to responses from the 16 FUV students. Hence, the participants included in Article Five did not include Respondents 13 and 14 in Table 4.1. In Article Five, quotes from participants 15, 16,

17 and 18 were attributed to Participants 13, 14, 15 and 16 respectively. Table 4.1 identifies the WIL industry type by Vietnamese-defined classification codes used by the FUV.

Table 4.1 Alumni sample details

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Year Grad</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>WIL Internship Industry type</b>	<b>Occupation Industry type</b>	<b>Current occupation</b>
A01	M	2011	FUV-E	Advertising, PR, Digital, Social Media	Processing, Manufacturing	Operations mgr
A02	F	2008	FUV-C	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	Non-Governmental (NGO)	Marketer
A03	F	2008	FUV-C	Construction/Property Development/Real Estate	Government	Analyst
A04	F	2011	No	N/A	Accounting, Auditing	Auditor
A05	F	2011	FUV-E	Accounting, Auditing	Accounting, Auditing	Auditor
A06	M	2011	No	N/A	Finance	Not working
A07	F	2012	No	N/A	Education	Marketer
A08	M	2011	No	N/A	Government	Analyst
A09	M	2010	FUV-E	construction/Property Development/Real Estate	Construction, property, Real Estate	Sales manager
A10	M	2007	FUV-C	IT-Hardware	Banking, finance	Sales manager
A11	F	2012	FUV-E	Processing, Manufacturing	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	Sales manager
A12	M	2012	No	N/A	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	Accounts exec
A13	F	2010	Local uni	insurance	Health	Marketer
A14	F	2013	Local uni	Banking, finance	Banking, finance	customer service exec
A15	M	2009	FUV-C	Government	Government	Business Development
A16	F	2012	FUV-E	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	Hospitality (Hotels, Restaurants, Tourism)	Guest relations
A17	F	2012	FUV-E	FMCG	Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG)	HR manager
A18	F	2013	No	N/A	FMCG	Masters Student

## Information about Findings

Initially, I had not planned to analyse responses to questions about internships to respondents who had not done WIL. However, as analysis proceeded, it transpired that most alumni who did not do WIL did their own internships. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the six students in the Non-WIL sample segment of FUV alumni, adding details about their non-WIL internships. Students not taking the WIL elective also voiced many responses recommending WIL to others and about the value of internships. Wood, Psaros, French and Lai (2015) also found that although 107 alumni respondents chose work placement assessment as the most useful programme element of a transition to work, only 33 had actually done a placement. Therefore it was interesting to explore reasons why students did not take WIL as an elective even though judging from their feedback they held positive perceptions about WIL.

Table 4.2 Internship details for non-WIL participants

Respondent	Gender	Graduated	WIL Internship?	Non-WIL internship/s	Current occupation
A04	F	2011	No	WIL social enterprise project intern	Auditor
A06	M	2011	No	1. Big Four auditing intern; 2. Masters finance intern; 3. NGO volunteer intern	Seeking work (finance)
A07	F	2012	No	Overseas volunteer intern	Marketing exec
A08	M	2011	No	Public Relations firm intern	Analyst
A12	M	2012	No	No internship	Account exec
A18	F	2013	No	1. Education marketing intern 2. IT peripheral marketing intern	Masters student

To close Chapter Four, the two journal articles follow.

## ***References - Chapter Four introduction***

- Boud, D., & Middleton, H. (2003). Learning from others at work: communities of practice and informal learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 15(5), 194-202. doi: doi:10.1108/13665620310483895
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 4(2), 193-212. doi: 10.2307/40214287
- Kolb, D. (1976). *Learning styles inventory*: Boston: Wiley.
- Middaugh, M. F. (2011). *Planning and assessment in higher education: Demonstrating institutional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Pyvis, D., & Chapman, A. (2007). Why university students choose an international education: A case study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 235-246. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.07.008>
- Wilkins, S. (2015). Ethical issues in transnational higher education: the case of international branch campuses. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-16. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1099624
- Wood, L. N., Psaros, J., French, E., & Lai, J. W. M. (2015). Learning experiences for the transition to professional work. *Cogent Business & Management*, 2(1), 1042099. doi: 10.1080/23311975.2015.1042099



## **Article Five – Graduate transitions: reflections from transnational campus alumni**

Christine Bilsland

*Department of Marketing and Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

*Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University, NSW 2109 Australia*

[Christine.bilsland@mq.edu.au](mailto:Christine.bilsland@mq.edu.au)

Leanne Carter

*Department of Marketing and Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

Leigh Wood

*Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

## **Graduate transitions: reflections from transnational campus alumni**

Transnational universities operating in offshore environments face challenges delivering locally relevant business programmes. Perspectives from local graduates on the usefulness and relevance of their degree programme to local employment would provide valuable insight; however, published research on the transnational graduate experience is scarce.

Therefore we interviewed alumni of a foreign university campus in Vietnam (FUV) to discover their perceptions of the FUV business degree experience, and its usefulness in making a transition to the local work environment.

Findings showed satisfaction with the FUV's role in developing useful business skills as well as English communication skills and confidence. However, perceptions of incompleteness emerged around integration of local business culture and workplace awareness, and around suggestions for stronger ongoing alumni engagement.

Keywords: work integrated learning; transnational higher education; graduate transition; alumni; Vietnam

### ***Introduction***

Graduating from university and starting the first fulltime or career job is an exciting time, but research indicates that this transition is often accompanied by uncertainty, ambiguity, and stress (Cranmer, 2006; Wood, Psaros, French & Lai, 2015). As a university degree is a high investment, research on graduate transition focuses largely on match of graduate skill to employer expectation, and measures such as percentage in work, time to find a job, and other quantitative measures of graduate success, rather than on the narrative experienced by the graduates themselves.

Transnational education (education delivered to students living in a different country to the institutional provider) generates issues around standards, quality, and relevance. A draft strategy released by the Australian Government for consultation in April 2015 (Government of Australia, 2015), recognised these issues, advocating that transnational higher education

institutions seek greater insight into the transnational student experience. This paper explores one aspect of the transnational student experience; how the “foreign-ness” of a transnational degree programme impacts on graduates’ transition to local industry employment.

The paper takes a qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews with sixteen undergraduate business alumni of a foreign university in Vietnam (FUV) sought to reveal perceptions of their experiences with the FUV and their views on making the transition from FUV study to working in a local Vietnamese environment.

### ***Literature review***

Transnational education (TNE) is a cost-effective method of exporting degrees in countries where operating costs are lower than they are in Australia (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007). There is little published research about the offshore education phenomena compared to research for overall “internationalization” of Australian universities (Harman, 2005; Naidoo, 2009; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002; Chapman & Pyvis, 2012; Gallagher, 2011; Bennell & Pearce, 2003). Reasons why students choose to study in an offshore campus have been explored (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015; Hoare, 2011; Robertson, Hoare, & Harwood, 2011; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011; Pyvis & Chapman, 2007; Vinen, 2007; Wilkins & Huisman, 2013). Wilkins (2015) discussed offshore stakeholder expectations of similar academic quality as mandated in the home campus, alongside locally appropriate social and business relevance. Student satisfaction with transnational campus business degree programmes in Malaysia and Hong Kong (Chapman & Pyvis, 2005), Singapore (Hoare 2011), Vietnam (Nguyen, 2009; Dobinson, 2013; Ly, Vickers, & Fernandez, 2015), China (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2012; Moufahim & Lim, 2015), and computer science programmes across four transnational education market locations – Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Vietnam (Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011) have been addressed to a degree.

However published research from the perspective of transnational higher education alumni is scarce. Robertson, Hoare, & Harwood (2011) noted the lack of research on transnational higher education graduates' post-study experience, and that the few extant studies, quantitative and market-driven, do not reveal insight into the graduates' transition experience.

### **The graduate transition**

Although transitions through life's milestones can be viewed by a society as routine rites of passage, these involve change and progression to a state not yet experienced by the individual undertaking the transition, making them potentially uncomfortable. As Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick, & Cragolini (2004) stated, often graduates experience anxiety and unease when transitioning to their first graduate job and don't feel prepared to meet expectations. Wood and Reid (2006) observed a lack of career awareness and professional identity in mathematics graduates; a study of graduates from several universities in Australia showed many were not sure about what they wanted to do or what their learning qualified them for (Wood et al., 2015).

This feeling of anxiety and lack of fit may be intensified in Vietnamese graduates for several reasons. First, the university culture in Vietnam has been to expect the university to prepare graduates for employment (Tran, 2014). Second, the gap and disconnection between higher education and industry in Vietnam frequently generates comments about relevant work-related skills not being delivered at Vietnamese universities (World Bank, 2008, 2012; British Council, 2012; Trung & Swierczek, 2009; Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Tran, 2010; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008). Third, although an increased awareness and implementation of soft skills is emerging (Tran, 2013a) systematically integrating them into curriculum is difficult. Fourth, (Tran, 2013b) identified the stress and anxiety new graduates experience due to perceived importance of family, money, relationships and "rumour" in securing jobs.

How university experience contributes to successful work transition is shaped by both academic and non-academic factors (Scott & Yates, 2002) and influenced at several stages throughout a programme – orientation, years of progression, assessments, graduation, post-graduation (Arambewela & Maringe, 2012). Gale and Parker (2014) discussed pedagogical transition approaches in the context of students transitioning into university. They called for research that considers “students’ lived realities” (p. 734) and develops student capability to manage life change; this supports the premise of transition as an ongoing development. Lees (2002) proposed that graduates continue the “transfer process” (p. 3) in their first job and that employers assess graduates’ skill based on this process. Wood and Reid (2006) reported the critical influence of the manager during the first year of work after graduation. The emerging impression is that the transition experience is a cumulative process that temporally extends from programme entry and participation to after graduation; the implication for any university operating in an offshore transnational environment is the need to understand this process from local stakeholder perspectives.

### **The context of Vietnam**

Tran (2013a) found that local university graduates were unsure of what their university education had equipped them for, and described differences in expectations of fresh graduate hires in MNEs and international organisations and those of government organisations and SOEs in Vietnam. Nguyen (2010) reported that Vietnamese graduates who returned to Vietnam after studying in Australia found that fitting into Vietnamese life after completing a degree in Australia was challenging: “A golden knife handle cannot fit on a metal knife” (p. 772). Although there is a lack of research into whether graduates of transnational degree programmes also experience this challenge to fit into local work environments, it might be expected that alumni graduating from a foreign university would perceive that their foreign education would better equip them for careers in international organisations.

Nguyen and Leihy (2015) interviewed students of a foreign university in Vietnam; their participants reported feeling both exhilarated and disappointed about their university experience, which Nguyen and Leihy referred to as a state of ambivalence. Other Vietnamese academic researchers (Tran & Marginson, 2014) have pointed out that although foreign higher education institutions are important change agents for much-needed reform in Vietnamese higher education, it is important to “be faithful to Vietnam’s core values and educational tradition” (Brown, 2014).

As research into alumni perceptions of the transition from a transnational university education to the local workplace is relatively unexplored, our overall research problem centred on discovering how the academic curriculum prepared alumni for a transition to local work environments; perceptions of the FUV’s wider support for the university-to-work transition; and what more the university could do to support its graduates in their transition to work.

### ***Method***

The research adopted a qualitative approach to gather exploratory insight into unknown aspects of the alumni participants’ experience and perceptions of the FUV educational experience – particularly around alumni perceptions of how the foreign university experience prepared them to function in a Vietnamese workplace context.

Purposive sampling of 16 alumni who had graduated at least one year before the interview were recruited through personal contacts, snowball sampling and LinkedIn connections; an iterative approach to data collection and analysis was taken, and participants were recruited until data saturation occurred (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). A semi-structured approach was used to enable maximum insight into participants’ perceptions of the work-readiness preparation delivered by the foreign university. Interviews lasted between 30-60 minutes.

Interviews were audio-recorded for accuracy of transcription. Transcripts were coded and analysed with Nvivo 10 qualitative software, using a progression of open coding to establish theme categories, axial coding to find associations between themes, and selective coding appropriate to discovery of emergent theory (Creswell, 2007).

### ***Findings and Analysis***

Alumni shared views about how the FUV prepared them for a satisfactory transition to the local work environment. These are summarised in two emerging dimensions: Table 1, benefits of the FUV experience compared with local universities; and Table 2, FUV drawbacks, along with representative quotes. Suggestions for improvement, with quotes, are summarised at the end of this findings section in Table 3.

Table 1. Perceived benefits of FUV compared to local universities

<b>Pertinent details/number of coded sources</b>	<b>Representative quotes</b>
<b>Academic (15 sources)</b>	<p>Maybe because there was a lot of presentation project, available was back then not provided in other schools. ...you have the confidence ability to talk in front of many people” (A10).</p> <p>“Another thing good about FUV is that the lecturers actually live here, .for example the lecturers find out about the Vietnamese accounting system. So they can share with us what the differences between the Australian accounting system ...and that is like never, no student who studies abroad can get that from their lecturer“(A04).</p>
<b>Work integrated learning Internships (16 sources)</b>	<p>“We at FUV ...are very lucky to do internships with industry projects. It shows the responsibility of the university, helping the students orienting their career path, in comparison with my friends at Vietnamese universities they were left alone” (A02).</p> <p>“When I studied there were some courses that students had to work with real company I think that is really good. For example in marketing research...customer behaviour ...we had to work with real company, get the information and analyse aspects for the company ...this is really really good” (A11).</p>
<b>Networking, opportunities to build connections (14 sources)</b>	<p>“For me, internship is not successful just because you have done a certain amount of tasks. But like how many friends or connections you have made” (A09).</p> <p>“Networking events like AusCham were good to make the connections. The teachers also” (A16)</p>
<b>Extra-curricular activities (13 sources)</b>	<p>“Yes I was president of a club that helped me to build on organizing skill, to persuading people, more of the soft skill thing ...very important” (A10).</p>
<b>FUV “brand image” (9 sources)</b>	<p>“(FUV) students who are hard-working and active in their studies and have real capabilities – they are sought for by companies, especially big ones” (A16).</p> <p>“Like my boss he also received some message from some media about (FUV) that is why he is confident in me. I believe that is partly why he is interested in me” (A08).</p>



Table 2. Perceived drawbacks of FUV compared to local universities

<b>Pertinent details/number of coded sources</b>	<b>Representative quotes</b>
<p><b>Academic (11 sources)</b></p> <p>Disadvantage in knowledge of Vietnamese business terms and communication; procedures; culture</p>	<p>“I have to read about the tax and law and all the documents in Vietnamese and I have problems writing in Vietnamese as well. So it’s like actually I am prepared in English but actually the language is in Vietnamese” (A06).</p> <p>“In FUV we have student club activities – quite open with that - but in other unis they have youth union and they have to follow policies, procedures, used to the official documents” (A03).</p> <p>“I know not many FUV students join government company like me - most of them join multinational or private companies. The knowledge of FUV is more applicable in these fields more than government” (A08).</p>
<p><b>FUV Brand image (4 sources)</b></p>	<p>“Maybe some employers, they don’t know why students would pay the high fees to go to FUV unless they couldn’t get into Vietnamese universities” (A16).</p>

Many alumni evaluated the FUV's curriculum as more practical and current to support graduates in their work than that of local universities. The FUV's information resources such as the library and database access were seen as more extensive than resources of local universities. Use of a variety of assessment methods, as compared to the perceived reliance on written essays and examinations, were perceived as differences between local universities and the FUV. The use of teaching methods that incorporated presentations with question and answer sessions requiring students to think on their feet were viewed as helpful for building confidence and communication skills required by employers. The addition of real industry-project into subjects was valued.

Participants noted the diversity of backgrounds that international lecturers brought to the FUV to share with students. Alumni perceived the support from lecturers, different teaching methods and styles of communication they experienced at the FUV as beneficial. However, they also expressed concerns of inadequate business Vietnamese familiarity, particularly with regard to terminology and procedures relevant to accounting and business law. Culturally, local university graduates were seen as having advantages not only in terms of familiarity with Vietnamese business terms and standards, but in terms of understanding policies and official documentation found in Vietnamese organisations. Local university graduates were often viewed as a better fit for government, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and some privately-owned traditional Vietnamese businesses.

Alumni believed that employers held both positive and negative opinions about FUV graduates. The obvious advantage was that as graduates of an English-language institution, they were believed to have good English skills as well as confidence in dealing with foreign customers, suppliers, and other contacts in English. Alumni remarked on the public recognition of the FUV through its marketing success and positive media coverage. However, they expressed concerns about negative stereotypes of FUV graduates such as; privileged, therefore less motivated to work hard; unsuitable as a cultural fit into Vietnamese

organisations; and lacking academic skills to achieve grades that would enable them to qualify for the best national universities.

Internships, whether affiliated with the FUV in their work integrated learning (WIL) programme or not, were seen as essential for students who lack actual work experience to gain practice and familiarity in a work context. The support from the FUV in providing its students with planned internships was an advantage that differentiates the FUV from local universities. The main value in doing an internship was not getting a job, but to “learn how to work” in ways that would add to their overall experience and confidence in handling work environments.

Extra-curricular activities represented valuable support for students to develop teamwork, time/project management, communication and other business-related skills. Those who did not participate in clubs nevertheless, in hindsight, saw benefits in joining clubs. Networking events organised by the FUV, and through arrangements with foreign associations such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce, were mentioned as important for establishing connections and for developing networking skills.

### **Suggested improvements**

Alumni were asked for specific recommendations for improvement at the end of the interview: “What could the university do to help its graduates’ transition to the workplace?” All sources offered at least one suggestion. Table 3 indicates four coded areas of suggestion convergence: incorporate local content into academic programmes; strengthen relationships with alumni; prepare better for the local workplace context; and reach out to students.

Table 3. Suggested improvements

<b>Improvement dimension</b>	<b># coded sources</b>	<b>Pertinent details/examples</b>	<b>Representative quotes</b>
Better preparation for the local work environment	15	Help students form realistic expectations of the local workplace; prepare for conflict/challenges;	<p>“...some of the companies and managers that I met say that FUV students expects too much from the workplace, so a lot of people in companies will not want FUV students” (A04).</p> <p>“I was shocked, when I study I think yes I get good grade in studying but when I get to the work I am not quite detailed” (A15).</p> <p>“Maybe uh I don’t know they can open a group on Facebook and post like usually ...post some information about the companies ; post some reflections from students from previous semesters ; like testimonials?” (A05).</p>
Greater local relevance in academic programme	11	Include content/courses on local culture, business in Vietnam/Asia	<p>“I believe these courses not only will be interesting but also very useful if students go on to work in Vietnam. Even though we’re international school, we cannot forget the fact that we operate in Vietnam, and the curriculum shouldn’t be too far away” (A16).</p>
Alumni relationships	9	Improve communication with alumni; Involve alumni to communicate with/mentor current students and interns	<p>“The information that reaches alumni now is not consistent” (A03).</p> <p>“Alumni could mentor the new students, help them to see what is along the way, and after graduation. I would be very willing to do that! “(A15).</p> <p><i>[share experience with students]</i> “I am quite willing to do so. Because it is from real experience” (A01).</p>
FUV should reach out to students and graduates	9	Involvement beyond academic knowledge; encouraging extra-curricular activities; keep communication channels open after graduation	<p>“I feel the university could do more to encourage motivation ...for instance to join clubs” (A13).</p> <p>“I believe the period after graduation is quite critical. During the first few months or even year of work, if a graduate can still receive support from school ...advice, consult ...it would help them feel less shocked, less lonely” (A16).</p>

Suggestions to incorporate greater local cultural relevance into the academic curriculum included to supplement subjects that integrate Vietnamese business-context into course work with one or two subjects specifically addressing Vietnamese business, culture or history. Although this paper's scope does not extend to curriculum adaptation issues, these suggestions provide potentially useful insight into the importance students place on local relevance.

Several alumni reported a lack of perceived effort by the FUV to establish and maintain a vibrant alumni community in Hanoi. First, the alumni wanted to be able to keep in touch with other alumni in order to support each other in career and business goals. Second, participants shared their willingness to mentor current FUV students and interns. The FUV had a student peer mentoring system in place for several core subjects such as accounting, statistics, and law; alumni appreciated this support but spoke about extending this mentoring system to incorporate FUV graduates connecting with current students to share relevant and valuable early-career experiences. Several expressed willingness to act as mentors. Local university programmes were mentioned twice as being more advantageous but in developing networks in general; local university students have more time (less academic pressure throughout the year, just more intense around the exam time) to take advantage of industry sponsored events such as seminars, club events and networking.

Several participants mentioned that the FUV could help students manage their work expectations realistically. The FUV operates a Career Centre; alumni expressed desire for the centre to expand its effectiveness through greater use of social media, engaging students, alumni and industry partners. Several alumni remarked that although the FUV's supportive culture was a good thing, the FUV should prepare students to face less supportive situations in workplaces. Alumni valued extra-curricular activities, but felt that the value of these activities was often not perceived by students until they graduated; Tran (2013a) reported similar findings from interviews with local university graduates, partially due to perceived pressure

from parents to focus on academic study rather than clubs. Alumni felt that therefore, the FUV should actively ‘reach out’ to students to encourage and motivate them to join in.

### ***Discussion***

University graduates around the world experience similar uncertainty and anxiety as they move from the world of university to that of the workplace – for example feelings such as uncertainty were discovered in Vietnamese graduates by (Tran, 2013b), and in Australia by Wood et al. (2015). Therefore it was not surprising to find that the alumni in this study recalled similar feelings on this transition.

However it appears that the transition from a foreign university to local employment adds an additional layer of anxiety. We found that Nguyen and Leihy (2015)’s interpretation of conflicted identity between the “self” and “other” in students attending an offshore Australian campus in Vietnam was further reflected in our data, which highlighted similar issues balancing local and FUV environmental elements. As our alumni sample reflected on their past student experience as well as on their adjustment to local work environments, post-graduation feelings of ambivalence formed areas of incompleteness after the university education was sealed with a degree.

### **Incompleteness**

Three conceptual areas of the research findings emerged as commonly shared elements of importance for alumni: balancing local social and business culture with foreign academic elements; preparation for the local work environment; and continuing links with the FUV after graduation. We found that although alumni shared many positive perceptions of their FUV programme relevant to these elements, they simultaneously made comments and improvement suggestions that indicated perceived aspects of “incomplete” experiences. Table 4 illustrates how elements that contributed to states of incompleteness emerged at various stages of the passage from FUV student to alumnus.

Table 4. Emergent evidence of incompleteness across transition stages.

Stage of student passage	Elements	Emergent evidence of incompleteness
As Enrolled student  (academic environment)	Academic curriculum  -Lack of local culture  -Lack of local knowledge  -Lack of local business relevance	<b>1. Cultural Imbalance</b>  Lack of connection to local culture  Lack of connection to local knowledge  Lack of clarity/confusion on how to apply foreign university theory to local business setting
As Graduating student  (transition environment)	Identity questioning  Lack of awareness, realistic expectation for work	<b>2. Lack of fit into local work environment</b>  Shock, “incomplete” unprepared feeling at time of transition
As Established Alumnus  (post-graduation communication environment)	Lack of alumni community  -Lack of opportunity to connect with the university, other alumni and students	<b>3. Feeling of disconnection</b>  Lack of fit resolves as experience at work develops; however incompleteness can develop from perceived lack of alumni engagement

### 1. Cultural Imbalance

One aspect of incompleteness related to the tension between curricular focus on Western/Australian theory and practices and Vietnamese/Asian sociocultural orientation. As alumni have experienced both being a student of the FUV as well as graduating from it and finding their path in life and career, their feedback revealed areas of great satisfaction with the FUV yet simultaneously identified a concern to balance their status as foreign university students with local sociocultural identity, as outlined below:

“The thing I remember the most from that conference was when she asked all of us to stand up on two feet, then she asked us to pick up one of our feet. And she said that we could not stand with only one foot and that is what FUV brings to us. The other world, or way in Vietnam. But the other foot is our Vietnam, we are in Vietnam so we must balance ourselves with our culture – we cannot isolate ourselves from the western things because we are living with that – we have a lot of foreign companies coming to Vietnam

and we have to get used to that. And that is what I remember, and I still keep that in mind with every step in my career” (A04).

This quote represents the balance that not only the FUV graduates must strike; it appears to also apply to the FUV. It echoes findings of offshore students’ ambivalent feelings about their Western education experience (Nguyen, 2014), and supports calls for Western higher education providers operating in Vietnam to respect Vietnam’s values and educational tradition (Marginson & Tran, 2014). A foreign provider’s entire “product” (curriculum, assessment, teaching methods, support mechanisms, stakeholder relations) must seek balance and relevance with its offshore host.

Alumni made suggestions to add local and/or Asian subjects into the curriculum such as “Doing Business in Asia”, and to incorporate greater awareness of local culture into academic units. Although such curricular issues are beyond this paper’s scope, carefully considered incorporation of such elements would demonstrate the university’s concern for its offshore students as members of local society, not simply as students or even as valued customers. TNE providers could also benefit from increased two-way learning (rather than the deficit model of the West teaching the East decried by commentators on transnational education in the past) both through research and development of culturally-relevant content, and through engagement with students in class and through assessment activities. Further research to determine how offering locally-based content would best lift student engagement, motivation, confidence, and overall learning is justified.



## **2. Lack of fit into local work environment**

Although the alumni interviewees stayed at home in Vietnam to complete their FUV degree, their responses indicated a similar lack of fit as did Nguyen (2010)'s participants who returned to Vietnam after studying in Australia. Many felt that the FUV curriculum, teaching style and culture made it easier for them to transition to a multinational or foreign-run company than to government or state-owned enterprises (SOEs). The two alumni currently working at state-owned enterprises (SOEs) both remarked on the difference in working culture; however, both stated that it took just one or two weeks to adjust. These students had both done internships and worked in several other companies before starting their current roles at the SOEs, so may have developed adaptation skills as they moved from one job to another. Comments about a perceived lack of cultural fit in government and SOEs may have been of greater concern to this alumni sample than to alumni from other parts of Vietnam; most respondents were from Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam where there are more career opportunities in this sector.

Using Vietnamese in the workplace was seen as an initial challenge after graduation. As FUV graduates had studied under the Australian curriculum in the English language, they found it challenging to deal with local industry business terms and organisational policy language. FUV alumni perceived initial disadvantages through a lack of understanding of business communication standards in the Vietnamese context, for example the style of writing emails and letters. One student found common ground between herself and Vietnamese graduates who had studied overseas:

“A lot of the documents ...we are not totally understanding...and the team mates are not as open as in foreign companies ...it's the culture. So I talk with some of my new colleagues coming back from study abroad, they said the same thing ...that there is a little bit of culture shock so that we form a small company ...that we study abroad ...foreign study students” (A03).

The critical question arising from this research is what role the FUV can play in supporting students at various parts of their transition to the local work environment – which as alluded to by Arambewela and Maringe (2012) and Lees (2002) is a process starting at university entry and continuing past graduation.

Alumni were happy with the focus given to teamwork, the participative class environment and WIL program elements (industry projects, opportunities to reflect, provision of the means for learning to work), but in some ways perceived themselves as less able to network and fit in with local industry – particularly, with the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and Vietnamese-owned businesses. Reasons given were partially discipline-specific (particularly for accounting/finance internships where Vietnamese accounting, tax and legal systems differ from Australian methods studied). Additionally, alumni hinted at an opportunity cost of studying at the FUV – proposed by Nguyen and Leihy (2015) this cost stems from a comparison of the local university environment, whose “social, cultural, academic and other capitals are denominated in ‘local currency’” (p. 91). Several mentioned that local university students become familiar with local work practices not only in class, but through school activities, clubs, and extra-curricular activities. The importance of work-integrated learning and internships that was highlighted by alumni as an FUV advantage may represent crucial support towards recouping part of the opportunity cost, through applying FUV learning to local environments. Another way to manage transition expectations is to provide students with greater access to and engagement with alumni to share their own experience; several of our respondents appeared eager to provide students with such mentoring support and advice.

Carefully considered incorporation of relevant local business and cultural awareness into a foreign university’s curriculum hopefully will encourage graduates to become flexible and adaptable – qualities valuable in all graduates, but possibly of particular use to TNE graduates who work in local organisations with uniquely local and/or regional culturally-

influenced characteristics. TNE providers may need to flip the usual rationale for cross-cultural business training – international business, expatriate assignments, or working with overseas partners and clients – to that of doing business or working *at home* in local organisations – and contextualise class and training activities accordingly.

### **3. Alumni disconnection**

Alumni associations and the building of networks was seen as a positive feature of the FUV; networking sessions were seen as valuable but, at the same time, did not go far enough.

Alumni groups for international students who study overseas have been supported by both national universities and by national government bodies (for example the Australian Vietnamese alumni association has links to Australian Education International offices in the Australian Embassy in Hanoi). However, Dobson (2015) suggested that the newly-released National Strategy for Work Integrated Learning in Higher Education (Universities Australia 2015) overlooks the potential of strong international student alumni networks to impact on international student employability initiatives. The expressed desire for ongoing engagement from FUV alumni supports this contention; but there is little research on the topic of alumni engagement with regard to transnational students.

Our respondents' support for greater engagement may link to a lack of "belonging" to the university referred to by Pyvis (2008). Promotional materials for universities and their offshore campuses are often full of images that offer prospective students this sense of belonging. Our findings show that a desire to belong may extend beyond the student years in the case of the FUV. Many universities realise the benefits of alumni engagement and work hard to keep the connections alive with their alumni; however in offshore campuses, this institutional commitment may lack strength. The comments from alumni who graduated between 2007 and 2011 provided the greatest number and depth of coding references about the lack of alumni engagement. Rather than feeling less need for alumni affiliation over time

as their career and life commitments expanded, they continued to value and desire alumni connections for both personal and business reasons:

“Sure that is one thing I love FUV for sure I receive good impression, I have good friends here, I want to keep contact with FUV and alumni is one way to do so ...for my plan I do not intend to stick to only one business like I want to expand after I have enough money to open some business myself or to join with some other to open a company outside, like that, I will love to have some connections for that. For first I am thinking to see how people are doing ...after that, it might be great to sometime work together” (A08).

Ongoing engagement is important and providing ongoing opportunities for FUV alumni to connect will also keep alive valuable connections between the FUV and its alumni as their careers progress and expand. Transition-to-work mentoring from the FUVs alumni to its current students is an element of the entire alumni engagement value that represents not only student learning benefits, but wider relationship-building and public relations opportunities for TNE providers that go beyond the scope of this article topic.

### ***Limitations***

There are regional differences in Vietnamese consumer beliefs and behaviours, and differences between rural/urban participation in Vietnamese tertiary education (Ziguras & Pham 2014). As alumni for this paper came mostly from Hanoi, their perceptions may differ from those of alumni from major urban transnational education markets (Ho Chi Minh City, Danang) as well as from regional education centres (Can Tho, Thai Nguyen) and rural Vietnam.

Alumni were interviewed rather than students because alumni have not only experienced the student journey, but also the transition to the workforce; some had completed more than one internship and worked at a variety of organisations. A limitation therefore is that it had been at least one year since respondents had graduated; recall of student-related experiences may be less sharp or accurate than if students were interviewed. Alumni

interviewees may also constitute a sample bias (Middaugh, 2011); if they didn't have mostly good memories of their FUV student days they would not be likely to spend time doing interviews. This was mitigated by using semi-structured interviews that probed for negative recall and suggestions for improvements.

### ***Conclusion***

Alumni shared many positive perceptions about their FUV experience. They viewed the academic curriculum and teaching methods as supportive; particularly the opportunity to do FUV-supported internships, and engage in other work integrated learning activities with industry such as industry projects and networking events. However, three areas of perceived “incompleteness” emerged across three stages of transition to working life.

First, we found a perceived tension between Western and Vietnamese/Asian elements of the FUV course. Suggestions were made to address this tension by weaving local culture and business practice into the business curriculum, offering elective courses in Vietnamese/Asian culture and history. Resulting class activities would give FUV teaching staff useful insights into local realities through student in-class feedback. Not only greater cultural awareness could be incorporated into teaching and assessment, but in some aspects a reversed approach to cross-cultural training could be adopted by TNE providers; i.e. doing international business at home from a local perspective. Although a consideration of curricular matters that balance local relevance with institutional academic standards is beyond the scope of this paper's topic of graduate transition, it is an important area for transnational curriculum developers to address.

A second concept of incompleteness – with the strongest impact around the time of graduation and workplace entry – relates both to feelings of transition anxiety expressed by graduates worldwide and to general uncertainty about how a foreign degree equips them to work in the Vietnamese workplace. The FUV's work integrated learning program and local

internships were greatly appreciated to support learning how to work in local Vietnamese business. However, alumni felt more could be done by the FUV to reach out to students to support them in forming realistic expectations and preparing them to work in local environments.

The third element of incompleteness evolved from an expressed desire for greater continuing alumni engagement. Vietnamese and other Asian cultures place high importance on networks; alumni that maintain strong links with their university can be powerful brand ambassadors. TNE providers in Asia should ensure that a strong formal alumni communication strategy is in place to deploy by the time the first batch of students have graduated. Our findings show that alumni want to stay connected with the FUV not only for their own career and personal purposes, but to mentor FUV students. This desire to engage with students represents a valuable learning resource for TNE providers; one that alumni are uniquely positioned to provide to students undertaking TNE degrees.

To conclude, currently there is a significant research gap concerning transnational university students' transition to local workplaces. Our findings show the importance for TNE institutions to research how locally relevant and effective work transition approaches should be implemented in the offshore university environment at all stages of their students' transition journeys.

### ***References – article five***

- Ahmad, S. Z. & Buchanan, F.R. (2015). Motivation factors in students decision to study at international branch campuses in Malaysia. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-18. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1067604.
- Arambewela, R. & Maringe, F. (2012). Mind the gap: Staff and postgraduate perceptions of student experience in higher education. *Higher education review* 44 (2), 63-84. doi: hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30044716
- British Council. (2012). Lifelong Learning Strategies: Vietnam main page. Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>.

- Brown, D. (2014, October 18). Vietnam's education system: still under construction. *EastAsia Forum*. Retrieved from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2014/10/18/vietnams-education-system-still-under-construction/>
- Chapman, A., & Pyvis, D. (2005). Identity and social practice in higher education: student experiences of postgraduate courses delivered 'offshore' in Singapore and Hong Kong by an Australian university. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 25(1), 39-52. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2004.05.003>.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008) "15 Student Questions and Answers." In *Basics of Qualitative Research (3rd ed.): Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 313-328. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/03075070600572041
- Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C-J., & Cragnolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/0729436042000206636
- Creswell, J. W. 2007. *Qualitative enquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. (2d ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dobinson, T. 2013. *Encountering the "Asian learner": Teaching and learning experiences of postgraduate Asian learners and their lecturers in Australia and Vietnam*. (Doctor of Philosophy). University of Western Australia, Perth.
- Dobson, G. (2015). Where there is a WIL there is a way (for alumni to make a difference). *Vista* (Winter 2015): 10-12.
- Duoc, T. Q., & Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Gale, T., & Parker, S. (2014). Navigating change: a typology of student transition in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education* 39(5), 734-753. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2012.721351
- Government of Australia. (2015). *Draft national strategy for international education: For consultation*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Hoare, L. (2011). Transnational student voices: reflections on a second chance. *Journal of Studies in International Education* 16(3), 271-286. doi: 10.1177/1028315311398045
- Lees, D. (2002). *Graduate employability-literature review*. Exeter: LTSN Generic Centre, University of Exeter.

- Ly, C. T. M., Vickers, M. H. & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam: Graduate student insights from a qualitative study. *Education + Training*, 57(1), 88-107. doi:10.1108/ET-08-2013-0104.
- Marginson, S., & Tran, L. (2014, September 19). Higher education must focus on flexibility. *University World News*. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140918110311868&mode=print>.
- Middaugh, M. F. (2011). *Planning and assessment in higher education: Demonstrating institutional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Miliszewska, I., & Sztendur, E. (2011). "Critical success attributes of transnational IT education programmes: The client perspective." *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research* no. 10 (1):123-137.
- Moufahim, M., & Lim, M. (2015). The other voices of international higher education: an empirical study of students' perceptions of British university education in China. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 13(4), 437-454. doi: 10.1080/14767724.2014.959476.
- Nguyen, C. T. (2010). What are the perceptions of Vietnamese students in approaching the teaching and learning process in Australia? *Journal of Administration and Development Mahasarakham University*, 2(1), 8-33.
- Nguyen, T. N. (2014). *Selling western dreams: Australian transnational education in Vietnam and the formation of students' identities*. (Doctor of Philosophy). Monash University, Melbourne Australia.
- Nguyen, T. N., & Leihy, P. (2015). Vietnam, the West and the generalized Self in transnational education. In H. Zhang, P.W.K. Chan, & J. Kenway (Eds.), *Asia as Method in Education Studies: A Defiant Research Imagination* (pp.82-96). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Nguyen, T. D. (2009). Signal quality and service quality: A study of local and international MBA programs in Vietnam. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 17(4), 364-376. doi:10.1108/09684880910992331
- Pyvis, D., & Chapman, A. (2007). Why university students choose an international education: A case study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 235-246. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.07.008>.
- Pyvis, D. 2008. Transnational Education in Mauritius: Quality Assurance for Program Exporters. In L. Dunn, & M. Wallace (Eds.), *Teaching in Transnational Education:*



- Enhancing Learning for Offshore International Students* (pp.227-237). New York: Routledge.
- Robertson, S., Hoare, L., & Harwood, A., (2011). Returnees, student-migrants and second chance learners: case studies of positional and transformative outcomes of Australian international education. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 41(5), 685-698. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2011.562369.
- Scott, G., & Yates, K.W. (2002). Using successful graduates to improve the quality of undergraduate engineering programmes. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 27(4), 363-378. doi: 10.1080/03043790210166666
- Speight, S., Lackovic, N., & Cooker, L. (2012). Stakeholder attitudes towards employability in a Sino-British university. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 3(1), 26-40. doi: 10.21153/jtlge2012vol3no1art556
- Tran, L., & Marginson, S. (2014) Education for Flexibility, Practicality and Mobility. In L. Tran and S. Marginson (Eds.), *Higher education in Vietnam: Flexibility, mobility and practicality in the global knowledge economy* (pp.3-28). UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). *Graduate Employability in Vietnam: A Loose Relationship Between Higher Education and Employment Market*: Anchor Academic Publishing.
- Tran, T. T. (2013a). Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education*, 65(5), 631-644. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9567-7.
- Tran, T. T. (2010, December). Enhancing graduate employability: challenges facing higher education. Paper presented at Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne.
- Tran, T. T. (2013b). Counting the uncounted: rumours, corruption and luck in job seeking by Vietnamese undergraduates. *Journal of Asian Critical Education*, (2), 3-12.
- Trung, T. Q. & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175.
- Universities Australia. 2015. National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education. Australia: Universities Australia.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School.  
Retrieved from  
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>
- Vinen, D. G. (2007). *Sustainability of offshore business programs: the key to success in Vietnam*. (Doctor of Business Administration). Swinburne University, Melbourne.

- Wilkins, S. (2015). Ethical issues in transnational higher education: the case of international branch campuses. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-16. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1099624.
- Wilkins, S., Balakrishnan, M. S., & Huisman, J. (2012). Student Choice in Higher Education: Motivations for Choosing to Study at an International Branch Campus. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(5), 413-433. doi: 10.1177/1028315311429002
- Wilkins, S., & Huisman, J. (2013). Student evaluation of university image attractiveness and its impact on student attachment to international branch campuses. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(5), 607-623. doi: 10.1177/1028315312472984
- Wood, L. N., Psaros, J., French, E., & Lai, J. (2015). Learning experiences for the transition to professional work. *Cogent Business & Management*, 2(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/23311975.2015.1042099.
- Wood, L., & Reid, A. (2006, November). Graduates' initial experiences of work. Paper presented at the annual conference for the Association for Research in Education, Parramatta NSW.
- World Bank. (2008). Vietnam Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2012). Vietnam - Second Higher Education Project. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Ziguras, C., & Pham, A. T. N. (2014). Assessing participation in cross-border higher education in cities: Foreign education provision in Ho Chi Minh City. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 55(2), 169-181.

**Article Six – Work integrated learning internships: transnational campus alumni perspectives**

Christine Bilsland

*Department of Marketing and Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

*Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University, NSW 2109 Australia*

[Christine.bilsland@mq.edu.au](mailto:Christine.bilsland@mq.edu.au)

Leanne Carter

*Department of Marketing and Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

Leigh Wood

*Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia*

Note: The abstract for this article was prepared according to journal publisher (Emerald) template.

## **Work integrated learning internships: transnational campus alumni perspectives**

### **Purpose**

This qualitative research paper investigates Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in a transnational education environment, Vietnam, in order to gain insight into making WIL internships relevant to local students.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

The qualitative design employed semi-structured interviews with local business undergraduate alumni of a foreign university campus located in Vietnam (FUV).

### **Findings**

Internships were crucial to successful adaptation to the local work culture.

Administrative and academic guidance provided to source internships and support students through goal-setting and work visits by FUV staff were perceived as particularly useful. WIL internships were seen as an FUV advantage compared to local universities, where internships lack formal support mechanisms. Alumni regarded internships as valuable transformational experiences on a learning journey, rather than simply as pathways to a post-graduate job.

### **Research limitations/implications**

Results are limited in scope to Vietnam.

### **Practical implications**

Universities operating in transnational environments must meet local stakeholder needs by providing authentic, locally-relevant industry-related learning activities. Although the study's scope was limited to Vietnam, alumni feedback provides useful insight into incorporating local stakeholder perspectives into transnational work integrated learning elements.

### **Originality/value**

This paper addresses a gap in research: understanding transnational stakeholder perspectives of work integrated learning, in particular qualitative interview feedback from alumni. Alumni constitute a uniquely valuable feedback source based on dual experience as foreign university students, and as fresh graduates making the transition to local work environments.

Keywords; Work integrated learning; transnational education; internships; alumni;  
Vietnam; work-based learning

### ***Introduction***

Transnational education refers to educational activities where the learners are located in different countries than the educational institution (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2001). Australian universities operate transnational programmes in 22 Asian countries, and transnational tertiary education will continue to be a significant long-term growth sector (Orr, 2013). The central role of higher education in the eyes of offshore stakeholders (students, families, local employers, communities and government) is to equip graduates with skills valued in the local work environment, enabling them to create stable, sustainable and productive careers and lives. Nguyen, Vickers, Ly and Dong (2016) discussed the strategic role of transnational education in Asian governments, including Vietnam, in developing graduate skills required in globalising economies.

Work integrated learning (WIL) is being mandated into university curriculum (Bates, 2005; Patrick et al., 2008; M. Smith et al., 2009; Wolf & Archer, 2013) to better integrate authentic practice into curriculum, with the aim of equipping graduates to meet industry expectations and requirements, to manage their careers and contribute to continued national well-being (Bridgstock, 2009). Work Integrated Learning covers a range of teaching and learning practices that integrate the world of work with academic curriculum (Patrick et al., 2008; Cooper, Orrell & Bowden, 2010). Internships, work placements, industry projects, community-based service learning, workplace visits, guest lecturers, industry-sponsored seminars and competitions are all examples of WIL activities.

Australian higher education policy dictates that universities must provide employability-related outcomes relevant to the context of their international and transnational students (Government of Australia, 2015). Gamble, Patrick and Peach (2010) stipulated that Australian universities must play a role in graduate skill development of international

students. This implies that universities should offer authentic WIL opportunities to transnational students, given that WIL is recognized as a crucial vehicle for graduate skill development. However, WIL is resource-intensive (Patrick et al., 2008), and presents challenges when delivered in offshore legal and sociocultural environments, (Naylor, Bhati, & Kidd, 2010; Welch, Vo-Tran, Pittayachawan, & Reynolds, 2012) particularly with respect to internships. This challenging landscape requires research commitment aimed at understanding the local WIL context. A crucial aspect of this local understanding is gaining insight into the perspectives of key local stakeholders.

Therefore, this paper deployed an exploratory research approach. Business undergraduate degree alumni from a foreign university in Vietnam (FUV) were interviewed about their perceptions of WIL internships, and the relevance of the FUV WIL programme to the local work environment.

The WIL elective subject at the FUV requires students to complete a 12-week minimum 40-hour week internship with credit value, and undertaken under the joint supervision of a workplace supervisor and an academic adviser, therefore conforming to the definition of “internship” identified by Gault, Redington and Schlager (2000, p. 46). Interns also attend six workshops held at the FUV campus by academic staff. Each two-hour workshop is planned around generic skill topics such as communication, dealing with conflict, future career planning; however the main purpose is to provide interns with a platform to share their experiences and learn from other interns. Assessments include a goal setting proposal, bi-weekly reflection blogs and a final reflection submission.

### ***Literature review***

This review links the research aim of understanding local alumni perspectives of WIL with relevant research output (mainly from Western sources). First, the review considers: how WIL develops work-ready skill; how universities support WIL by blending experience with

learning process awareness; and elements of perceived internship value. Then, the WIL environment in Vietnam is outlined.

### **Addressing work-readiness challenges with WIL**

Cranmer (2006) proposed that “employability skills” – a broad set of skills transferable across disciplines such as communication, teamwork, problem solving, analytical, project management and use of IT – cannot be adequately developed in university classrooms. Consequently resources aiming to equip students with these skills should be directed to work-context learning experiences such as internships. Integrating the workplace context into the learning context is important if not essential (Guile & Griffiths, 2001; Wang, 2012). Trigwell and Reid (1998, p. 146) definitively stated that “graduates who are now in the workforce are in no doubt about where it is that they acquire key skills”.

Optimal informal learning is developed through “unfamiliar and unpredictable situations” (Crebert, Bates, Bell, Patrick & Cragolini, 2004, p. 47) that occur in work contexts. Similarly, Scott and Wilson (2002, p. 3) noted that “it is when a troubling problem or dilemma emerges that professional capability is most tested, not when things are running smoothly or routinely”. Rather than teaching students about work, universities should adopt the approach that “work, like education, is a context *through which* students learn and develop” (Guile & Griffiths, 2001, p. 117), based on work-based learning encounters and interactions that constitute valuable informal learning (Eraut, 2007).

### **Blending experience and process in the work-based learning context**

Dacre Pool and Sewell (2007)’s model of employability identifies reflection and evaluation as necessary links between learning and development of employability (p. 280). Consequently, WIL initiatives often incorporate reflections into activities and assessments (Bullock, Gould, Hejmadi, & Lock, 2009; Richardson, Jackling, Henschke, &Tempone, 2013). WIL internships provide evidence-based opportunities for students to reflect and process

experiential learning, recognise informal learning, develop effective reflective practices (Boud & Middleton, 2003; Knight & Yorke, 2003; Harvey, Coulson, Mackaway & Winchester-Seeto, 2010; Oliver, 2013) and crucially, to actively set and monitor work-related goals, including personal learning goals (Abeysekera, 2006). Reflective assessments can be perceived as forced (White 2012). Dean, Sykes, Agostino and Clements (2012) reported mixed feedback from commerce interns about reflection assessments; although comments were generally favourable, the authors recommended consideration of more flexible approaches, as did Sykes and Dean (2013).

Developing collaborative networks between students, managers and academic supervisors is fundamental for informal learning in placements, enhanced by reflective process learning (Greenbank, 2002). Often, informal learning is “not even perceived as learning by the learners themselves” (Eraut, 2004, p. 146).

Non-internship WIL practices can stimulate valuable informal learning by addressing authentic industry issues through communicative collaboration between students and practitioners with: simulations (Subramaniam & Freudenberg, 2007; Ehiyazaryan & Barraclough, 2009); consultancy teams (Meredith & Burkle, 2008); service and community learning projects (Langworthy, 2007; Bringle & Hatcher, 2009); and commercial industry projects (Lee, McGuiggan & Holland, 2010).

### **Perceived value of internships**

Studies have reported positive correlations between: employers’ positive perceptions of the influence of internships on graduate employee performance (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010); consistently higher graduate earnings (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000); WIL internship participation and reported levels of general self-efficacy (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000; Subramaniam & Freudenberg, 2007), discipline-related self-efficacy (Bates, Thompson, & Bates, 2013) and professionalism (Freudenberg, Brimble, & Cameron, 2009); increased confidence to set and pursue goals ((Purdie, Ward, McAdie, King, & Drysdale, 2013); higher



self-confidence in job-seeking activities (Brooks, Kay, & Edwards, 2014); and developed networking skills and contacts (Patrick et al., 2008; Tymon, 2013). Trede (2012) found that development of a graduate's professional identity is a significant but hidden outcome of WIL (p. 160). M. Smith et al. (2009) pointed out that students doing Work-integrated learning internships transform their self-concepts as career professionals. Chapman and Pyvis (2006) discriminated between students' "self-transformative" (desire to change themselves) and "positional" (employment-oriented) motivations (p. 235) to study international university degrees; although their research did not investigate WIL activities, it is interesting to explore whether this motivational concept is reflected in transnational students' motivations to undertake WIL internships. Callanan and Benzing (2004) noted that although landing career-related employment was positively correlated with internship completion, confidence about personal fit with graduate career-related employment was not related to internship completion.

Little and Harvey (2007) cited reasons why students decide against internships: the difficulty of fitting internships in with income-generating work; family and study commitments; and costs of internships that require students to extend the programme duration. Interestingly, Gochenauer and Winter (2004) found that a high percentage of all respondents viewed internships as Very Important or Somewhat Important, regardless of whether or not they had actually taken an internship.

### **The WIL environment in Vietnam**

Vietnamese English-language media regularly spotlight the perceived lack of preparation for work that university graduates display (Dao & Thorpe, 2015). Academic researchers (Hayden & Lam, 2006; Trung & Swierczek, 2009; Pham & Tran, 2013) have proposed that graduates of Vietnamese universities are poorly prepared for workplace transition, particularly for work in an increasingly globalised environment due to Vietnam's lack of progress in

internationalising tertiary education (Cam, 2015; Nguyen, Vickers et al, 2016). Duoc and Metzger (2007) concluded that not only do graduates lack soft skills, but that universities should provide more practical experiences.

Unlike Australia and other TNE-exporting nations such as the UK and USA, where university-industry training, internships and graduate recruitment relationships are not unusual, in Vietnam a systemic lack of communication and collaboration between higher education and industry is entrenched. This disconnect is a barrier to Vietnam's higher education sector being able to provide graduates with industry-relevant skill training (Tran, 2006; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008; World Bank, 2008, 2012; British Council, 2012; Tran, 2014; Vu, 2014; Ly, Vickers, & Fernandez, 2015). Nevertheless, in Vietnam employers and families of graduates hold universities responsible for delivering suitably employable graduates that can contribute to family and society wellbeing (Tran, 2013), and work effectively in both local (Ly et al., 2015) and international environments (Bon, 2013).

Marginson and Tran (2014) noted the minimal implementation of work integrated learning in Vietnam due to this lack of linkage between industry and higher education. Internships are compulsory for many local university students; however, universities can only find places for 20-30% of interns (VietNamNet Bridge, 2010). There is no official programme for the interns to follow, nor is there a systematic approach to communication between the work supervisors and the university administrative or academic staff (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015).

A "triple partnership" approach matching government direction with appropriate university and industry learning collaborations with students is advocated by WIL practitioners in Australia (Patrick et al., 2008). Only recently in Vietnam has this triple partnership approach surfaced in practice (Vu, 2014; Cam, 2015; Far East University, 2015); however, weak collaboration has resulted in ineffective internships in undergraduate business

degree programmes reported by tertiary tourism programmes and teaching practicums (Nguyen, 2015).

### **Research questions**

As a qualitative, exploratory project conducted in Vietnam, research questions were broadly formulated around discovering:

- On what basis did alumni make the decision to do/not do the WIL internship elective?
- What value did internships deliver?
- How could internships be adapted to better fit the Vietnamese work environment?

### ***Methodology***

FUV alumni with one to five years post-bachelor degree work experience in local organisations were recruited through professional contacts, LinkedIn, and snowball sampling. Alumni constitute appropriate participants for studies about higher education effectiveness (Delaney, 2004), particularly perceptual research studying the impact of higher education on graduate skills (Harvey, 2000, Teichler, 2002).

Six participants did not undertake a WIL internship. Recruitment of participants continued to the point of redundancy, when no new information was generated from interviews, as advocated by Patton (2002). Two local university alumni who had done internships were later recruited to further explore perceptions that FUV alumni commonly held about local Vietnamese university internships. None of the 18 participants (11 female and 7 male) had accumulated significant work experience prior to commencing the undergraduate degree.

Blackwell, Bowes, Harvey, Hesketh, & Knight (2001) stated that graduates reflect on work experience more positively than current interns. Therefore, to mitigate possible response bias a semi structured interview approach was employed to probe for both positive and negative views as well as to encourage rich feedback for maximum exploratory insight.

Interviews lasted 30-60 minutes, and were audio-recorded for accuracy of transcription. Transcripts were coded and analysed using Nvivo 10 qualitative software, employing an iterative process of open coding to identify potential categories, and focused coding as constant comparative analysis of the data produced emergent theoretical concepts.

### ***Findings and Analysis***

The coding process resulted in the emergence of four dimensions, plus suggestions for improvements, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Emergence of research dimensions

Dimension	Coding specifics	# Sources N=18	#Coded responses
Deciding on WIL internship	Overall influences	17	87
	Influence in <i>decision not to do WIL internship</i>	6*	14
Goals of internship	Personal and Professionally-related	17	78
Value of internship	Learning how to work	18	75
	Support of FUV/work supervisor	15**	76
	Personal learning /development	14	32
	Assessments	12	20
Improvements	Overall suggestions	13	21

\*The six alumni who had not done WIL were coded into the decision not to do the WIL elective, but not coded into the WIL assessment dimensions.

\*\*The two local intern interviewees had no comments as although they were very aware of the FUV, they had no knowledge of the FUV internship.

Each dimension is presented, with accompanying representative quotes, in Tables 2-5.

### **Decision to do WIL internship**

It was expected some alumni might have elected to do a WIL internship in order to “avoid” two more academic subjects – either due to boredom or restlessness after nearly three years of study, or perceived poor academic performance; however, only one participant indicated this.

Alumni who chose the WIL internship as an elective endeavoured to: put their theoretical learning into practice; gain experience in a real organisation; break into the Vietnamese technical environment and office culture; and develop contacts.

Table 2. Factors in decision to do WIL internship

Reasons to do internship	Representative quotes
Apply theory into practice	“I at that time liked to work in a real company so I can practice and apply what I learned into a real environment” (A11).
Gain experience in a real organisation	“Many people say that when you go to work it is different, and you know I just feel like it is time to really try ...what it is like after university ...internship is just a time for you to get exposed. So that is why I choose an internship” (A17).
Break into the Vietnamese technical environment/office culture	“At FUV we mostly focus on international things and even the tax the legal stuff the law that we study here – international law, Australian based – but if we work in Vietnam we have to understand the Vietnamese environment and that’s the most important thing when it comes to the internship” (A05).
Develop contacts	“It is a good way for students who don’t have any part time or relationships” (A09).

### Decision not to do WIL internship

Participants who did not take the WIL elective shared that the main considerations were either financial, desire to study more subjects, a lack of suitable companies or internship opportunities, and confidence in their ability to obtain work or an internship independently.

Table 3. Factors in decision not to do WIL internship

Reasons not to do internship	Representative quotes
Financial (WIL internships cost two electives)	“I decided not to do an internship because I was a scholarship student, for financial reasons. I wanted to use the scholarship to do all 24 subjects. Then I could find my own internship later” (A18).
Desire to learn more (by taking academic courses instead)	“I think that I want to learn more courses and for the internship I can apply by myself or directly apply for a job” (A07).
Lack of suitable companies or internship opportunities	“I talked with my friends about this issue ...they said that the companies were not appealing ...our target company is the big four accounting firms” (A06).
Confidence to obtain work or an internship independently	“I already had some contacts outside so I think that I can get an internship myself” (A08).

Five of the six interns who did not do the WIL elective internship nevertheless would recommend the WIL internship to other students who lacked confidence and experience; the following comment was typical:

“If you don’t have any connection with outside, then the internship programme is quite good for you to step into the real world you face the real difficulties and the real boss” (A08).

A matrix query to examine overlapping coding showed that participants who did not choose the WIL internship elective had many responses indicating the value of internships; although they had not done a WIL internship, five out of the six alumni in this category had arranged their own internships after graduation.

### Goals of internship

Responses coded here incorporated specific goals behind reasons for doing internships.

Because it transpired that most students who did not take the WIL internship elective subsequently arranged their own internships, all but one student had responses coded to this dimension.

Table 4. Goals of internship

Goals of internship	Representative quotes
Gaining experience to add to the CV, especially well-known organisations	“Since they have a brand name then it would make a mark on my CV for later applications” (A03).
Applying discipline skills to work context	“My goals were to ...apply my knowledge in the real job. To see how different between the theory and ...real life” (A11).
Improving cross-cultural/language skills	“Have a chance to practice English – it is the target environment I want to work in in the future” (A14). “...so actually I have a lot of exposure to different environments and culture. Australia, Vietnam and India so working styles of different countries” (A06).
Familiarising with real work culture, hierarchy, communication	“Dealing with the people at work later on ...because at university everyone is so nice ...lecturers are so nice to you ...so yeah it is better to see what is real” (A01). “Students support each other but in the company it is different” (A17).
Networking – a. develop contacts and b. develop skills	“The connection is business it is everything so internship help you not only to get experience but to start to build relationship” (A08).
Assessing career – personal fit	“(Internship) was an opportunity to get into the real world, observe what they do and I had 3 months to assess if it was good for me or not” (A02).

## Value of internships

Perceived value of internships fell into four general themes: related to general learning to work through experiencing work challenges and consequences; support derived from the FUV staff and work supervisor collaborative guidance; self-learning and development; and goal proposal, reflection and industry project assessments.

Table 5. Value of internships

Value dimension	Representative quotes
Learning how to work	<p>“if we work in Vietnam we have to understand the Vietnamese environment and that’s the most important thing when it comes to the internship “ (A04).</p> <p>“I learned that the team in the workplace is very important ...how they organise the work is different from than when you learn at the university” (A03).</p>
Support from FUV/work supervisor	<p>(FUV support) “...university cares about us, knows what we are doing and what to improve so for the long term help us to improve ourselves” (A01).</p> <p>(work supervisor support) “ he gave me patience to find out what the work was, how we must always give our best to do better work, not just good work ...he was very inspirational (A15).</p>
Personal learning and development	<p>“Yes it’s not really for my work but for my life, I just want to experience how people in different countries they have different feelings, different style of workings, I just want to experience it“ (A07).</p>
Assessments	<p>(goal proposal) “...yes I do it my supervisor and me we take it quite seriously. The goal proposal helped me” (A17).</p> <p>“Reflections were very helpful because sometimes when we got busy at work and we would sort of forget ...what was the experience like“ (A05).</p>

## Improvement suggestions

Although most alumni found goal proposal and reflection assessments useful, five alumni proposed assessment improvements: reporting/presenting on projects (3) or on diarised internship experiences (1); doing group presentations with small number of interns working in similar industries (2); and changing the reflection assessment (3). Although reflections were seen as helpful generally, alumni expressed concern that WIL assessment structure and criteria produced superficial writing as outlined below:



“Reflections should be done verbally ...consultation sessions ...because you write your reflections you won't be able to explain the dynamics ...you have to confirm with the word limit, comply with this, or that ...for sharing you need to have to give the background, who influenced what, and you just cannot do it with a word limit” (A15).

### **Local university alumni**

The local university alumni participants suggested improvements for better internship learning outcomes: support before the internship, and support during the internship to enhance the value of the learning experience:

*Greater support with the internship:* “They should give you guideline, what you should do in your internship and ...yeah we should have something like conference, and the seminar.

People could share about their experience in internships, their problems I think it is better for us” (A13).

*Academic support during internships to enhance learning:* “I think there needs more interaction ...help from university ...should have the instructor to not only help writing the reports but also the practical experience that affects students during internships ...have the contact with the mentor, and understand the progress through the internship ...I think that would be more useful” (A14).

### ***Discussion and implications***

The findings indicate that alumni were motivated by both positional goals (experience for the CV, putting discipline theory to practice, familiarising with local work cultures, gaining network contacts) as well as transformational goals (working with a diversity of people and culture, improving personal communication skills, and exploring career fit).

## **Internship learning; a journey, not a destination**

Alumni valued internships as part of an experimental learning journey rather than strictly instrumental means to obtain jobs. Not one of the participants identified getting a job at the internship company as a goal. Neither did they state that the value of the internship lay in obtaining a job offer (although most were offered either permanent jobs or contract employment). Rather, participants' internship goals and perceptions of value were based on gaining general experience and trying out particular areas of work to assess personal career compatibility. This corroborates findings from interviews with a range of international students at Australian universities; internships were valued for personal development and learning, not only for opportunities to get job offers.

Most alumni valued internships, similarly to Gochenauer and Winter (2004)'s findings. As Little and Harvey (2007) found, alumni chose not to do the internship elective due to costs – as well as the competing desire to take further discipline-based subjects. They perceived themselves as confident and capable of finding internships or work on their own. This finding supports offering WIL internships as elective units, giving students the flexibility to make their own choices. Students should be supported with relevant academic and career counselling if they need assistance making the elective choice, however offering internship electives eliminates the need to maintain resource-intensive internship activities for students who don't require them. Alumni who didn't choose the WIL elective did not dismiss WIL internships as exploitative and lacking meaningful experience, compared to their perceptions of many internships arranged through local universities

The surprising finding was that five out of the six alumni who did not do the FUV internship arranged their own internships after graduation. In fact one student who did not do the WIL elective actually did three internships (one at a Big Four consulting company immediately after graduation, one in Australia as a post-graduate student, and one overseas volunteer internship in India). The only alumnus who did not do any form of internship was

working at an international hotel in operations, rather than in their field of study (accounting) and was nevertheless very positive about internships in the hotel to get grounded experience useful in many occupations:

“Actually hospitality job very nice, you do communication, marketing, even accounting, so actually is multifunctional job. So why not send somebody there? For other companies maybe you only do finance, not anything else” (A12).

The finding that internships are viewed as sufficiently valuable for students to postpone the search for regular paid employment after graduation in order to seek, and undertake, independent internships lends support for the existence of a learning journey orientation. Alumni motivations to do internships (of any kind) appeared to encompass not only the “positional” investments towards being able to obtain employment but also “self-transformative” expansion of world view and a range of skills and approaches (Pyvis & Chapman, 2007). They wanted to try out fields they were interested in, and to gain general experience.

### **The internship learning context: part of the learning journey**

Internships gave students the chance to widen their learning perspective to the local workplace context. Participants’ feedback about the value of using discipline and generic skills in internship work environments corroborates literature that advocates integrating workplace learning into higher education. Because transnational degrees are based on foreign curricula, locally-based WIL elements may be even more essential in offshore locations than they are in the home campus. For graduates to establish confidence in themselves as competent to deliver in local work environments and form professional identities, they need to learn through work (Guile & Griffiths, 2001) in authentic, local but low-risk, supportive environments.

Facing work challenges and learning from and through other people contributed to internship learning. As Scott and Wilson (2002) maintained, troubling challenges that test learners are integral to professional learning development. Frequently, alumni reported learning from challenging situations, confronting interactions with others in the workplace, and finding their place in the organisational hierarchy. The reality of working in the local work environment exposed interns to learning that stemmed from discovering both good and less pleasant realities of working environments, including dealing with conflict:

“I learned how to bear some team conflict and how to manage it” (A07).

However as interns are students, subject to the stresses and anxiety of first-time workforce participants, the degree to which university support was valued in delivering legitimate internship opportunities, providing academic guidance and especially with facilitating the support of workplace supervisors is notable. Work supervisors were instrumental in creating a learning environment for interns, acting as mentors, guides and providers of relevant and timely feedback. In the words of one alumnus:

“If they have time they can support intern work ...that’s what I learn from internship ...it’s not very academic ...but help you hand in hand and show you what to do” (A01).

Work supervisors also value the support that universities provide to enable them to improve their own coaching skills and deliver helpful outcomes to interns (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015).

Alumni valued WIL assessments based on their perceived authenticity. Internship goal proposals received unanimous support as useful, helpful assessments. These proposals involve dialogue, feedback and final approval from the work supervisor, and are directly linked with interns’ own motivations for doing the internship. This was in contrast to local universities’ internship report assessments, generally seen as unhelpful because they did not link to authentic workplace activities. Finally, authenticity also determines perceived usefulness of reflection assessments. Most alumni found reflections helpful to actively process their learning experience. However, five FUV alumni said that reflection assessments written about

general skill topics according to assessment criteria and deadlines result in superficial reflections not necessarily linked to real learning, aligning with Dean, Sykes et al. (2012)'s findings that reflections must be relevant to actual practice.

### ***Conclusion***

This project showed that meaningful internship learning was anchored by FUV support. Valued support elements included matching interns with suitable placements (especially with high-profile organisations), coordinating internship activities, and liaising with interns and work supervisors. Local university alumni who lacked this supportive collaboration between the university and their internship host organisation said that this disconnection severely limited their internship learning experience. It is crucial for any WIL programme, particularly in transnational environments, to maintain clearly evident support throughout the internship process.

Universities in transnational environments should build on existing connections with internationally recognised brands with local presence to create WIL partnerships. These have high appeal to students wanting to gain experience with professional firms. For example, in markets such as Vietnam where tourism is in growth stages, major hotel chains often offer educative internship programmes with work environments and appropriate training/coaching that interns from a range of disciplines – including accounting, human resources, marketing and PR, IT – find valuable for their learning journey.

Authentic experience in a local work context was essential for alumni to effectively transition to work. Alumni did not primarily perceive internships as sources for potential job offers but more significantly as part of a continuous learning process. FUV graduates often come from privileged backgrounds and may be able to take a more “transformative” compared to a purely “positional” approach to internships. Undoubtedly graduates’ ability to get good jobs drives hefty stakeholder investments in higher education. However, the fact that

alumni who did not take the WIL elective often arranged not only one, but successive internships illustrates an “experimental learning journey” approach to their workplace transition. Alumni clearly viewed various steps on this journey as valuable for their personal and career development and success.

Goal proposals developed together with work supervisors provide valuable support to interns. Reflection assessments are valuable when applied to authentic local work situations and challenges. Alternative WIL initiatives such as industry projects or service learning that integrate process reflection assessment with local industry interactions are also recommended to inject authenticity. Given the ongoing resource-intensive nature of internship programme provision, compounded by the legislative, cultural and logistical challenges posed in an offshore WIL environment, universities should actively pursue not only internships but alternative WIL activities to embed into a range of courses in offshore campuses. Offering internships as elective units (rather than compulsory) gives students the flexibility to take further academic electives if they prefer, and lifts the administrative burden to provide internships to students who don't require them. Academic and career counselling should be supplied to help students make appropriate choices. Building bridges through internships, industry consultancy projects, and service learning also creates learning for the university; as international staff interact with local industry people, they gain greater insight into the local industry environment.

Clearly, Vietnamese alumni value university support in enabling internship experiences; they are important elements of a professional and personal learning journey. Although limited in scope to Vietnam, the findings indicate the importance of internships in preparing graduates for local employment; the role of internships in career and personal development; and the view of internships as part of a learning journey, not just getting a job. To conclude, support of authentic, locally-based WIL has wide-ranging benefits for transnational universities that transcend graduate employability. Further research into

establishing WIL activities that meet offshore needs is recommended, to create enriching partnerships between transnational universities and local employers that result in relevant, useful student learning.

### **References – article six**

- Abeysekera, I. (2006). Issues relating to designing a Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) program in an undergraduate accounting degree program and its implications for the curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 7(1). 7-15.
- Bates, L. (2005). *Building a bridge between university and employment: Work-integrated learning*. (Research Brief No 2005/08). Brisbane: Queensland Parliamentary Library. Retrieved from <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/documents/explore/research/publications/researchbriefs/2005/200508.pdf>
- Bates, M., Thompson, C., & Bates, L. J. (2013). Not all dimensions of work self-efficacy are equal: understanding the role of tertiary work placements in the development of the elements of work self-efficacy. *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships* 47(1).19-30.
- Bilsland, C., & Nagy, H. (2015). Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 3(16). 185-198.
- Blackwell, A., Bowes, L., Harvey, L., Hesketh, A. J., & Knight, P. T. (2001). Transforming Work Experience in Higher Education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 269-285. doi: 10.1080/01411920120048304
- Bon, D. P. (2013). Higher education is the beating heart of society. *Tạp chí Phát triển và Hội nhập* (07). 15-16.
- Boud, D., & Middleton, H. (2003). Learning from others at work: communities of practice and informal learning. *Journal of Workplace Learning* 15(5). 194-202.
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development* 28(1). 31-44. doi: 10.1080/0729436080244437
- Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (2009). Innovative practices in service-learning and curricular engagement. *New Directions for Higher Education* (147). 37-46.
- British Council. (2012). Lifelong Learning Strategies: Vietnam main page. Retrieved from <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-skills-for-employability-vietnam-country-lifelong-strategies.htm>.

- Brooks, R., Kay, J., & Edwards, M. (2014). The impact of placements on students' self-efficacy. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning* 4(3). 228-241. doi: 10.108/HESWBL-05-2014-0015
- Bullock, K., Gould, V., Hejmadi, M., & Lock, G. (2009). Work placement experience: Should I stay or should I go? *Higher Education Research and Development* 28(5). 481-494. doi: 10.1080/07294360903146833
- Callanan, G., & Benzing, C. (2004). Assessing the role of internships in the career-oriented employment of graduating college students. *Education + Training* 46(2). 82-89. doi: 10.1108/00400910410525261
- Cam, K. T. H. (2015). *Internationalising tourism education in Vietnam: an evaluation of the work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs*. Doctor of Philosophy, RMIT University.
- Chapman, A., & Pyvis, D. (2006). Quality, identity and practice in offshore university programmes: issues in the internationalization of Australian higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education* 11(2). 233-245. doi: 10.1080/13562510500527818
- Cooper, L., Orrell, J., & Bowden, M. (2010). *Work integrated learning: A guide to effective practice*. Routledge.
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/03075070600572041
- Crebert, G., Bates, M., Bell, B., Patrick, C-J., & Cragolini, V. (2004). Developing generic skills at university, during work placement and in employment: graduates' perceptions. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 23(2), 147-165. doi: 10.1080/0729436042000206636
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative enquiry and research design: choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 49(4), 277-289. doi: doi:10.1108/00400910710754435
- Dao, M. T. N., & Thorpe, A. (2015). What factors influence Vietnamese students' choice of university? *International journal of educational management*, 29(5), 666-681. doi:10.1108/IJEM-08-2014-0110
- Dean, B., Sykes, C., Agostinho, S., & Clements, M. (2012). Reflective assessment in work-integrated learning: To structure or not to structure, that was our question. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education* 13(2). 103-113.



- Delaney, A. M. (2004). Ideas to enhance higher education's impact on graduates' lives; alumni recommendations. *Tertiary Education and Management* 10(2): 89-105. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2004.9967120
- Duoc, T. Q., & Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Ehiyazaryan, E. & Barraclough, N. (2009). Enhancing employability: integrating real world experience in the curriculum. *Education + Training* 51(4). 292-308. doi: 10.1108/00400910910964575
- Eraut, M. (2007). Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford Review of Education* 33(4): 403-422. doi:10.1080/03054980701425706
- Far East University. (2015). ITHM int'l internship program expands to Vietnam. Retrieved from <http://www.feu.edu.ph/manila/index.php/ithm-intl-internship-program-expands-to-vietnam/>.
- Freudenberg, B., Brimble, M., & Cameron, C. (2009). The building of a professional: Creating greater career identity within a degree. *The International Journal of Learning* 16(10). 253-266. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.1460708
- Gamble, N., Patrick, C.-J., & Peach, D. (2010). Internationalising work-integrated learning: creating global citizens to meet the economic crisis and the skills shortage. *Higher Education Research & Development* 29(5). 535-546. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502287
- Gault, J., Leach, E., & Duey, M. (2010). Effects of business internships on job marketability: the employers' perspective. *Education + Training* 52(1). 76-88. doi: 10.1108/00400911011017690
- Gault, J., Redington, J., & Schlager, T. (2000). Undergraduate business internships and career success: are they related? *Journal of marketing education* 22(1). 45-53. doi: 10.1177/0273475300221006
- Gochenauer, P. & Winter, A. (2004). Analyzing data with statistics: Business internship effects on postgraduate employment. In P. Linn & A. Howard (Eds.), *Handbook for Research in Cooperative Education and Internship* (pp. 137-157). Mahwah: Routledge.
- Government of Australia. (2015). *Draft national strategy for international education: For consultation*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Greenbank, P. (2002). Undergraduate work experience: an alternative approach using micro businesses. *Education + Training* 44(6). 261-270. doi: 10.1108/00400910210441392

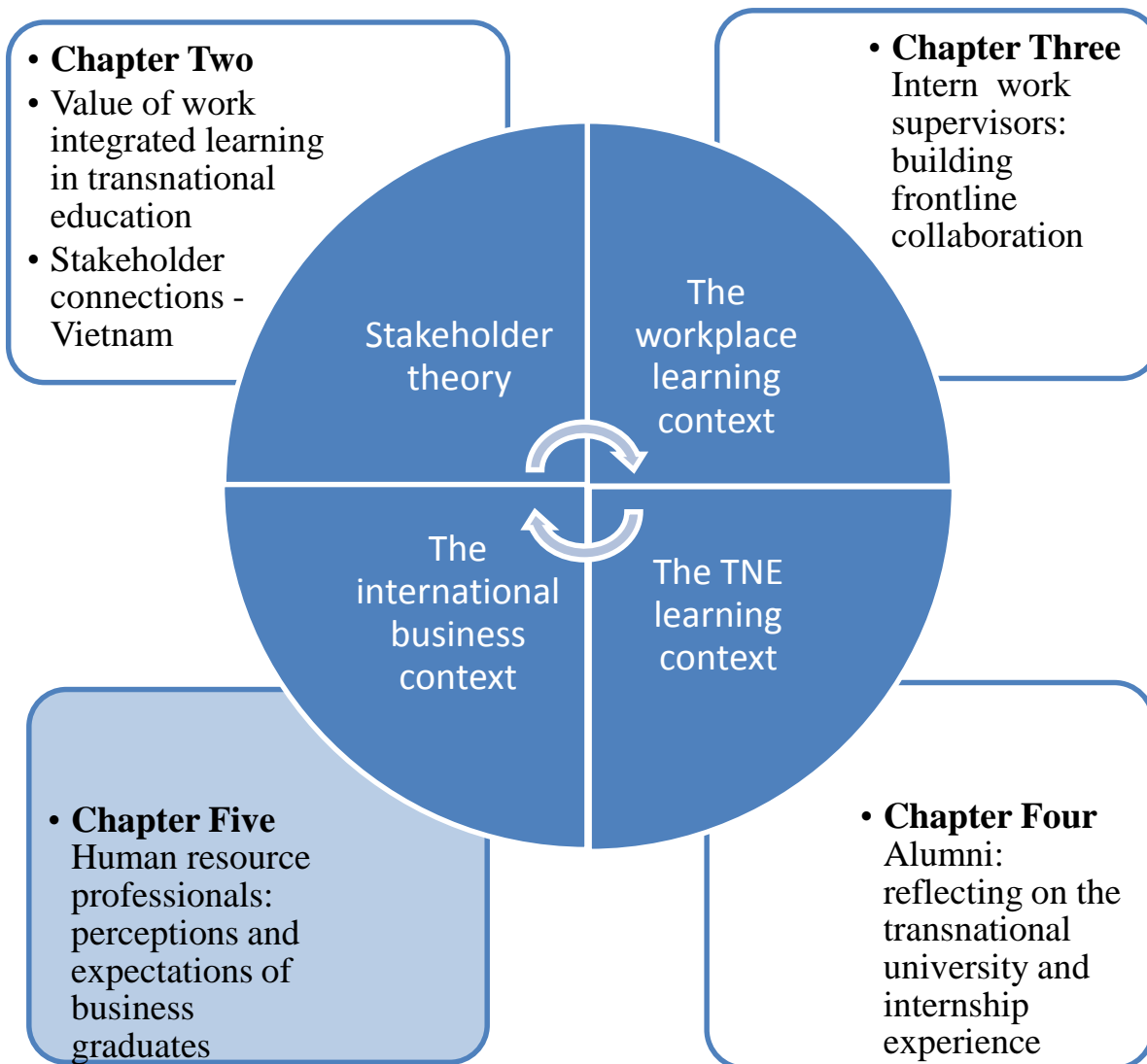
- Guile, D., & Griffiths, T. (2001). Learning through work experience. *Journal of Education and Work, 14*(1), 113-131. doi: 10.1080/13639080020028738
- Harvey, L. (2000). New realities: The relationship between higher education and employment. *Tertiary Education and Management, 6*(1), 3-17. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2000.9967007
- Harvey, M., Coulson, D., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2010). Aligning reflection in the cooperative education curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, 11*(3), 137-152.
- Hayden, M. & Lam, Q.T. (2006). A 2020 vision for Vietnam. *International Higher Education, 44* (Summer), 11-13.
- Knight, P. & Yorke, M. (2003). *Assessment, learning and employability*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill International.
- Langworthy, A. (2007). Education for the public good: is service learning possible in the Australian context. *The Scholarship of Community Engagement: Australia's way forward*, 1-10. Retrieved from [http://www.universityworldnews.com/filemgmt\\_data/files/Education%20for%20the%20Public%20Good.pdf](http://www.universityworldnews.com/filemgmt_data/files/Education%20for%20the%20Public%20Good.pdf).
- Lee, G., McGuigan, R., & Holland, B. (2010). Balancing student learning and commercial outcomes in the workplace. *Higher Education Research & Development, 29*(5), 561-574. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502289
- Little, B. & Harvey, L. (2007). UK Work Placements: A Choice Too Far? *Tertiary Education and Management, 13*(3), 227-245. doi: 10.1080/13583880701502174
- Ly, T. M. Chau, Vickers, M., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam. *Education + Training, 57*(1), 88-107. doi: 10.1108/ET-08-2013-0104
- Marginson, S. & Tran, L. (2014, 19 September) Higher education must focus on flexibility. *University World News*. Retrieved from <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140918110311868&mode=print>.
- McBurnie, G. & Ziguras, C. (2001). The regulation of transnational higher education in Southeast Asia: case studies of Hong Kong, Malaysia and Australia. *Higher Education, 42*(1), 85-105.
- Meredith, S. & Burkle, M. (2008). Building bridges between university and industry: theory and practice. *Education + Training, 50*(3), 199-215. doi:10.1108/00400910810873982

- Nguyen, D. P., Vickers, M. H., Ly, T. M. Chau, & Dong, T. M. (2016). Internationalizing Higher Education (HE) in Vietnam: insights from Higher Education leaders - an exploratory study. *Education + Training*, 58(2). doi: 10.1108/ET-08-2015-0072.
- Oliver, B. (2013). Graduate attributes as a focus for institution-wide curriculum renewal: innovations and challenges. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 32(3), 450-463. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2012.682052
- Orr, J. L. (2013). Australian universities: transnational education arrangements and liability in partnership law. *International Journal of Law & Education*, 57, 57-82.
- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants\\_project\\_wil\\_finalreport\\_jan09.pdf](http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants_project_wil_finalreport_jan09.pdf).
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Pham, H. & Tran, L. (2013). Develop graduate skills and knowledge for the world of work: The case of the translation curriculum in Vietnam. *Journal of Language, Culture and Society*, 36, 7-17.
- Purdie, F., Ward, L. McAdie, J., King, T. N., & Drysdale, M. (2013). Are work-integrated learning (WIL) students better equipped psychologically for work post-graduation than their non-work-integrated learning peers? Some initial findings from a UK university. *Asia Pacific Journal of Co-operative Education*, 14(2), 117-125.
- Richardson, J., Jackling, B., Henschke, K., & Tempone, I. (2013). Developing a collaborative model of industry feedback for work placement of business students. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 14(1), 28-43.
- Scott, G. and Wilson, D. (2002). Tracking and profiling successful IT graduates: an exploratory study. In A. Wenn, M. McGrath, & M. Burstein (Eds.), *Enabling Organisations and Society through Information Systems, Proceedings of the 13th Australasian Conference on Information Systems* (pp. 1185-1195) Association for Information Systems: Melbourne.
- Smith, M., Brooks, S., Lichtenberg, A., McIlveen, P., Torjul, P., & Tyler, J. (2009). *Career development learning: maximising the contribution of work-integrated learning to the student experience*. Australian Learning & Teaching Council Final report. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.

- Subramaniam, N. & Freudenberg, B. (2007). Preparing accounting students for success in the professional environment: enhancing self-efficacy through a work integrated learning program. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 8(1), 77-92.
- Sykes, C. & Dean, B. A. (2013). A practice-based approach to student reflection in the workplace during a Work-Integrated Learning placement. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 35(2), 179-192. doi: 10.1080/0158037X.2012.736379
- Teichler, U. (2002). Graduate employment and work in Europe: diverse situations and common perceptions. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 8(3), 199-216. doi: 10.1023/A:1016357826723
- Tran, N. C. (2006). *Universities as drivers of the urban economies in Asia: The case of Vietnam*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Tran, T.T. (2013). Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education*, 65(5), 631-644. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9567-7
- Tran, T. T. (2014). Is graduate employability the 'whole-of-higher-education-issue'? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28 (3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Trede, F. (2012). Role of work-integrated learning in developing professionalism and professional identity. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(3), 159-167.
- Trigwell, K. & Reid, A. (1998). Introduction: work-based learning and the students' perspective. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 17(2), 141-154. doi: 10.1080/0729436980170201
- Trung, T. Q. & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175.
- Tymon, A. (2013). The student perspective on employability. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38(6), 841-856. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2011.604408
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School.  
Retrieved from  
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>
- VietNamNet Bridge. (2010, October 22). *What do students do during internships?* Retrieved from <http://m.english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/education/577/what-do-students-do-during-internship-.html>.
- Vu, C. (2014, October). *Triple Helix – Developing a tripartite international partnership to support skills development*. Paper presented at the British Council conference Bringing the learning home, Hanoi.

- Wang, Y. (2012). *Education in a changing world: Flexibility, skills, and employability*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- White, J. V. (2012). Students' perception of the role of reflection in leadership learning. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 11(2), 140-157.
- Wolf, K. and Archer, C. (2013). Into the unknown: A critical reflection on a truly global learning experience. *Issues in Educational Research*, 23(2), 299-314.
- World Bank. (2008). *Vietnam Higher Education and Skills for Growth: Human Development Department Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2012). *Vietnam - Second Higher Education Project Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

## Chapter Five: Human resource manager perceptions





## **Chapter Five: Human resource manager perceptions**

Chapter Five incorporates stakeholder perspectives of human resource managers towards graduate employability in the context of theories around internationalisation of higher education (Altbach 2000; McBurnie & Ziguras 2006). While human resource managers are often the initial point of contact when the FUV Career team makes the initial arrangements for WIL internships, usually the intern is assigned to a frontline operational manager as a direct supervisor and subsequently the human resource manager may have little direct contact with the intern. In addition, the ongoing contact between the university and the intern host organisation is usually between the direct work supervisor and the intern's academic adviser.

As earlier interviews with work supervisors progressed, I became interested in exploring potentially differences between their perspectives and those of human resource managers who do not have the direct contact with interns that intern work supervisors do. Research questions to investigate possible differences therefore developed. Also, although employability of Vietnamese graduates from employer perspectives is gaining a research presence (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; Tran, 2014; Trung & Swierczek, 2009), there is a scarcity of research focused on employer perceptions about graduates of foreign universities (whether overseas or operating as TNE providers in Vietnam). Therefore, I took the opportunity to expand the research questions to address related perceptions of foreign university graduate employability. As the demand for foreign university degrees expands (Ashwill, 2010; Ly, Vickers, & Fernandez, 2015), this is therefore a useful avenue of exploratory research.

I conducted 60-minute interviews with nine Human Resource professionals in Hanoi, Vietnam in January and February 2014. Grounded theory is not prescriptive in terms of minimal sample size, sampling decisions are determined by theoretical saturation, particularly when interviewees have focused expertise (Mason, 2010). Interviewee details are outlined in Table 5.1.



Table 5.1. Human Resource Manager sample details

Respondent	Gender	HR function	Industry type
IV1	F	HR Manager	Professional Services
IV2	M	General Manager	Recruitment
IV3	F	President	Human Resources Association
IV4	F	HR Manager	Hospitality
IV5	F	HR Manager	Processing, manufacturing
IV6	M	HR Director	Processing, manufacturing
IV7	F	HR Manager	FMCG (Fast moving consumer goods)
IV8	F	HR Manager	FMCG (Fast moving consumer goods)
IV9	F	Recruitment Manager	Recruitment

### ***References – Chapter Five introduction***

- Altbach, P. (2000). The crisis in multinational higher education. *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*, 32(6), 28-31.
- Ashwill, M. (2010). Vietnam: A Rising Star on the US Higher Education Scene. *World Education News and Reviews*, July/August 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/event/PF/10aug/pffeature.htm>
- Duoc, T. Q., Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Ly, T.M. Chau, Vickers, M., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam. *Education + Training*, 57(1), 88-107. doi: 10.1108/ET-08-2013-0104
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3).
- McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2006). *Transnational education: issues and trends in offshore higher education*: Abingdon: Taylor & Francis.
- Tran, T. T. (2014). Is graduate employability the ‘whole-of-higher-education-issue’? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28 (3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Trung, T. Q., & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175.

## **Article Seven – Are foreign-university graduates work-ready?**

### **Views from human resource managers in Vietnam.**

This article has been prepared for submission to the International Journal of Human Resource Management. There were differences between the perceptions that work supervisors and human resource managers expressed about foreign university interns and graduates. These differences, and the implications for mutual support, will be discussed in Chapter Six:

Conclusions.

# **Are foreign university graduates work-ready? Views from human resource professionals in Vietnam**

Christine Bilisland, Leanne Carter and Leigh Wood

Faculty of Business and Economics, Macquarie University

Sydney, Australia

[Christine.bilisland@mq.edu.au](mailto:Christine.bilisland@mq.edu.au)

When universities widen their reach to transnational campuses, understanding local industry expectations of work-ready graduates is complex and challenging. A foreign language qualification from a Western institution combined with evidence of skill competence may influence a recruiter to consider the graduate as “employable” and to offer the graduate a position. However, these factors do not necessarily characterise a graduate as perceptibly work-ready.

There is a gap in transnational higher education research from employer perspectives in offshore locations. This paper focused on Vietnam, a rising transnational education market, and employed qualitative research methods aimed at understanding perceptions of local employers towards hiring foreign university graduates. Interview responses indicated that foreign-university graduates often demonstrate adequate employability as measured by knowledge and skills, especially when courses are augmented with practical exposure to internships, industry projects and extra-curricular activities. However, attitude, mindset and career awareness emerged as crucial elements of graduate work-readiness that are not being met consistently. These elements are influenced by the cultural and educational context that transnational education providers must consider when expanding into foreign locations, and in planning programme employability approaches.

Keywords – Transnational education; employability; graduate work-readiness; attitude; career management, Vietnam

## *Introduction*

Students invest in a university business degree with a planned return of a good job and better life (Thang & Quang, 2007; Australian Government, 2016; O’Leary, 2013). Employers seek graduate recruits who can deliver industry-relevant skill and knowledge dividends;

governments view higher education expenditure as investments in the nation's economic and social wellbeing. Consequently, higher educational institutions are under increasing pressure to deliver graduates ready for work.

Therefore higher education institutions must understand industry interpretations of graduate employability in order to meet stakeholder expectations. (De La Harpe, Radloff, & Wyber, 2000). To succeed, higher education institution leaders and policy makers must “acknowledge the important role of employers’ beliefs about educational outputs and their understanding of the mechanisms underlying the maturation of employers’ beliefs.” (Cai, 2013, p. 467).

This article explores views of human resource professionals in Vietnam about graduate employability in terms of work-readiness. We do not address human capital elements of employability, such as time to find a job, graduate income/remuneration, recruitment costs, return on educational investment, and impacts on productivity. Rather, a qualitative approach aims to discover which elements make graduates desirable recruits, and perceived university education influences on these elements (in particular, a foreign university education).

Vietnam is a developing nation where the demand for transformed higher education outstrips local institutional capability to supply it (Le, 2014; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008), resulting in year-on-year increases in numbers of Vietnamese studying overseas (ICEF, 2015). Transnational education (TNE), where students reside in a country (host country) different from the country where the awarding institution is based (home country) has also increased steadily, with Australia being a notable TNE provider in Vietnam (Ziguras & Pham, 2014). To provide students with useful, locally-relevant outcomes, TNE providers must consider the local context of graduate employability. Yet, a gap exists in TNE graduate employability research from the host country employer perspective (British Council, 2014;

Mellors-Bourne, Jones, & Woodfield, 2015). The paper addresses this gap through in-depth interviews with nine human resource managers in Vietnam.

A literature review examines graduate employability concepts from both Western and Vietnamese perspectives, along with research that frames the human resource function in the Vietnamese context. Qualitative insights derived from conceptual analysis of participant responses are discussed along with recommendations for future research.

### ***Literature review***

This section identifies the complexity of employability, and reviews work integrated learning (WIL) as an employability strategy, and outlines the state of employability-related higher education and human resources environments in Vietnam.

### **Graduate Employability in context**

Higdon (2016, p. 186) claims that the “dominant model of employability is of skills development to meet employer needs.” Employable graduates possess “a combination of content knowledge and employability skills, such as communication, team work and problem solving, which enables professional practice” (Patrick et al., 2008, p. iv). More complex interpretations of employability extend its essence to individual qualities such as individual agency, (Edwards, 2014), attitude (Ren, Zhu, & Warner, 2011), and awareness of the need to develop and market themselves (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2013). Rooney et al. (2006) added that although there appears to be global consensus that employability and public benefits drive public support for higher education, cultural and social context are important factors in defining employability and shaping it through higher education ((Bailey & Ingimundardottir, 2015; Cheong, Hill, Fernandez-Chung, & Leong, 2016; Custer, 2016; Speight et al., 2013; Campbell, 2010).

In Vietnam, Nhuan and Van (2009) proposed a holistic definition that goes beyond the ability to find a job and be employed to encompass a range of skills, abilities and qualities that

equip graduates for career success and “benefit themselves, the workplace, the community and the economy” (p. 35).

### **Social capital**

Social capital refers to the capacity to access resources based on social networks and use them effectively (Turner & An Nguyen, 2005). Although this paper focuses on elements related to individual capability, because the sociocultural environment differs from the Western backgrounds of many foreign universities, a brief outline of the impact of social capital on employer perceptions in Vietnam follows.

Graduates from higher socioeconomic strata possess social capital that confers employability benefits in China (Liu, 2016; Wen, 2005) and Vietnam (Cox & Warner, 2013; Gribble, 2016), particularly in the public sector. Liu (2016) found that opportunities for graduates from lower socio-economic families to demonstrate their skills and qualities to prospective employers was limited, partially due to lack of parental influence and extended networks of higher socio-economic class parents, but also as a resulting effect of lowered “cultural capital” determined by “parental cultivation at the early childhood stage, as well as parental supervision during job search” (p. 100). The influence of family and political networks on graduate employment is similarly strong in Vietnam; Tran (2013) investigated the considerable extent to which graduates attributed their own employability to social and cultural capital, and reported a widespread belief that “knowledge and skills cannot beat relationship and money” (p. 9).

### **Perceptions of qualifications as indicators of employability**

In the UK, a degree may qualify graduates as candidates, however generic skills such as communication and teamwork constitute higher-level selection factors (Yorke, 2006). Studies on the influence of university reputation on employer selection report mixed results; Hesketh (2000) found that university rankings informed graduate selection, while a Canadian study

reported academic reputation as the bottom-ranked recruitment consideration factor (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013).

University academic results do not appear to play a large part in graduate selection decisions in Vietnam, however employers regard graduation from a top local university as a positive indicator of a quality graduate recruit (Pham & Starkey, 2016). Kelly (2000) reported that university grades were given lower priority than the secondary school grades required to achieve acceptance into top Vietnamese universities.

Local delivery of foreign university degree programmes have risen since 2000, largely welcomed in order to provide better quality education and internationally-recognised degrees (Gribble, 2011) notwithstanding concerns over equitable access, quality of programmes and suitability of the foreign curriculum to local needs that have been expressed (Le, 2014). Both local and foreign organisations in Vietnam value English language skills in managers (EnWorld, 2015). Students enroll in foreign universities to gain English skill advantages, as well as the intercultural experience and prestige of a foreign qualification (Harrison, 2015). Consequently, English-language degree graduates should be considered highly employable.

### **Graduate capability and employability skills**

Researchers lack clear consensus on how employability skills should be defined, transferred to post-graduate employment environments (Jackson, 2009) and articulated as graduate capabilities (Bosanquet et al., 2012). Velde (2009) maintained that the concept of graduate capability varies in different cultural environments. Kalfa and Taksa (2015) proposed a framework that incorporated the social context necessary to bring the presumed transferability of graduate attributes into appropriate perspective. While in Australia engagement with employers to develop industry-relevant curricula that develops desired skill sets has been reported (S. Cox & King, 2006), in Vietnam the disconnection between higher education and industry inhibits similar engagement.

In developing nations such as China, structured service learning is emerging particularly in business subjects in order to develop social awareness and empathy (Rutti, LaBonte, Helms, Hervani, & Sarkarat, 2016). In Vietnam, although structured service learning is rare, some Vietnamese universities partner with organisations that offer social entrepreneurship opportunities such as AIESEC (in Vietnam since 2006) and Enactus (previously known as SIFE – Students in Free Enterprise – in Vietnam since 2007). Universities in Vietnam also offer students opportunities to gain experience in work-related skills through industry-related clubs, service-oriented clubs, and sports clubs. However, Tran (2014b) reported Vietnamese students’ lack of interest in most local-university clubs. Many of the students she interviewed were jealous of the extra-curricular soft-skill development opportunities offered by the top-level local universities and foreign-affiliated universities.

### **Attitude and motivation**

Employers expressed dissatisfaction with current graduates’ motivation, citing overly-high professional expectations in the UK (McCracken, Currie, & Harrison, 2015). In Spain, Hernández-March, Martín del Peso and Leguey (2009) added that graduates lacked a dedication to work; this was partially attributed to a changing society where children are protected and indulged compared to previous generations. As a result, McCracken et al. (2015) reported employers’ cautious, selective recruitment approaches, aimed at hiring candidates that could demonstrate a performance “edge” (p. 23). This sought-after “edge” in drive and dedication is difficult for employers to identify and for universities to develop. Nevertheless, a series of World Bank Policy reports focused on the desirability of youth developing these attitudinal, socio-emotional attributes; despite the challenge, they asserted the need for external stakeholders such as employers and tertiary education to support this development process (Cunningham & Villaseñor, 2016). However, Mourshed et al. (2014) reported that although small businesses are most likely to face difficulties finding candidates



with a growth mindset and other qualities denoting a performance edge, due to their limited size and resources they are less likely to collaborate with universities to develop it than larger organisations.

Notable improvements in the Vietnamese education system have raised literacy and numeracy rates to impressive levels (World Bank, 2008; Wilmoth, 2004). However, disconnections between higher education and industry “undermine the very functioning of the higher education system” (World Bank, 2013 p. 6) in much of East Asia, including Vietnam, making it difficult for employers and higher education to collaborate. Drawing on a survey of urban-area employers, another World Bank study found that Vietnamese employers expect white collar workers to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, to communicate effectively, and work in teams (World Bank, 2013). To re-orient Vietnam's education system and establish relevance with a changing global and local economy, the World Bank (2013) advocated government action to encourage closer relations between education and industry. This would benefit students by making relevant WIL collaborations accessible.

### **Role of work integrated learning**

The importance of WIL for enhancing productivity and graduate work-readiness (Billett, 2009), and for strengthening partnerships between industry and universities (Brown, 2010; Patrick et al., 2008) was reinforced by Universities Australia's (2015) release of the National Strategy on WIL. Cai (2013) advised TNE universities to pursue greater links with local employers through internships, consultancy engagement, and other collaborative activities in order to create a shared understanding of the international institution's qualification.

Knight and Yorke (2003) maintained that WIL develops employability skills that not only enhance graduates' ability to find jobs and perform in the workplace, but that also contribute to their lifelong occupational success. Ren et al. (2011) linked workplace experience with developing not only skills but mature, desirable attitudes. UK graduates

surveyed by O’Leary (2013) reported that the greatest contribution of internships was to develop understanding of employer needs. Jackson (2015, p. 10) concluded that the benefits of WIL in terms of career awareness were “so far-reaching that engaging in WIL on this basis alone is critical”.

### **Responsibility for employability skill development**

Although, strictly speaking, it is not responsible for providing graduates with jobs, higher education should prepare graduates to meet labour force requirements (Cai, 2013).

Employability is however problematic for universities to realistically measure and accredit due to the variability of influential individual personality and background factors (Harvey, 2001).

Higher education’s capacity to lift graduate employability by embedding skills into teaching and learning activities depends on access to authentic work-related application (Cranmer, 2006). Universities must meet this challenge through partnerships with employers aimed at understanding and facing employability issues (Tomlinson, 2007), and by incorporating course elements that give students opportunities to apply theory to the workplace context (Dacre Pool & Sewell, 2007) where they experience consequences of workplace decisions in supportive WIL environments.

Vietnamese higher education has traditionally been held responsible for equipping the nation with a workforce (H. Pham & Starkey, 2016) and developing moral character (ThiTuyet Tran, 2013; Tran, 2014b); Pham (2014) however claimed that higher education had so far failed to recognise transformed work and societal paradigms that demand transformed approaches. Tran (2013), Truong and Laura (2013), Tran (2013), and articles in the popular media document the inadequate integration of adequate and necessary soft skills into Vietnamese curricula, and international higher education expert, Bon (2013), exhorted Vietnamese universities to embrace more authentic work experiences – especially

international experiences – to give graduates opportunities to develop soft skills needed in a globalized world.

Historically, the freedom and capability of most Vietnamese universities, other than top-level universities such as the two Vietnamese national universities, to make changes in curricula has been limited. (Cam, 2015; Hayden & Thiep, 2007). Despite the well-intentioned planned 2005-2020 reform of Vietnamese higher education that established Vietnam's Higher Education Law (2013) which granted the curricular autonomy to tertiary education institutions that would enable effective integration of soft skills and other authentic industry-relevant initiatives, the transition has been slow (Phan, Lupton, & Watters, 2016; Dao, 2014; Gribble, 2011; Lawrence, 2011; McCornac, 2012). Vietnamese higher education still lacks effective research networks and budgets (Hayden & Thiep, 2007), teaching methods (T. T. Tran, 2013; Tran, 2014a) and links with industry (Ashwill, 2010; Vallely & Wilkinson, 2008) upon which improving overall quality and graduate employability is dependent. Vietnamese educators have advocated that “changing from the bottom to the top of the tertiary education system” (Vu & Phung, 2010, p. 1) is essential for quality transformations that will underpin satisfactory graduate outcomes.

Limited research into employer perceptions of foreign university graduates' employability exists. (A. T. N. Pham, 2015) reported that TNE graduates possess an edge over overseas graduates because they maintained native language skill, local networks, and familiarity with informal Vietnamese practices while becoming familiar with global business practices through their TNE study. They were perceived as adaptable to both Western and Vietnamese management mindsets. However, London (2006) described a contrasting perception of privilege that TNE students owe their entry to family position and socio-economic circumstance rather than to academic capability. Whether this perception influences employer perceptions of graduate employability in terms of recruitment desirability is debatable.

## **Career development**

Bounous (1986) declared career development and experiential learning as key elements of post-secondary education in that “career related learning is part of the student’s total educational experience” (p. 62) and instrumental in integrating academic knowledge with experiential practice. As the nature of work is transformed, career awareness, proactive career behaviour and career strategy development will anchor future employability (Bridgstock, 2009; Harvey, 2003; Jackson, 2015; Okay-Somerville & Scholarios, 2015). Internships have been linked to career awareness and focus (Jackson & Wilton, 2016; Rothman & Sisman, 2016) which are, in turn, associated with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2000) indicating that graduates take conscious responsibility to develop themselves rather than interpreting themselves as products of their education (Speight, Lackovic, & Cooker, 2012). A growth mindset is part of the “edge” that graduates who exhibit career awareness and proactive career management behaviour hold over less proactively- minded candidates (McCracken et al., 2015).

In Vietnam, Nhuan and Van (2009) attributed graduate unemployment partially to a lack of career awareness, stating that most Vietnamese students were “preoccupied with getting into university and gave little thought to career direction” (p. 35), which seems logical given the traditional importance of gaining a qualification from a well-respected institution. Although some evidence exists that career discussion and development takes place, research suggests that education should do more to prepare students to manage their own careers in Vietnam (Nguyen, Vo, & Nguyen, 2013), as well as in other ASEAN countries (Paryono, 2011). This would lead to more realistic expectations and effective career planning (Bon, 2013; Pham, 2015; Tran, 2013).

## **Human Resources inclination to provide graduate training**

Development of human resource practices has become more important since World Trade

membership increased Vietnam's exposure to the global economy (Thang & Quang, 2007; Vo, 2009). Multinational enterprises operating in Vietnam have been instrumental in transforming the traditional passive role of human resource management to a more strategic role (Vo, 2009; Vo & Stanton, 2011); more Vietnamese organisations are recognising links between training and performance (Nguyen, Truong, & Buyens, 2011; Thang, Quang, & Buyens, 2010) but are often resource-constrained from offering training. Thang and Quang (2007) estimated that 80% of graduates require training.

Although Tran (2014b) described loyalty as an old-regime criterion, and how Vietnamese business now expects motivation and critical thinking from modern graduates rather than loyalty, other research indicates that employers perceive a lack of loyalty demonstrated by current graduates as a barrier to training (enWorld, 2015; Napier & Hoang, 2011), out of a fear that, once equipped with improved skills, graduates will leave (CIMA, 2015; enWorld, 2015). On the other hand, pressure to train based on the probability that impatient graduates not offered training will job-hop is also evident (Cox & Warner, 2013; Stanton & Pham, 2014). Phạm (2014) concluded that organisations in Vietnam have embraced life-long learning in theory, but still see it as higher education's responsibility.

As the literature review indicates, although graduate employability in Vietnam has attracted research focus, there is little published research on perceptions of local employers regarding employability of foreign-university graduates. Therefore the research questions were intentionally broad in scope, and aimed to explore: elements perceived to contribute to graduate work readiness; how human resource managers evaluate Vietnamese graduates (in particular, graduates of foreign universities and TNE institutions) in terms of work-readiness; and ways that TNE institutions can contribute to their graduates' perceived work-readiness.

### ***Methodology***

A qualitative design employing semi-structured interviews with nine human resource

professionals in Hanoi, Vietnam was adopted. The method was aligned with gaining exploratory insight into a field where little current knowledge has been published. Although quantitative research identifying skill deficits from surveys of Vietnamese employers is accumulating, as outlined in the literature review, there is little published research that offers insight into employer perceptions of the relative and comparative work-readiness of foreign-university graduates.

Human resource professionals are instrumental in forming policies regarding graduate recruitment and engagement with higher education on employability-related activities. Therefore, to gain exploratory insight, semi-structured 60-minute interviews with nine human resource professionals were held in Hanoi. Mason (2010) stipulates that this small sample size is appropriate where respondents hold focused expertise relevant to the research aim. Interviews were conducted until emerging themes became repetitive, signaling theoretical saturation (Patton, 2002).

Initial coding identified broad areas of perceived graduate work-readiness, and possible differences between local university, foreign university and TNE graduates. Subsequent coding rounds transformed associated concepts into themes and developed emergent theoretical concepts.

### ***Findings***

Open coding resulted in a range of descriptive dimensions that were further examined and refined using matrix coding to establish links to a developing concept of work-readiness. The five categories with strongest links to work-readiness (determined by number of linked sources, then number of linked responses) is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Categories linked to work-readiness.

Linked Category	Associated elements	# Linked Sources (/9)	# Linked Coded responses
1. Attitude	Proactive, willing to learn, flexible, adaptable, motivated, goal oriented, self-disciplined, mindset, mature, honest, trustworthy, work ethic, collaborative, loyal to organisation	9	37
2. Practical exposure	Internships, builds bridges to work, extra-curricular activities, part time work, volunteer, charity, industry projects participation, build soft skills, develops career awareness and focus, discipline, maturity, interpersonal and social awareness	9	28
3. Foreign university/TNE education background	English skills, presentations, confidence, practical, soft skills, dynamic, bright, willing learners when motivated <b>Balanced by observations</b> , proud, over-confident, high expectations, want quick wins, lack empathy and social awareness, lack commitment and focus to develop with company, job hop	7	15
4. Skills	English, soft skills; communication, interpersonal, team, listening, Practical skills, computer skills, task management	6	18
5. Career awareness	Career awareness, career direction, family influence, CV and interview techniques, managing expectations	6	15

### Attitude

All nine respondents identified attitude as a key determinant of graduate work-readiness.

Attitude was often the first-mentioned characteristic of a work-ready graduate, as expressed by one manager; “when we seek suitable candidates in any position we may focus on the three things; first attitude, then skills, and then knowledge. I think attitude and skills are weaknesses of Vietnamese graduates” (IV3). Attitude was perceived as an individual variable; some foreign-university graduates, as well as top-level local graduates, were seen as dynamic, motivated, and willing to learn.

Nevertheless, some foreign-university graduates were typecast as displaying undesirable attitude characteristics such as low motivation, team commitment, and empathy. Six respondents mentioned the influence of family socioeconomic background on attitude and

motivation, explaining that some graduates from foreign universities, as well as graduates from wealthy, well-connected families possessed a sense of entitlement and overly-high expectations relevant to salary and promotion. In contrast, graduates from less-privileged backgrounds were seen as more likely to work hard, develop themselves and commit to the organisation.

Although generally the confidence of foreign-university graduates was commended, there were accompanying observations of undesirable overconfidence, exemplified by one manager: “Confidence is good but sometimes not positive way, so confident, they become arrogant and they don’t listen to the colleagues or senior staff. They need to listen, that is the way they can improve” (IV1).

### **Practical exposure**

All respondents viewed practical exposure as essential to graduate work-readiness.

Internships were perceived as constructive workplace skill-builders, and as important opportunities to develop appropriate workplace behaviour and maturity: “Internship is the way for them to prepare some of the basic skills, office skills or communication skills to make them mature” (IV1). Extra-curricular activities (clubs, competitions, and volunteer or part-time work) work were also potential markers of a work-ready graduate, and were perceived to build interpersonal skills, teamwork, communication skills. Volunteer and charity work were perceived as important opportunities for students to develop empathy for less fortunate members of society; this was specifically mentioned by four respondents. Practical exposure, especially through internships, was also perceived to cultivate career awareness.

### **Foreign university education background**

Respondents associated foreign universities with a high level of quality education compared to most local universities, due to superior teaching practices, up-to-date teaching material, technology and curricula. Respondents appreciated the skill levels foreign-university



graduates demonstrated in English, communication skills and teamwork. Top local Vietnamese universities, such as the Foreign Trade University and the two Vietnam National Universities, were also recognised for their graduates' superiority in these skills. Although seen as a baseline-level recruitment criterion, the perceived quality of education revealed little direct association with a graduate's actual work-readiness

Respondents associated desirable individual-related attitudinal characteristics with some graduates from foreign and top-level local universities; these were however often balanced with examples of undesirable characteristics that detracted from work-readiness, such as a sense of entitlement to high salaries and promotional opportunities without a demonstrated commitment to working for these benefits.

### **Skills**

Foreign-university graduates usually met expected criteria of a work-ready graduate in terms of skills, especially English and communication skills. While respondents perceived that many top-level local university graduates were improving their skill levels, most agreed that the majority of local university graduates did not demonstrate adequate skill training.

Practical exposure was perceived as critical to developing the ability to acquire and apply workplace skills. Respondents expected that graduates would start in the workforce with relatively undeveloped skills, but they were willing to assist in developing these skills if graduates were work-ready in terms of attitude, mindset, and commitment to the organisation.

### **Career awareness**

Respondents commonly reported a general lack of career awareness in both local and foreign university graduates. Seven out of nine respondents said that graduates demonstrated inadequate knowledge often coupled with unrealistic expectations about job roles and business environments of the organisations they applied to work for.

Although an individual characteristic, this was associated with the education and sociocultural environment in Vietnam where parents and family networks traditionally have strong influence over career direction.

The next section will integrate specific details and quotes to discuss implications for TNE institutions in terms of gaining further insight into these perceptions in order to build locally-relevant employability initiatives for students.

### ***Discussion***

Although our interviewees' views may reflect Vietnam's sociocultural elements, educational system legacy, and their previous experience with graduates that are beyond a foreign institution's span of control, there are practical implications relevant to TNE programme delivery and communication planning. Interviewees hold ambivalent perceptions of foreign-university/TNE institution graduates. A conceptual model of a work-ready graduate that reflects various aspects of this ambivalence is presented, accompanied by discussion of implications for foreign university and TNE institutions in Vietnam.

### **Perceptions of foreign university/TNE qualifications**

A degree qualification was widely considered to be an entry-level baseline for graduate recruitment. Graduates from a foreign or top-level local university were frequently classed as desirable candidates due to their perceived practical knowledge and English ability, exemplified by the following quotes:

“We select graduates mostly from top ranking Vietnamese universities or foreign universities such as FUV because we believe they have good quality of education and quite practical” (IV1).

“Most foreign university students are very good at English and computer skills” (IV9).

Only one respondent flagged high university marks as a signal of work-readiness. An

impressive high school background had a greater influence than university scores, according to three respondents. This finding reflects Kelly's (2000) statement about the influence of high school grades in Vietnam. One respondent added that graduates from the top-level local universities were assumed to have been highly successful at high school level given the competitiveness of entry to these universities, and noted an associated "correlation between the quality of the high school and a top-notch person" (IV2). This finding may not be surprising but is nevertheless relevant to TNE institutions given increasing family investments in foreign-university or TNE programmes in Vietnam. Some employers apparently believe that graduates who pay high fees for a foreign-university degree are not strong or dedicated enough to gain entrance into top-level local universities.

### **Willingness to train a work-ready graduate**

One participant from a scientifically-specialised organisation lamented the gaps in technical abilities relevant to the organisation's products, attributing these in part to the outdated curriculum, lack of resources and access to cutting-edge research, and inadequate budgets for scientific education in Vietnam. One other participant said that graduates did not measure up in terms of computer software skills. Another comment referred to graduates from "Vietnamese ordinary universities and colleges, they have to self-learn, self-educate on many skills by themselves" (IV3). Respondents expected that fresh graduates would start at basic levels in terms of real world practical ability, and factored varying amounts of time for fresh graduates to rise to the level of a fully productive professional (up to two years in one case).

Acknowledging that human resource training and development strategies vary between SOEs, private Vietnamese organisations and foreign-owned enterprises (Stanton & Pham, 2014), this finding is interesting. It contradicts the systemic ambivalence towards training found in Vietnamese organisations (Cox & Warner, 2013; Tran, 2013) but aligns with a moderated view that reluctance to train mainly stems from a lack of resources and fear of

talent poaching (CIEM, 2014; EnWorld, 2015; Stanton & Pham, 2014) rather than expectations that graduates should not require training.

However on further inspection, the ambiguity of responses, particularly around foreign university graduates and attitude-related responses, evolved into a less definitive picture of foreign-university/TNE graduates as work-ready candidates worthy of training investments.

## **Ambivalence towards foreign-university graduates**

An ambivalence towards hiring foreign-university graduates incorporated elements of educational and socioeconomic backgrounds with undesirable attitudes and workplace orientations. A recruitment manager's feedback illustrated several aspects of this ambivalence. Foreign-university graduates fit well into this participant's organisation, attributed to the fact that suitable graduates specialising in human resources and interested in recruitment were aware of the value of understanding job requirements and learning and development, and were willing to start at the bottom because the participant's organisation was a recruitment industry leader with multi-national clients. Although the participant did not usually consider fresh graduates as suitable candidates for the organisations' clients, who usually prefer experienced candidates, because of the perceived superiority of foreign-university graduates' English and soft skills, they were occasionally put forward to clients. However, the following comment conveyed a high level of frustration with foreign-university/TNE graduates encountered by the manager's clients:

“For companies with a very good brand name in the market... students from (named foreign universities) are willing to work with very low position from the beginning however, with other companies they see - mostly with the local companies – if they want to hire from (foreign university) the student always want to have a good job with a good package from the beginning and I heard the comment from them – I heard that oh they really *hate* – I need to use the word hate – people from those universities” (IV9).

## **Work-ready graduate**

The concept of a work-ready graduate developed through the identification of Attitude and Skills as the two essential criteria (see Figure 1). Three elements of the graduate's background were seen as influential in shaping the degree to which the essential general characteristics of attitude and skills met work-ready expectations: family/socioeconomic background; educational background; and practical exposure. As illustrated in Figure 1, these factors

contributed to an overall Growth Mindset (as portrayed by Dweck, 2000) displayed by work-ready graduates who possessed desirable attitudes, the essential work-ready ingredient in addition to skills. As highlighted by Harvey (2001), although employability is an individual rather than institutional characteristic, employers are influenced by their perceptions of graduate jobseekers' education and socioeconomic backgrounds.

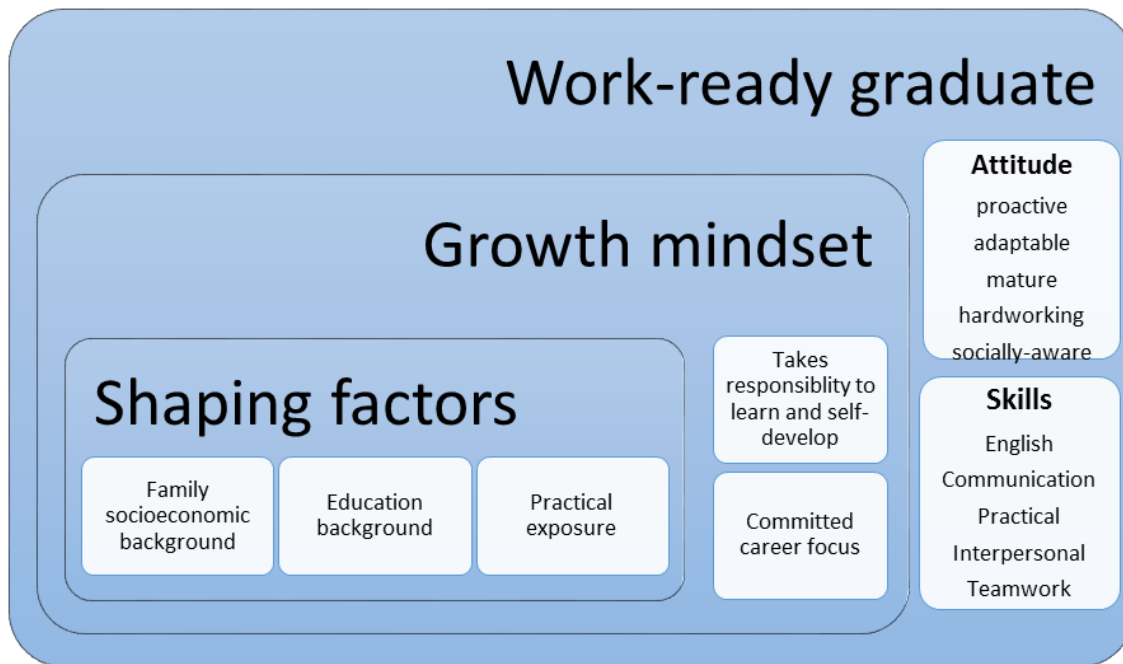


Figure 1. Perceptions of a work-ready graduate

## Skills

As outlined in the previous section, all respondents expected graduates to demonstrate basic-level skills, but recognised that most need time and training to develop into professionals. A well-rounded background that combined education with practical exposure were perceived as key shaping factors that developed adequate skill levels, as represented in Figure 2. As explained by one interviewee: “a work-ready graduate is ready to step in and get started gaps need to be filled in, but has all the basics in place because of his or her education, internships, extracurricular activities” (IV2),

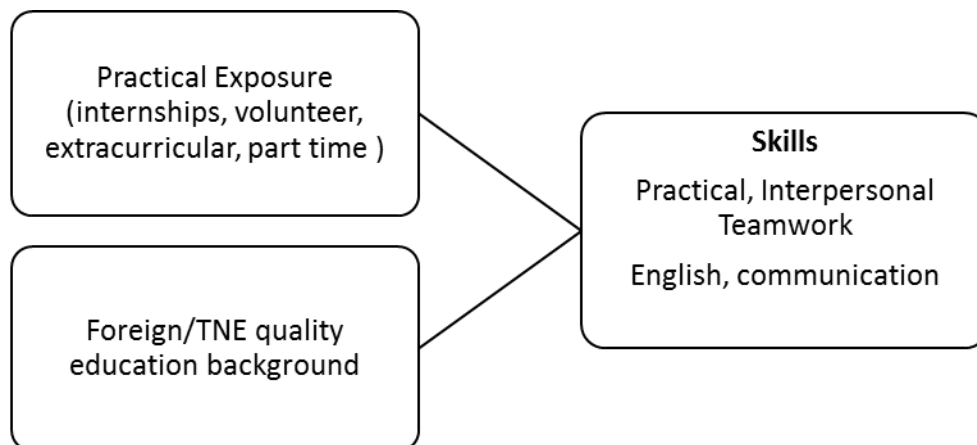


Figure 2. Shaping skills

A foreign/TNE university education was perceived as a particularly strong factor in shaping English and communication skills. The ability to work independently was also associated with foreign teaching methods as stated here: “Overseas I can see that they have lots of case studies and they must do the investigation independently and learn to be resourceful” (IV9). However, as one interviewee maintained, “in the university they spend a lot of time to train about theory, not time to gain real experience” (IV4). Therefore, practical exposure was emphasised as critical to developing capabilities that contribute to productive work environments, such as interpersonal skills and teamwork, and application of practical skills.

### **Practical exposure**

Although Vietnamese universities often include internships in their curricula, the lack of coordination between the intern host organisation and the university was reflected in the low level of association respondents articulated between universities and practical exposure. Students often prevail upon relatives to find them an internship; any practical learning that ensues is a matter of chance, as reported by interns and their supervisors (Bilsland & Nagy, 2015; Cam, 2016). One interviewee described her experience seeking internship partnerships with targeted top-level local universities: “I actively approach the universities but they say that no, they don’t need it... that this is their standard curriculum, they don’t want any other”

(IV5). Another participant related her encounters with interns that reflect a lack of perceived value of typical internships: “When I talk to interns most of them are just here. They wait for instructions, you tell them to do otherwise that’s it. I like to look for someone who really asks about something they want to learn” (IV7). It was, therefore, not surprising to find a lack of association between skills built through internships and local university education backgrounds.

Although all respondents had recruited foreign-university graduates, there was limited association between a foreign university education with practical exposure; only two respondents linked foreign universities with WIL internship opportunities. A strong implication for foreign-university providers in Vietnam lies not only in the need to seek internship and other learning partnership opportunities with appropriate host providers, but also to communicate the supportive elements of WIL internships in general marketing and promotion activities to generate wider recognition. As Vietnamese employers may be unfamiliar with differences between coordinated WIL internships and local university internships, this communication should be two-way; their feedback is critical to improving the local relevance of WIL internship activities.

One respondent summarised the value of “quality internship experiences where they learn how to become professional” (IV2). Actual practical experience was considered essential for developing professional maturity as well as skills. Industry projects were suggested by one participant, who maintained that although internships were not viable for the participant’s organisation, “we need to have the real project... to train for teamwork, train students to be practical” (IV6).

Extra-curricular activities were also seen to be valuable. As documented by Tran (2014b), universities in general were encouraged to do more to encourage students to participate in clubs and volunteering; two participants mentioned AIESEC in particular as effective ways for students to develop interpersonal skills as well as social awareness.



Therefore, TNE institutions should communicate their provision of AIESEC and other extra-curricular offerings to local industry partners and employers, especially in offshore markets such as Vietnam, where such practical exposure opportunities are not part of the typical academic programme or culture.

### **Attitude**

A more complex picture of the critical contribution of attitude to work-readiness emerged. Participants valued many foreign-university/TNE graduates' desirable character-related qualities such as independence, cross-cultural awareness, confidence, and appreciated the different perspectives they brought from their foreign education. However, these positive observations were often balanced by comments about other foreign university graduates' failure to measure up in terms of attitude and job/task commitment; these failures were sometimes but not always flagged by graduates' behaviour in the recruitment process. While these perceptions were linked to individual qualities, rather than aspects of the skills and training delivered by the university, repeated examples of foreign-university graduates' failure to meet expectations once hired were given. Combined with contrasting stories of less-privileged graduates' work-oriented attitudes, these responses led to an identification of two associated factors that were perceived to influence work-related attitude characteristics: educational background and socioeconomic background.

The perception that many foreign-university graduates came to their first job with an elevated sense of "entitlement" conferred by their degree aligns with CIEM's (2014) and EN Navigos' (2015) reports, as well as findings from China (Speight et al., 2012) where, prior to market liberalisation, a university qualification guaranteed a good job. One participant remarked that "graduates from top universities are over-proud of themselves and require very high salaries, even fresh graduates" (IV3), another that graduates should be "more proactive

in your job. No one will ask you; you need to tell the others what you need and to do your job, you need to raise the questions about the job yourself and find the proposals yourself” (IV7).

However, graduates tended to be “still quite passive... looking for instructions” (IV7). A related concern was the lack of caring about the quality of mundane tasks; several observers noticed that many of these graduates displayed a lacklustre attitude towards completing work, exemplified by the comment, “They do not care because they don’t have the behaviours to do things with detail... for students or for young people detail is very boring” (IV8). A lack of disciplined behaviour was noted as an area where the university should take action to inform students of an “organisational discipline approach... I think that for me that is the most pressing issues for graduates” (IV5).

A lack of social awareness of foreign university graduates from relatively wealthy, well-connected families often resulted in unsuitable candidates, according to one participant from an organisation that marketed products to lower socioeconomic consumer markets. Universities were encouraged to integrate not only with industry, but with society by involving students in service learning projects where their learning could be used to benefit others, and, as Rutti et al. (2016) proposed, to develop empathy:

“You can have more activities so that students can know the real life outside – the difficult things *outside* so they have more empathy for the people around them they have skills, they have capability but they lack some kind of empathy” (IV5).

Another facet of social awareness in terms of relating to team members and colleagues was reflected by observations about some graduates, attitudes to working collaboratively, and to forming positive relationships:

“However sometimes to drive the result we need you... to see that you must be willing to work collaboratively. Sometimes they are too eager to drive the result but don’t see how they will affect others in some ways. And the new graduates sometimes are too... have too much energy and cannot control their emotion” (IV4).

One manager stated that many graduates were “looking for quick wins” (IV5), and expected promotion without putting in the time and effort to fully contribute to a team, department or company objective, or to gain full mastery of a role. Another expanded on this general sentiment by observing that graduates in their organisation and industry regularly job-hopped without learning from experiencing a full project or sales cycle. The perception was that this job-hopping orientation produced graduates who did not develop adequate foundational experience and learning to make effective organisational contributions. Loyalty and commitment to the organisation, a key ingredient of a Communist-era career, was rated highly by several respondents, aligning with findings from EN Navigos (2015). An interviewee described why graduates from families with successful businesses may be unlikely to make organisational commitments to employers:

“As you grow you need to find people ...leadership and loyalty of course which is difficult to come by. Which is why so many companies hire family members they can trust – ideally qualified family” (IV2).

This response implied that graduates equipped with a foreign qualification felt entitled to rely on family networks as backup careers, therefore were not so motivated to work through demanding conditions and were more likely to quit, “unlike many others who have to take what they can get” (IV2).

### **Career awareness**

The general lack of career awareness that many graduates were perceived to display was remarkable, and not anticipated to the extent that it was expressed. The lack of awareness was demonstrated in job applications: “Many of them do a general CV and then just send it out! It’s not good at all” (IV3); as well as in interviews: “The candidates... don’t really know what to do, they just apply for a job although they cannot really imagine... they cannot even think long-term” (IV7).

Several respondents mentioned the influence of parents and family on career direction (Dang & Hathaway, 2014; Tran, 2013), and an associated lack of preparation into understanding company and industry needs when applying for jobs:

“They just know from the word of mouth without any, like, research... more or less they chose this company or that company based on their strength of relationship. They don’t really seem proactive in asking what the company itself needs... just ‘this is what I am looking for, what is in it for me?’” (IV5).

Therefore, participants attributed socioeconomic background as a factor that partially explains why graduates demonstrate inadequate understanding of career realities. They may not be motivated to seek true understanding of roles that they believe they are destined for but have little connection with on an individual, personal level.

Education background also played a part in the lack of graduate career awareness. Participants agreed that the Vietnamese education system in general should incorporate career focus and resourcefulness throughout all stages of education, not just tertiary levels, as research (Nhuan & Van, 2009; World Bank, 2013) has advocated. Universities were encouraged to introduce career awareness, CV writing, interview skill training, and links between various course topics and actual job functions from the outset of the university degree programme, instead of leaving it until the final year for students to try to figure it out, largely by themselves. As expressed by an interviewee, “companies and universities... should dig deeper to prepare students at least to study policies of companies” (IV8) in career or discipline-related subjects. Aligning with Jackson and Wilton (2016), internships were perceived as valuable opportunities for students to explore career options and develop greater awareness, as illustrated by this comment: “When the students come for real experiences, it has a lot of effect on their decision what they would like to do in the future” (IV4).

Suggestions were made to help students familiarise themselves with a range of potential

career options through varied engagement with external organisations in different ways, such as talks, events, projects and competitions, throughout the programme.

### **Growth or Fixed Mindset**

The willingness to invest in graduate training and skill development was linked with two critical aspects of work-readiness; attitude and a growth mindset (Dweck, 2000) that indicated “good ability for learning, for training, in our field that makes it easy to teach, to train” (IV6). However, as mentioned, participants often contrasted the motivation, career orientation, and willingness to develop alongside the organisation and work to overcome obstacles demonstrated by graduates from lower socio-economic backgrounds, with the less committed work attitudes and orientations exhibited by perceived privileged-background graduates from top local and foreign universities, illustrated by the following quote:

“Almost all of the students from the difficult background will have the work ethic rather than students coming from good family background. Maybe because the students coming from difficult background have to get used to fighting for something while the people coming from the good background get used to having everything without the effort... I have to say all of the students coming from difficult backgrounds have the better ways of working, I don't know why” (IV4).

This association between socioeconomic background and motivation towards learning and developing oneself, as well as the influence of practical exposure on career awareness led to the theory that graduates from less-privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly if they can demonstrate career focus achieved through previous work, internship or other practical exposure, may be more likely to be perceived to adopt a growth mindset that is linked to attitudes that characterise a work-ready graduate, as illustrated in Figure 3:

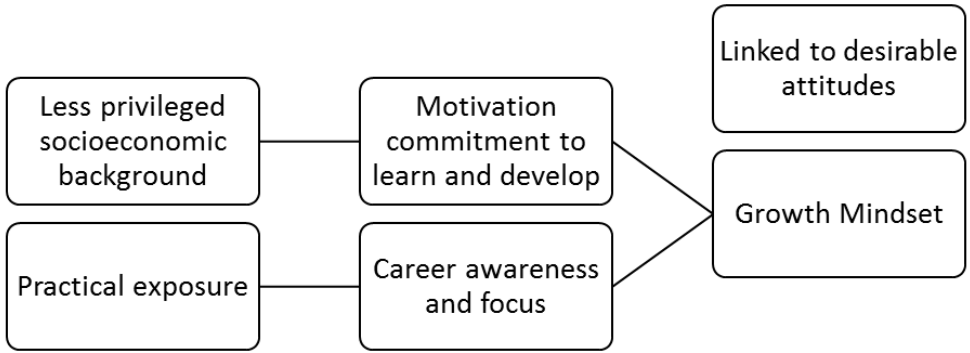


Figure 3. Shaping a Growth Mindset

On the other hand, a fixed mindset orientation appeared to characterise some graduates from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, as illustrated in Figure 4.

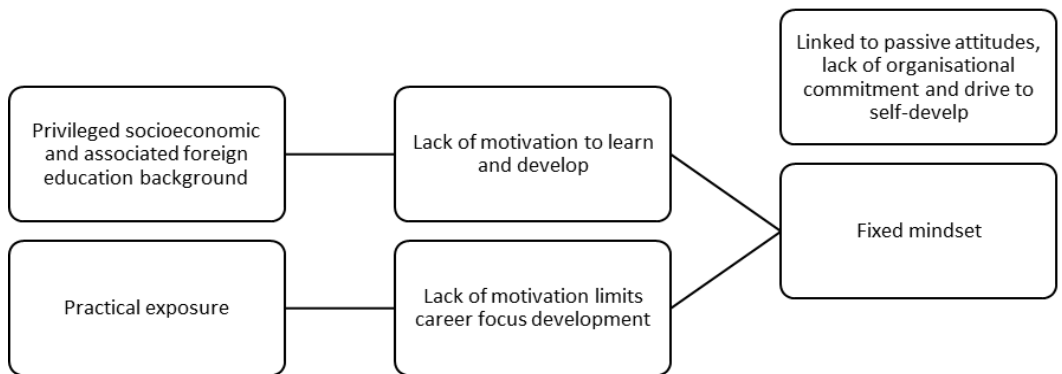


Figure 4. Shaping a Fixed mindset

Foreign-university and TNE graduates were often described as privileged; several interviewees described them as lacking motivation and awareness of the need for self-development before expecting promotions and high salaries. As one interviewee said, “They don’t spend the time to develop themselves from the small things” (IV4), but tended instead

to harbour expectations of high salary and promotion along with a lack of motivation or even the capacity to work hard to achieve success, as stated by another participant:

“Like I said before they want quick wins... and they are very... quick to get their mood down... they are stressed too much they can never imagine that the work level is... they just think, oh this company is bad this company has too much pressure for me another company is better” (IV7).

The lack of motivation to proactively understand the needs of prospective employers and adopt a proactive career approach was partly attributed to education background, high socioeconomic status, and family connections to jobs, as described in the previous section. Practical exposure, such as WIL internships that often awaken graduates’ awareness of the importance of career proactivity, may not have similar effects on graduates who enjoy high status through family connections.

Foreign-university graduates were perceived as more likely to abandon the organisation and leave for overseas Master’s degree study. The drive to earn further qualifications in itself was not the issue; the primary concern was that these graduates planned to leave the organisation soon after they commenced, or too soon to have progressed their work-related skills, develop a more professional work orientation, and contribute back to the organisation. This quest for further qualifications, especially from foreign institutions, that graduates believed would make them more employable, rather than focusing on personal development, indicates a fixed mindset, according to Dweck (2000).

Several respondents indicated willingness to collaborate with education institutions and bring a greater infusion of industry-relevant initiatives such as internships, competitions, industry projects and other joint activities into academic programmes. However, two respondents highlighted an important corollary. As collaborations on projects are resource consuming, they must be selective and participate with those institutions that have a track record of graduating not only skilled students, but students who demonstrate motivation and

focused learning and career approaches deemed consistent with a growth mindset. This reinforced the importance of universities supporting students' pursuit of proactive approaches to developing their individual talents that may give a graduate an employability "edge", associated with a growth mindset (McCracken et al., 2015), over a fixed mindset (Dweck, 2000) or a similarly passive student-as-product orientation identified by Speight et al. (2012).

### ***Conclusions***

As the state loosens its grip on market mechanisms, Vietnamese higher education is challenged to provide effective preparation for dynamic local work environments. TNE providers are relative outsiders. Understanding local employer needs and perceptions is vital to making employability-related aspects of delivery locally-relevant. Three key findings were revealed in our interviews with human resource professionals. First, individual attitudes towards work, discipline, personal commitment and interpersonal relationships are fundamental to work-readiness; however, human resource managers are ambivalent about the degree to which foreign-university graduates demonstrate them. Second, this ambivalence can result in foreign-university graduates being perceived as lacking the necessary growth mindset of a work-ready graduate. Third, although Vietnam lacks a legacy of university connections with industry, managers consider practical exposure such as offered by WIL internships essential for skill and career awareness development. They also perceive that universities should give students opportunities for extra-curricular activities that can develop teamwork and interpersonal skills; volunteer and charity work would enable students to engage with less-privileged sectors of Vietnamese society, helping them to develop empathy and adapt to unfamiliar environments.

Academic achievement, as reflected in GPA scores, was perceived by most as an entry-level consideration factor. Overall, knowledge that graduates demonstrated was considered adequate; employers expected that graduates would undergo a learning curve lasting several months to over a year. Soft skills were viewed as important, particularly the



interpersonal skills to work effectively in a global work environment. Foreign-university and TNE graduates possessed strong English and intercultural skills, as well as independence and resourcefulness, as a result of a more practically and globally-oriented curriculum than that of Vietnamese universities.

Yet they were simultaneously viewed as over-confident, possessing inflated expectations, and lacking organisational commitment in many cases. Therefore, foreign universities cannot take their perceived superiority in effective teaching methods and English skill delivery for granted. Respondents expressed the importance of individual qualities such as positive attitudes, perseverance, and work ethic which reflect graduates' commitment not just to their own learning, but to their employer. While human resource practices in Vietnam may be transitioning away from using social position and relationships as a basis for hiring (Collins & Zhu, 2005; Vo & Stanton, 2011), our findings indicate that the traditional pre-open market economy prizing of loyalty continues to exert influence on employer perceptions of work-readiness. Employers may be reluctant to recruit TNE graduates perceived to have low organisational commitment, seen as unlikely to take a long-term learning partnership approach with the organisation.

Overall, graduates were viewed as unprepared in terms of career awareness and planning. Although this finding was more closely associated with the Vietnamese education system as a whole, comments also applied to foreign university graduates. In Vietnam family influence on career choice is still strong. Young people attend university without researching possible career options other than those they are guided towards by parents and family networks. This passive approach to job searches reflected a fixed mindset; universities were urged to foster greater career awareness by blending career development activities with industry-based curricular activities, such as internships, industry partnerships and other forms of work integrated learning, so that graduates are prepared, informed, proactive and more effective in their own career development and job search.

Conditional support for organisations to participate with universities in partnership initiatives such as internships was expressed. However, because of limited resources, several respondents voiced intentions to limit their support to institutions whose students were perceived as having the qualities aligned with a growth mindset and proactive attitudes, not just better skills. The evidence offered by several respondents indicated that some foreign university and TNE graduates consistently failed to demonstrate these characteristics as recruits. A perception emerged of some graduates who, through a combination of individual characteristics and experiential shaping factors of a comparatively affluent background, lacked the desirable growth mindset. These are qualities that vary by individual, and while it may seem unfair to paint all foreign university and TNE graduates with one brush, the reality is that human resource managers are instrumental in creating effective, ongoing industry learning partnerships with higher education institutions. Therefore, their feedback should be sought by TNE providers and used to systematically monitor, evaluate and adapt the TNE curriculum, work integrated learning implementations, and career service offerings to remain visibly relevant in local employer notions of employability and work readiness.

These conclusions are limited to an exploratory interpretation, derived from a small sample size and single location (Hanoi). Future research using quantitative methods on a sample sufficiently large to verify existence and extent of the ambivalence towards foreign university graduates' work-readiness is recommended.

### ***References – article seven***

- Ashwill, M. (2010). Vietnam: A Rising Star on the US Higher Education Scene. *World Education News and Reviews*, July/August 2010. Retrieved from <http://www.wes.org/event/PF/10aug/pffeature.htm>
- Australian Government. (2016). National Strategy for International Education 2025. Canberra Australia: Department of Education and Training.

- Bailey, L., & Ingimundardottir, G. (2015). International employability: Stakeholder attitudes at an international university in Malaysia. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 6(1), 44-55.
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843. doi: 10.1080/0307507080270656.
- Bilsland, C., & Nagy, H. (2015). Work-integrated learning in Vietnam: Perspectives of intern work supervisors. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 3(16), 185-198.
- Bon, D. P. (2013). Higher education is the beating heart of society. *Tạp chí Phát triển và Hội nhập*(07), 15-16.
- Bosanquet, A., Winchester-Seeto, T., & Rowe, A. (2012). Social inclusion, graduate attributes and higher education curriculum. *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 6(2), A73-A87.
- Bounous, R. M. (1986). Experiential Learning Programs: An Organizational Schema. *Journal of Career Development*, 13(1), 61-67. doi: 10.1177/089484538601300107
- Bridgstock, R. (2009). The graduate attributes we've overlooked: Enhancing graduate employability through career management skills. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 28(1), 31-44. doi: 10.1080/07294360802444347
- British Council. (2014). Impacts of transnational education on host countries: academic, cultural, economic and skills impacts and implications of programme and provider mobility. *Going Global*. UK: British Council and German Academic Exchange Service.
- Brown, N. (2010). WIL[ing] to share: an institutional conversation to guide policy and practice in work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 507-518. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502219
- Cai, Y. (2013). Graduate employability: a conceptual framework for understanding employers' perceptions. *Higher Education*, 65(4), 457-469. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9556-x
- Cam, K. T. H. (2015). *Internationalising tourism education in Vietnam: an evaluation of the work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs*. (Doctor of Philosophy), RMIT University, Australia.
- Cam, K. T. H. (2016). Work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs in Vietnam: Voices of education and industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 17(2), 149-161.

- Campbell, A. (2010). Developing generic skills and attributes of international students: the (ir)relevance of the Australian university experience. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 32(5), 487-497. doi: 10.1080/1360080X.2010.511121
- Cheong, K.C., Hill, C., Fernandez-Chung, R., & Leong, Y.C. (2016). Employing the 'unemployable': employer perceptions of Malaysian graduates. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(12), 2253-2270. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1034260
- CIMA. (2015). Bridging the employability gap; the Vietnam perspective. *Ready for Business*. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.
- Collins, N., & Zhu, Y. (2005). The Transformation of HRM in Transitional Economies: The Case of Vietnam. *Journal of Comparative Asian Development*, 4(1), 161-178. doi: 10.1080/15339114.2005.9678414
- Cox, A., & Warner, M. (2013). Whither 'training and development' in Vietnam?: learning from United States and Japanese MNCs' practice. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 51(2), 175-192. doi:10.1111/j.1744-7941.2012.00058
- Cox, S., & King, D. (2006). Skill sets: an approach to embed employability in course design. *Education + Training*, 48(4), 262-274. doi: doi:10.1108/00400910610671933
- Cranmer, S. (2006). Enhancing graduate employability: best intentions and mixed outcomes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 169-184. doi: 10.1080/03075070600572041
- Cunningham, W. V., & Villaseñor, P. (2016). Employer voices, employer demands, and implications for public skills development policy connecting the labor and education sectors. *The World Bank Research Observer*, 31(1), 102-134.
- Custer, S. (2016). Work in progress. *The PIE Review*, (10). Retrieved from [http://www.emagcloud.com/thepiereview/THE\\_MASTER\\_REVIEW\\_10\\_with\\_coverindex.html#/1/](http://www.emagcloud.com/thepiereview/THE_MASTER_REVIEW_10_with_coverindex.html#/1/)
- Dacre Pool, L., & Sewell, P. (2007). The key to employability: developing a practical model of graduate employability. *Education + Training*, 49(4), 277-289. doi: doi:10.1108/00400910710754435
- Dang, H., & Hathaway, T. (2014). Vietnamese Students' Perception and Loyalty towards an Image of Vocational Education and Training. *Journal of Education and Vocational Research*, 5(4), 228-238.
- Dao, K. V. (2014). Key challenges in the reform of governance, quality assurance, and finance in Vietnamese higher education – a case study. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(5), 745-760. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2013.842223
- De La Harpe, B., Radloff, A., & Wyber, J. (2000). Quality and generic (professional) skills. *Quality in Higher Education*, 6(3), 231-243. doi:10.1080/13538320020005972

- Dweck, C. S. (2000). *Self-theories: Their role in motivation, personality, and development*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Edwards, M. (2014). The impact of placements on students' self-efficacy. *Higher Education, Skills and Work-based Learning*, 4(3), 228-241. doi: doi:10.1108/HESWBL-05-2014-0015
- enWorld. (2015). Challenges in recruitment and retention for foreign firms; Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand and Japan. Thailand: enWorld - Navigos Search.
- Finch, D. J., Hamilton, L. K., Baldwin, R., & Zehner, M. (2013). An exploratory study of factors affecting undergraduate employability. *Education + Training*, 55(7), 681-704. doi:10.1108/ET-07-2012-0077
- Gribble, C. (2011). National policies on skilled labour and the cross-border student market, with a focus on Vietnam In S. Marginson, S. Kaur, E. Sawir (Eds.), *Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 291-307) Netherlands: Springer.
- Gribble, C. (2016). *Exploring 'employability' in different cultural contexts*. UK: Society for Research in Higher Education.
- Harrison, N. (2015). Practice, problems and power in 'internationalisation at home': critical reflections on recent research evidence. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(4), 412-430. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2015.1022147
- Harvey, L. (2001). Defining and Measuring Employability. *Quality in Higher Education*, 7(2), 97-109. doi: 10.1080/13538320120059990
- Harvey, L. (2003). *Employability and Transitions from Higher Education to Work*: UK: LTSN Generic Centre.
- Hayden, M., & Thiep, L. Q. (2007). Institutional autonomy for higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 26(1), 73-85. doi:10.1080/07294360601166828
- Hernández-March, J., Martín del Peso, M., & Leguey, S. (2009). Graduates' Skills and Higher Education: The employers' perspective. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 15(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1080/13583880802699978
- Hesketh, A. J. (2000). Recruiting an elite? Employers' perceptions of graduate education and training. *Journal of Education and Work*, 13(3), 245-271. doi: 10.1080/713676992
- Higdon, R. D. (2016). Employability: The missing voice: How student and graduate views could be used to develop future higher education policy and inform curricula. *Power and Education*, 8(2), 176-195. doi: 10.1177/1757743816653151
- ICEF. (2015). Challenges in Vietnamese higher education contributing to demand for study abroad. *ICEF Monitor*. Retrieved Oct.24, 2016, from

<http://monitor.icef.com/2015/09/challenges-in-vietnamese-higher-education-contributing-to-demand-for-study-abroad/>

- Jackson, D. (2015). Career choice status among undergraduates and the influence of work-integrated learning. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 24(1), 3-14. doi: 10.1177/1038416215570043
- Jackson, D., & Wilton, N. (2016). Developing career management competencies among undergraduates and the role of work-integrated learning. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 1-21. doi: 10.1080/13562517.2015.1136281
- Kalfa, S., & Taksa, L. (2013). Cultural capital in business higher education: reconsidering the graduate attributes movement and the focus on employability. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(4), 580-595. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2013.842210
- Kelly, K. (2000). *The Higher Education System in Vietnam*. [World of Education News and Reviews, 1 May 2000]. Retrieved from <http://wenr.wes.org/2000/05/ewenr-mayjune-2000-the-higher-education-system-in-vietnam>
- Lawrence, A. L. (2011). *Training the dragon: transnational higher education in Vietnam*. (Master of Arts). Simon Fraser University, British Columbia.
- Le, H. T. K. (2014). Vietnamese Higher Education in the Globalisation Context: A Question of Qualitative or Quantitative Targets. *International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives*, 13(1), 17-29.
- Liu, D. (2016). Parental involvement and university graduate employment in China. *Journal of Education and Work*, 29(1), 98-113. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2015.1049029
- London, J. D. (2006). Vietnam: The political economy of education in a “socialist” periphery. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 26(1), 1-20. doi: 10.1080/02188790600607770
- McCornac, D. C. (2012). The challenge of corruption in higher education: the case of Vietnam. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 1(3), 262-275. doi: 10.1108/20463161211270482
- McCracken, M., Currie, D., & Harrison, J. (2015). Understanding graduate recruitment, development and retention for the enhancement of talent management: sharpening ‘the edge’ of graduate talent. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 1-26. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2015.1102159
- Mason, M. (2010). Sample Size and Saturation in PhD Studies Using Qualitative Interviews. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 11(3).
- Mellors-Bourne, R., Jones, E., & Woodfield, S. (2015). *Transnational education and employability development*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy.

- Mourshed, M., Patel, J., & Suder, K. (2014). *Education to employment: Getting Europe's youth into work*. USA: McKinsey & Company.
- Napier, N. K., & Hoang, V. Q. (2011). Getting to the Real Story: What Vietnamese business people wish foreigners understood about doing business in emerging and transition countries like Vietnam—BEFORE they start. *International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management*, *11*(2), 208-220.
- Nguyen, C. D., Vo, K. D., & Nguyen, D. T. (2013). Supporting Career Counseling with User Modeling and Job Matching *Advanced Computational Methods for Knowledge Engineering* (pp. 281-292): Netherlands: Springer.
- Nguyen, T. N., Truong, Q., & Buyens, D. (2011). Training and firm performance in economies in transition: a comparison between Vietnam and China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, *17*(01), 103-119. doi: 10.1080/13602381003773982
- Nhuan, M., & Van, H. (2009). Enhancing Graduate Employability at Vietnam National University, Vietnam: a case study In *Country Reports – Enhancement of Graduate Employment, ASAIHL 2009* (pp. 35-41). Sri Lanka: University of Kelaniya.
- O'Leary, S. (2013). Collaborations in higher education with employers and their influence on graduate employability: an institutional project. *Enhancing Learning in the Social Sciences*, *5*(1), 37-50. doi: 10.11120/elss.2013.05010037
- Okay-Somerville, B., & Scholarios, D. (2015). Position, possession or process? Understanding objective and subjective employability during university-to-work transitions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 1-17. doi: 10.1080/03075079.2015.1091813
- Paryono. (2011). TVET Initiatives in Southeast Asian countries in response to increasing labour mobility within the region and beyond. *International Journal of Training Research*, *9*(1/2), 123-133.
- Patrick, C-J., Peach, D., Pocknee, C., Webb, F., Fletcher, M., & Pretto, G. (2008). The WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) report: A national scoping study. Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) Final report. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants\\_project\\_wil\\_finalreport\\_jan09.pdf](http://www.olt.gov.au/system/files/grants_project_wil_finalreport_jan09.pdf).
- Pham, A. T. N. (2015, October). *'Transnational education and employability: failure to deliver or failure to measure?'*. Paper presented at the Australian Education International Conference, Adelaide AU.
- Pham, H., & Starkey, L. (2016). Perceptions of higher education quality at three universities in Vietnam. *Quality Assurance in Education*, *24*(3), 369-393. doi: 10.1108/QAE-07-2014-0037

- Phạm, T. Đ. N. (2014). Obstacles to Lifelong Learning in Vietnam and Some Suggested Solutions. *VNU Journal of Science: Education Research*, 30(1).
- Phan, T. N., Lupton, M., & Watters, J. J. (2016). Understandings of the higher education curriculum in Vietnam. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1-13. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2016.1149693
- Ren, S., Zhu, Y., & Warner, M. (2011). Human resources, higher education reform and employment opportunities for university graduates in the People's Republic of China. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(16), 3429-3446. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2011.586871
- Rooney, P., Kneale, P., Gambini, B., Keiffer, A., Vandrasek, B., & Gedye, S. (2006). Variations in international understandings of employability for geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30(1), 133-145. doi: 10.1080/03098260500499766
- Rothman, M., & Sisman, R. (2016). Internship impact on career consideration among business students. *Education + Training*, 58(9). doi:10.1108/ET-04-2015-0027
- Rutti, R. M., LaBonte, J., Helms, M. M., Hervani, A. A., & Sarkarat, S. (2016). The service learning projects: stakeholder benefits and potential class topics. *Education + Training*, 58(4), 422-438. doi: 10.1108/ET-06-2015-0050
- Speight, S., Lackovic, N., & Cooker, L. (2012). Stakeholder attitudes towards employability in a Sino-British university. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 3(1), 26-40. doi:10.21153/jtlge2012vol3no1art556
- Speight, S., Lackovic, N., & Cooker, L. (2013). The Contested Curriculum: academic learning and employability in higher education. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 19(2), 112-126. doi: 10.1080/13583883.2012.756058
- Thang, N. N., & Quang, T. (2007). International briefing 18: training and development in Vietnam. *International journal of training and development*, 11(2), 139-149. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2419.2007.00275
- Thang, N. N., Quang, T., & Buyens, D. (2010). The relationship between training and firm performance: a literature review. *Research and Practice in Human Resource Management*, 18(1), 28-45.
- Tomlinson, M. (2007). Graduate employability and student attitudes and orientations to the labour market. *Journal of Education and Work*, 20(4), 285-304. doi: 10.1080/13639080701650164
- Tran, T. T. (2013a). Counting the uncounted; rumours, corruption and luck in job seeking by Vietnamese undergraduates. *Journal of Asian Critical Education*, 2, 3.



- Tran, T. T. (2013b). Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education*, 65(5), 631-644. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9567-7
- Tran, T. T. (2013c). *Enhancing Graduate Employability: the perspectives of Vietnamese university students and graduates*. (Doctor of Education), La Trobe University, Melbourne Australia. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.9/316250>
- Tran, T. T. (2014a). Governance in higher education in Vietnam – a move towards decentralization and its practical problems. *Journal of Asian Public Policy*, 7(1), 71-82.
- Tran, T. T. (2014b). Is graduate employability the ‘whole-of-higher-education-issue’? *Journal of Education and Work*, 28 (3), 207-227. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2014.900167
- Truong, T. T. H., & Laura, R. S. (2013). The Effects of Educating for Soft Skills on Success in Career Development among Graduates at Universities of Economics and Business Administration in Vietnam. In *Postgraduate research in education; proceedings of the second annual Higher Degree Research Conference*, Sydney: University of New South Wales.
- Turner, S., & An Nguyen, P. (2005). Young entrepreneurs, social capital and doi moi in Hanoi, Vietnam. *Urban Studies*, 42(10), 1693-1710. doi: 10.1080/00420980500231563
- Universities Australia. (2015). National Strategy on Work Integrated Learning in University Education. Australia: Universities Australia.
- Vallely, T. J., & Wilkinson, B. (2008). Vietnamese Higher education: Crisis and response. *Memorandum: Higher Education Task Force*. Boston: Harvard Kennedy School. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/innovations/asia/Documents/HigherEducationOverview12008.pdf>
- Vo, A. (2009). *The transformation of human resource management and industrial relations in Vietnam* Oxford: Elsevier.
- Vo, A., & Stanton, P. (2011). The transfer of HRM policies and practices to a transitional business system: the case of performance management practices in the US and Japanese MNEs operating in Vietnam. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(17), 3513-3527. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2011.560876
- Vu, D. A., & Phung, N. X. (2010, June). *Adapting the CDIO Approach in Developing Learning Outcomes for Economics and Business Disciplines in Vietnam: A Case-Study of University of Economics and Business at Vietnam national University, Hanoi*. Paper presented at the 6th Annual CDIO Conference. Montreal.

- Wen, D.M. (2005). The Impacts of SES on Higher Education Opportunity and Graduate Employment in China [J]. *Peking University Education Review*, 3, 010.
- World Bank. (2013). Skilling up Vietnam: Preparing the workforce for a modern market economy. *Vietnam Development Report 2014 (Vol. 82940)* Washington: World Bank.
- Yorke, M. (2006). Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not. In M. Yorke (Ed.), *Learning and Employability*. York, UK: Higher Education Academy (HEA).
- Ziguras, C., & Pham, A. T. N. (2014). Assessing participation in cross-border higher education in cities: Foreign education provision in Ho Chi Minh City. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 55(2), 169-181.

## **Chapter Six: Discussion, implications and conclusions.**

In this chapter, a summary of the themes and implications of each paper topic are presented in a table that will be analysed for commonalities, and inferred areas of concern relevant to stakeholder expectations and perceptions of the effectiveness of WIL internships and other academic endeavours. The chapter will explicate how these findings address the two broad research questions formulated at the beginning of the research study. The main converging concept of support will be developed through the emergent categories, supported by the indications of literature. Support throughout, and after, the WIL internship experience, is hypothesised to be a valuable asset for TNE providers such as the FUV. The goodwill of work supervisors is an area in which the FUV can build on its apparent advantage and address support areas that have emerged from the research. The feedback from the human resource managers suggested a more conditional affiliation with foreign universities in general. The major underlying theme across stakeholder categories is mutual support. Figure 6.1 depicts this notion of support incorporated into the initial conceptual framework, followed by a discussion explaining how this integration developed. Figures 6.9 – 6.11 represent derived support implications through boundary-spanning relationships between the TNE institution and intern work supervisors within the institution's transnational environment. Implications of how this support could be expanded to the wider institutional context is incorporated into Figure 6.12, a preliminary model for collaboration that extends mutual benefits beyond those of transnational student/graduate stakeholders and their prospective employers.

### *Cross-stakeholder summary*

Table 6.1 revisits the major themes that emerged across work supervisor, alumni and human resource manager stakeholder groups.

Table 6.1 Summary of stakeholder perception findings

<b>Work supervisors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- WIL internships positively differentiate FUV from local Vietnamese universities</li><li>- Professional, caring approach</li><li>- Interns are there to learn to work</li><li>- Benefits for the organisation, team and intern supervisor</li><li>- Positive towards collaboration in intern learning</li><li>- Seek additional information on interns, programme and greater involvement in intern placement</li></ul>
<b>Alumni</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- WIL internships positively differentiate FUV from local Vietnamese universities</li><li>- Both WIL and non-WIL internships are valuable parts of a developmental “learning journey”</li><li>- FUV experience positive overall, however aspects of ‘incompleteness’ at various stages (academic, transition and post-graduate alumni)</li></ul>
<b>Human Resource Managers</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Foreign/TNE universities provide quality of education (English skills, communication, up to date curriculum, confidence)</li><li>- Top-level Vietnamese universities are also associated with quality of education</li><li>- Ambivalence towards work-readiness of foreign/TNE university graduates</li><li>- Shaping factors (socio-economic background, educational background, practical exposure through internships, clubs, volunteering, other extracurricular activities)</li><li>- Importance of a growth mindset and career focus</li><li>- Attitude a crucial individual factor</li></ul>

These findings addressed the two broad research questions posed at the start of the thesis study. Providing relevant support at visibly high levels, especially in comparison with other higher education providers, is especially important in the transnational environment of Vietnam (research question one). Overall, stakeholders perceive the FUV’s WIL activities as beneficial however there is some ambivalence that warrants further investigation and action (research question two). Key details relevant to these findings are summarised below.

### **Work Supervisors:**

Work supervisors noted the professional, caring approach to both students and the host organisation conveyed through work visits and ongoing communication. They recognised that interns are there to learn to work, not merely to execute tasks. They articulated that interns contribute knowledge, English skills, fresh ideas and energy to the team. As young, frontline managers, many work supervisors valued opportunities to coach and guide interns in order to improve their own training and mentoring skills. They are willing to collaborate: more information about intern goals and their academic programme, and involvement in intern recruitment processes, would enable them to better support interns.

### **Alumni:**

All alumni recognised the value of WIL internships whether or not they had participated in the elective WIL internships at the FUV. Alumni perceived internships as valuable steps in a “learning journey”, rather than simply as means to land job offers. Alumni articulated positive associations with the FUV experience overall. However a theme of “incompleteness” emerged. They recalled feelings of cultural imbalance that stemmed from Western cultural focus over Vietnamese/Asian focus in curriculum and content. They expressed feelings of uncertainty about how their Western education equipped them for Vietnamese work environments as they transitioned from university to local employment. Finally, a lack of alumni connection after graduation extended this sentiment of incompleteness following transition to the workplace, even for alumni who had graduated five to seven years ago.

### **Human resource professionals:**

Many participants referred to TNE and foreign university graduates interchangeably in their comments about graduate characteristics, qualifications, and capabilities. Quality of education was associated with foreign universities/TNE providers as well as top-level local universities.

Skills developed through practical exposure to internships, extra-curricular activities and volunteer/charity work marked employable graduates. Individual characteristics such as attitude and a growth mindset that demonstrated career focus influenced perceptions of graduates as “work-ready” more so than educational qualifications or even skills.

Ambivalence about foreign university/TNE graduates displaying these characteristics emerged. Characterisations of some foreign university/TNE and top-level local graduates as privileged, lacking in social empathy and motivation repeatedly emerged. This ambivalence influenced reluctance on the part of some participants to partner with the TNE in WIL-related activities.

## FUV support and its relation to stakeholder perspectives

The stakeholder concept framework developed throughout the research process, as documented in Chapter One. The concept of FUV support as fundamental to effective, mutually beneficial WIL outcomes emerged, and is schematically represented by the insertion of FUV support into the centre of the concept framework in Figure 6.1.

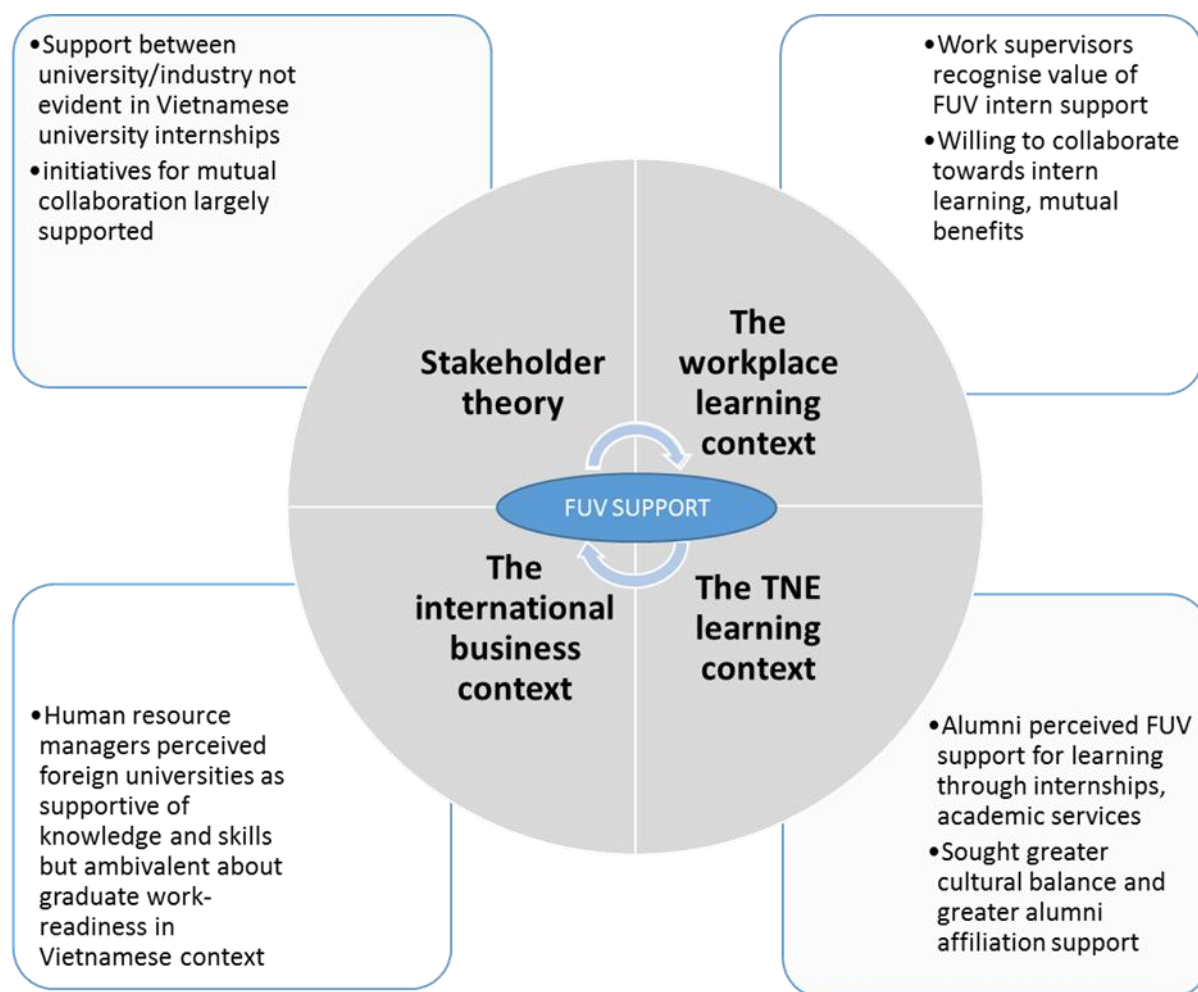


Figure 6.1 Support framework

### Stakeholder theory; review of stakeholder perspectives.

Research data that emerged from human resource manager, alumni and work supervisor perspectives supported previous publication claims about the systemic disconnection between universities and employers in Vietnam. Alumni from the FUV as well as two local university alumni consistently raised issues about the lack of connection between

the university administration, academics, and the host organisation throughout the internship process.

Human resource managers reinforced the lack of university-industry stakeholder connection at a different level; possibly because their involvement in the internship process is not usually at front-line operational levels, their feedback related to the lack of industry relevance of curricular content and teaching approaches demonstrated by interns and graduates of local universities. Therefore, their views were more directly linked to the lack of Vietnamese university support of adequate industry-relevant skills and knowledge, and that foreign universities provided more current support (particularly of English communication skills) than local universities.

### **The workplace learning context**

Although feedback from graduate employers in Vietnam has been reported (Duoc & Metzger, 2007; T.T. Tran, 2010; Trung & Swierczek, 2009), little research relevant to intern work supervisor perspectives is evident. Work supervisor stakeholders in this thesis study demonstrated high awareness of their instrumental roles in interns' learning and development, not only as frontline task managers but as guides and mentors. They also acknowledged benefits that they personally derived through developing their coaching and guiding skills. Building relationships with interns, facilitating their integration into the team, and providing both formal and informal feedback emerged as common practice across work supervisor stakeholders, targeted at improving intern skills and thereby improving on-the-job performance. Given their role as the intern's main source of guidance and feedback at this pivotal stage of their transition to the workplace, it is important that the university gains and maintains an understanding of how to acknowledge and build on work supervisors' ability to enhance intern learning in the TNE context by providing considered, effective support. Work supervisors' perceptions of FUV internships as professional, caring, and therefore more effective, than local universities' disconnected internships, coupled with their expressed



desire to effectively contribute to the best mutual outcomes through greater sharing of information relevant to the intern's academic programme and goals for the internship, indicate opportunities for enhanced collaboration through boundary-spanning relationships between the workplace supervisors and academic advisors. The direct connection that the work supervisor has with both the intern and the university represents a valuable opportunity to establish strong relationships that will support intern learning.

### **The TNE learning context**

Connectivity between the FUV and intern companies was seen as a valuable support for interns and alumni contrasted with the lack of interaction between intern host organisations and local universities. Support through provision of structured administrative processes such as sourcing, coordinating and monitoring placements on an ongoing basis was appreciated. Alumni also indicated a desire for integration of employability-related activity into technical courses. For example, an accounting degree graduate suggested that his experience in hospitality prepared him in a range of useful ways – such as dealing with difficult people – that he did not recall encountering in his accounting courses: “Preparation for the job in our class all we focus is on top of the accounting, finance” (A12). O’Leary (2013) found similar desires for well-managed employability support processes in social science undergraduates.

Alumni who did not choose the elective WIL internship for individual reasons nevertheless provided strong recommendations for students who lacked experience, connections, or confidence to enrol in WIL electives, partially owing to FUV support in sourcing appropriate placements where students would be monitored and not exploited. Academic support, through communication and visits with interns throughout the semester and by scheduling relevant assessments such as goal-setting and industry projects, was an

advantage over local universities' internship assessments that largely consisted of unrelated (and thereby inauthentic) reports and essays.

Perceived transition-related support extended beyond internships to extra-curricular activities such as discipline-related clubs (Accounting, Business, Marketing, and Entrepreneur Clubs, for example) and industry projects. Alumni suggested that support should be augmented through greater “reaching out” to students and encouraging them to join clubs; students may be disinclined to engage in club activity due to family pressures to concentrate on academic performance, and by a lack of awareness of the career-related skills they can develop through club participation. Recognition of this awareness was indicated by the following comment:

“When I got involved in a lot of clubs, that developed my communication skills and helped me to talk to my managers, my colleagues and also the clients. It’s how I talk to them that makes them feel comfortable and give me the information that I need” (A05).

Finally, alumni valued assessments that support the student to be what Billett (2009) terms an “agentic learner”, making their own meaning across university and practice settings through goal setting assessments and internship projects discussed and negotiated with workplace supervisors. Providing the academic structure for these fruitful collaboration-based assessments requires the TNE institution to understand how effective support should guide work supervisors to evaluate and support interns. Scaffolded, constructive approaches help interns to cope with and make meaning from assessments such as reflections and setting goals and objectives that require approaches that differ from academic essays and exams.

Although TNE student satisfaction and motivation has been researched in Vietnam (Ly, Vickers, & Fernandez, 2015; Dao & Thorpe, 2015; Nguyen & Leihy, 2015), and in other TNE locations (Hoare, 2011; Pyvis & Chapman, 2007; Wilkins, Balakrishnan, & Huisman, 2011; Wilkins & Huisman, 2013), alumni views, particularly in the context of transition to the local workplace, have not previously been evident in the literature. As did work supervisor

responses, alumni feedback indicated positive associations and a willingness to stay connected with the FUV. Supporting alumni connections has potential to yield benefits for the FUV and its students through alumni mentoring and provision of internships and other WIL opportunities.

### **The international business context**

Benefits of WIL internships associated with the supportive role of the FUV were consistently recognised by work supervisors and alumni, but appeared to be considerably more elusive in discussions with human resource managers. Human resource managers perceived that an assortment of activities that incorporated authentic industry learning (including WIL internships and projects) as well as a wider engagement with society through clubs, volunteer work and service learning were valuable components of a work-ready graduate. Respondents did not however strongly associate foreign/TNE universities with activities related to practical exposure. Perceptions of work-readiness may have a cultural component that influences graduate hiring decisions; socio-economic background and educational background were seen as shaping factors in graduate work-readiness. Human resource managers also sought loyalty demonstrated by a mindset oriented towards development within the organisation. Implications of these findings will be proposed in the following Discussion section.

### ***Discussion***

Themes of mutual support underlay participant responses, although the strength and nature of support varied across stakeholders. The strength of support extended by work supervisors anchored the proposition that developing supportive and collaborative relationships between the workplace supervisor and the academic adviser is crucial for WIL programmes in TNE locations. Positioned at the point of university-organisation frontline intersection, work supervisors and academic advisers together directly influence intern learning. It is additionally

proposed that by cultivating mutual support and sharing of information, these directly-interfacing roles can provide a base from which to extend supportive collaboration beyond WIL. Finally, wider institutional benefits that extend beyond offshore intern learning are proposed through a collaborative model based on mutual support and expanded knowledge sharing networks across home and host campuses.

Support indicators will be presented in the following Figures 6.2 – 6.7.

## *Support*

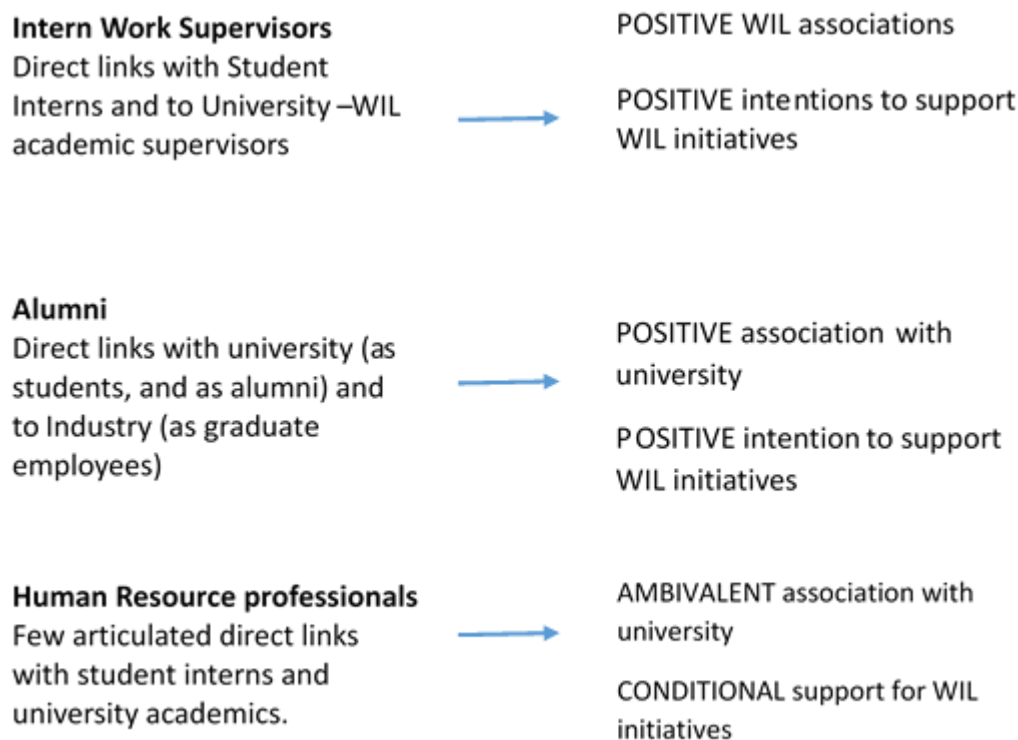


Figure 6.2 Stakeholder support strength

As outlined in Figure 6.2, work supervisors and alumni generally expressed mutual support for FUV collaboration. Human resource managers were however ambivalent about foreign university graduates' work-readiness and provided conditional support for greater collaboration. Figure 6.2 also proposes that the support expressed by work supervisors and alumni is associated with the direct links established with the university, contrasted with the lack of direct links between human resource professionals and university academics and student interns. Support interpretations are illustrated in Figure 6.3, then analysed from the perspective of work supervisors, interns (recollections from alumni), alumni (graduate experience) and human resource managers.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the flow of FUV support to stakeholders, the resulting support that stakeholders yield for other stakeholders, and the linked benefits (shown in notched squares) that emerged from the stakeholder interviews. Potential benefits that emerged as not completely linked by support are shown as notched squares with thick borders.

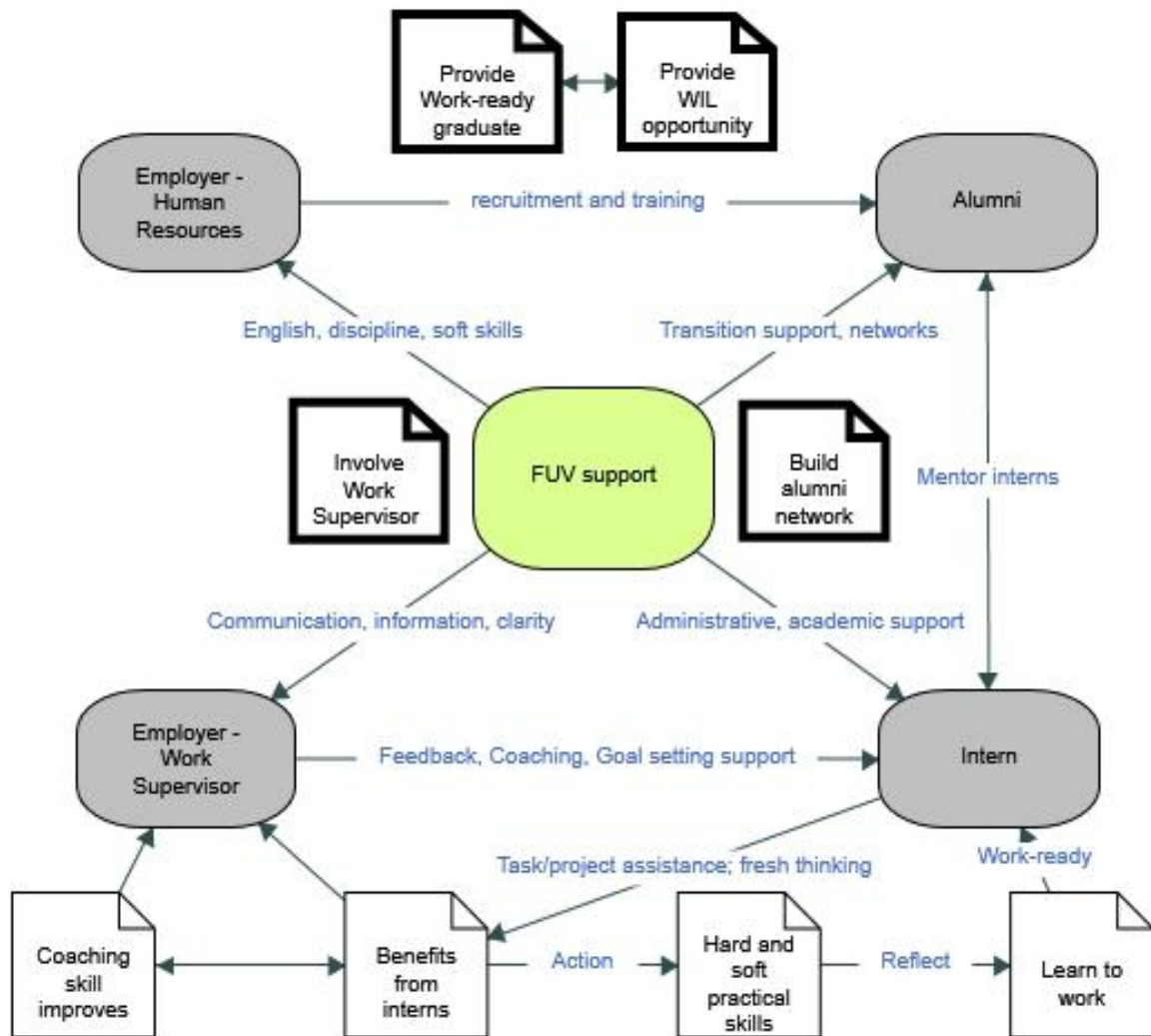
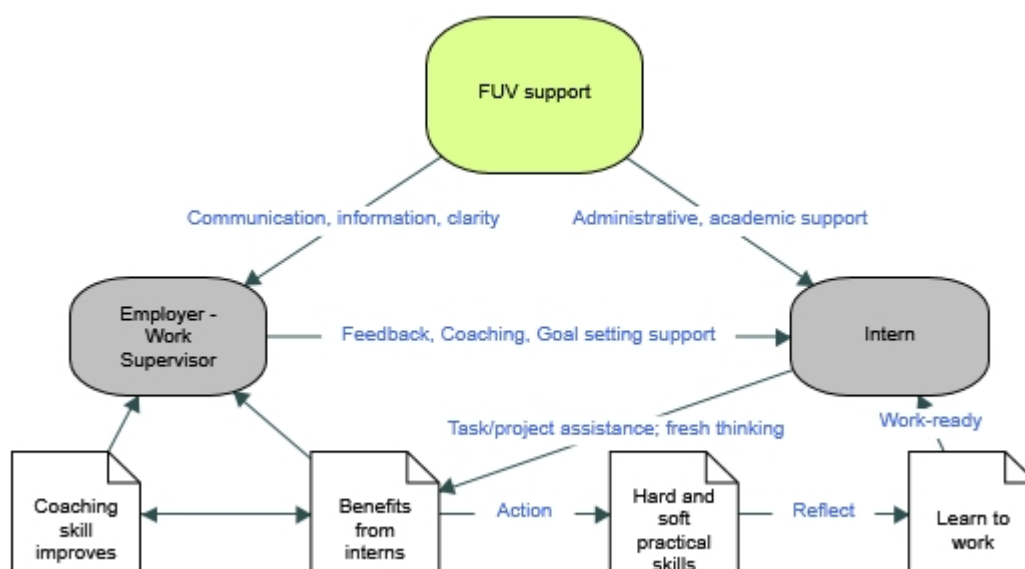


Figure 6.3 Stakeholder support flows

Figure 6.3 will be dissected into four sections (Figures 6.4 – 6.7) in order to frame a discussion of how support flows affect each stakeholder. Figure 6.4 looks at support flows between the FUV, work supervisors, and interns.

Figure 6.4 Support flows between work supervisors and interns



**Work Supervisors** require clear guidelines about supervisor role expectations and details about intern obligations in order to effectively support interns (Peach, Ruinard, & Webb, 2014; Rowe, Mackaway, & Winchester-Seeto, 2012). Work supervisors perceived that the FUV provides this support through work visits where expectations, intern goals and assessments are clarified. This enables work supervisors to further provide support to interns through appropriate coaching, relationship building, feedback and goal setting assessments. Work supervisors, in turn, improve their coaching and leadership skills. Their teams receive task and project support, fresh thinking and a link with recent academic knowledge.

**Interns** are supported by the FUV with placement assistance, workplace preparation sessions prior to placement, academic visits during the internship period and through the Career Centre services available to all students and interns. Supportive work supervisors and co-workers provide the environment to build not only task-related skills but informal social learning that critically underpins the transition to work (Billett, 2009; Eraut, 2007). The FUV conducts workshops and assigns reflective that assessments support the intern’s capacity to process workplace learning experiences and “learn to work”, and to develop “self-learning”. The workshops also offer a venue for interns to get together, share and learn from other interns’

experiences. An alumnus from a local university, where there are no workshops or other integrative activities, suggested that universities form a club for internship students to meet and share experiences. Giving interns a platform to communicate with other interns who may be facing similar achievements and challenges may yield supportive social learning of even greater value than the workshop content itself.

Interns build networks that enhance career possibilities and boost confidence through supportive work supervisors and colleagues and through FUV industry-related career events. Reflecting on their intern days, alumni articulated the value of receiving mentorship support from previous interns/alumni as indicated by this comment: “I would need more feedback from people who did the internship before. That would be better so I could find out what internship is like, internal conditions, like that” (A12). Alumni indicated a willingness to be involved in intern mentorship activities, as outlined in the next section, accompanied by Figure 6.5.



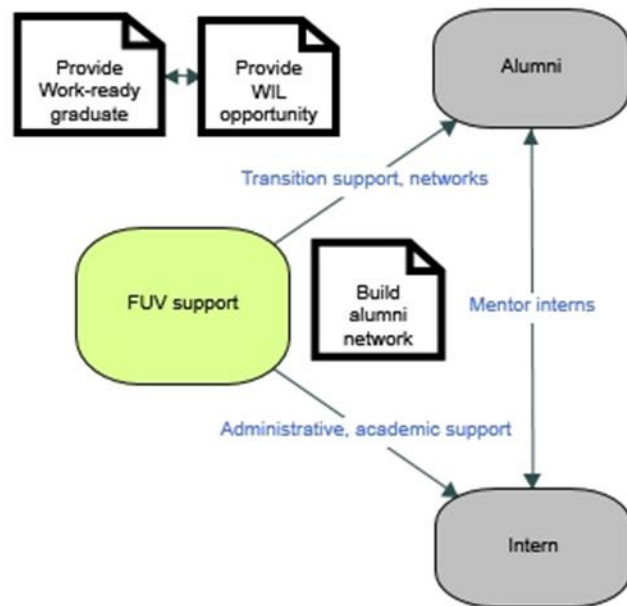


Figure 6.5 Alumni support

**Alumni** are in a stage of transition after they graduate (Perry & Perry, 2015); they recalled aspects of supportive help received from the FUV throughout this transition process. The FUV provides access to Career Services for graduates, and arranges alumni events that support alumni in career pursuits, keeping in touch with each other and building their networks. In turn, alumni respond very positively to acting as mentors to current FUV students:

“One alumni can take charge of maximum, two or maybe three if he/she is capable. And then we can assist them on how they can get used to the work, how they are gonna improve themselves from their internship to their career path in their future” (A03).

Alumni suggested that the FUV improve their alumni support systems. The culture shock of adapting to a Vietnamese working environment after a Western study environment meant that maintaining links with peers who had gone through or were going through similar transition processes was invaluable. Active engagement with alumni was suggested to address this and

other needs for affiliation. Alumni want to keep their graduate network strong, and frequently agreed that the FUV should be more proactive and consistent with its alumni events, particularly in Hanoi.

“To make the networking with people at (FUV) is very important as well. Many of my friends are now working in finance firm and accounting but I lost contact with them like two years ago and I wish that I had maintained the regular contact. Maybe I would have more opportunity to work with them in the company” (A06).

Therefore, although “Build alumni network” was commonly identified as a valuable benefit, it is not linked to existing FUV support mechanisms in Figure 6.5. Universities are encouraged to maintain links with offshore alumni, particularly universities that aspire to build international reputations and enhance opportunities to improve onshore international student outcomes (Australian Government, 2016; Dobson, 2015). Moreover, the willingness of FUV alumni to act as intern and student mentors widens the FUV’s potential to increase student support through more WIL opportunities, which are, in turn, associated with the practical exposure valued by human resource managers.

**Human resource managers'** awareness of FUV support was aligned with the English, communication and general knowledge skills, as illustrated in Figure 6.6.

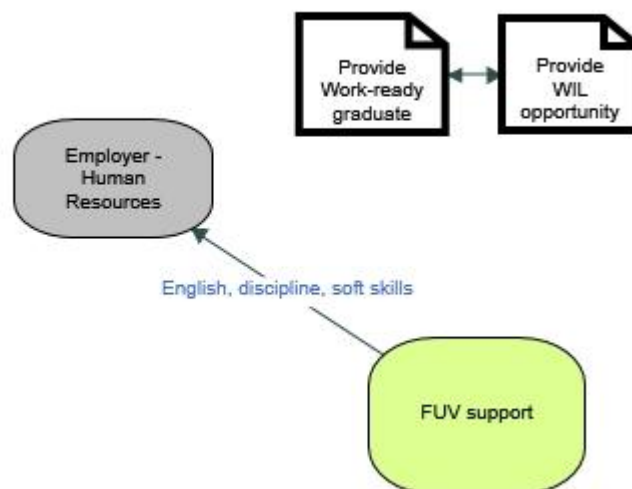


Figure 6.6 Ambivalent perceived support from human resource managers

Human resource managers also associated WIL (as an element of practical exposure) as a key element of a work-ready graduate. However, their perception of FUV graduates as work-ready were ambivalent. Human resource managers do not appear to find foreign-university graduates analogous with work-ready recruits, as shown by the absence of perceived linkage between human resource managers, FUV support, and work-ready graduates in Figure 6.6.

This quote reflects the ambivalence:

“[FUV graduates] are very bright and they have very good... communication skills during the selection process. But from our own experience... it is not about that capability... [FUV graduates] are very high class, but our business is about consumers everywhere... not just about premium ones... I don't know to find the right words, they think that... they position themselves as the high class and the luxury people. It's more kind of fit... they are from very rich families, when they fail at work they cannot stand up to it and they give up very easily” (HR05).

As outlined in the cross-stakeholder summary earlier in this chapter, this ambivalence was shared by several human resource participants. Although participants acknowledged that these attitudinal elements were individually determined and not universally shared by FUV

graduates, their ambivalence was sufficient to influence participants' inclination to provide WIL activities (including industry projects, seminars, guest speakers, career fairs, and student competitions) with the FUV.

## Greater involvement of work supervisors in intern selection

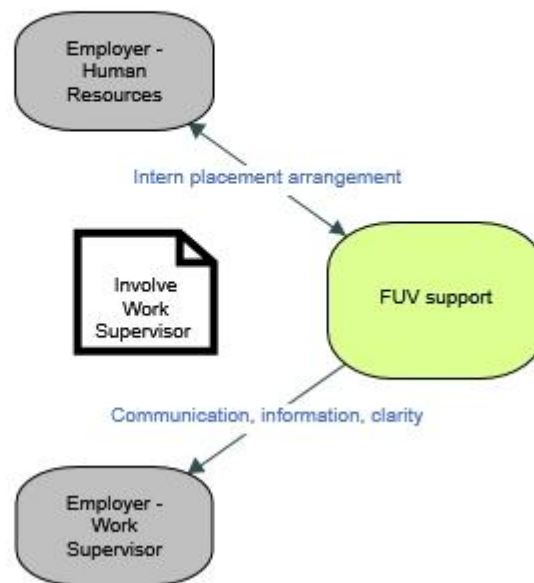


Figure 6.7 Involve work supervisor

**Work supervisors** indicated that they are often out of the human resources information loop during interns' recruitment and allocation. This was commonly identified as an area where improved intern support could be achieved; work supervisors suggested more involvement with intern selection processes including receipt of CVs, programme details, goals, and participation in interviews. Work supervisors valued the opportunities to grow their own coaching and guiding skill through intern supervision; therefore involving them to a greater degree in intern recruitment and selection would presumably benefit the organisation in terms of their management skill development. While this is not an area that the FUV staff can control, it appears worthwhile for the FUV to encourage intern host companies to involve work supervisors in these initial stages of internships to improve their motivation and preparation, and thus, intern learning.

## Implications

The environmental context of this study is also the main driver of the research problem – applying the WIL concept to the environment of Vietnam. The qualitative research methods employed dictate that although rich participant data has generated conceptual theory around the crucial role of support, these concepts cannot necessarily be generalised to apply to other WIL offshore host country contexts. Although the Vietnamese educational and macro-environmental context is unique, a progressive relationship of support-based value to WIL stakeholders to enable better learning outcomes incorporates fundamental university principles: delivering desired outcomes to students and their prospective employers. Therefore, the general concept of relationship building that starts with an assessment of local stakeholder needs and planning appropriate support can be applied to a TNE provider’s specific offshore campus context. The proposed three-level relationship model is illustrated by Figure 6. 8 below:

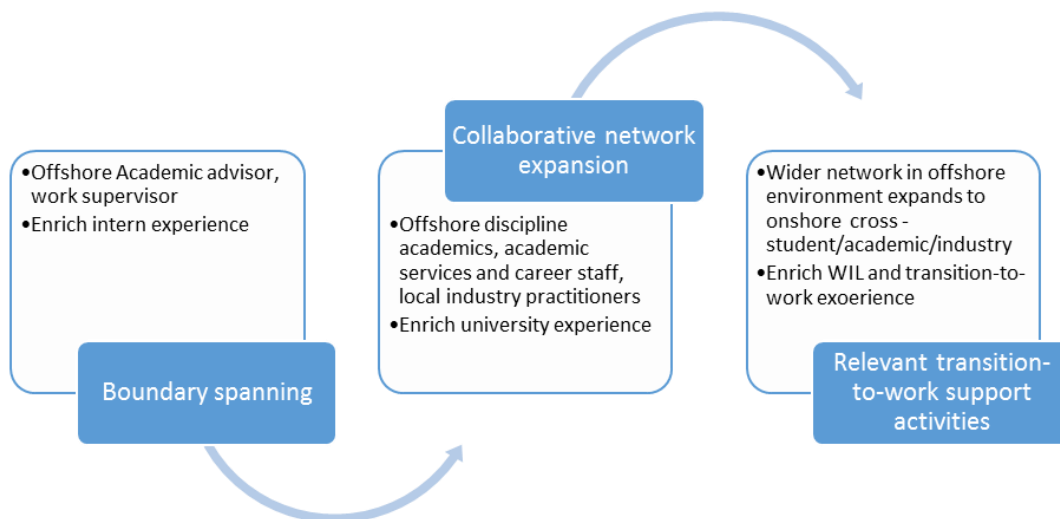


Figure 6.8 Three levels of support activities and benefits

Implications of boundary spanning, collaborative network expansion, and relevant transition-to-work support activities are illustrated in Figures 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11 henceforth.

*Boundary spanning to enrich the WIL experience*

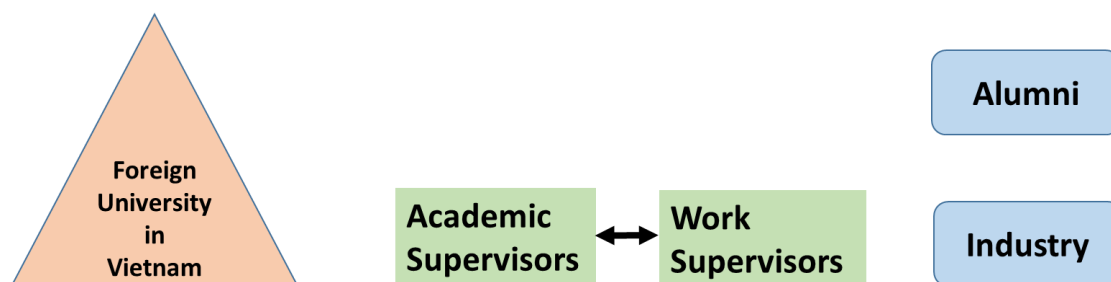


Figure 6.9 Boundary spanning roles

The positivity that work supervisors voiced about the front-line communication and support extended by the FUV through work visits and ongoing communication, their commitment to improve intern learning, as well as to developing their own coaching and guiding skills indicates the potential for work supervisors to enact boundary spanning roles. Closer collaboration with academic supervisors and the establishing knowledge sharing links through recognition of these roles as boundary spanning is proposed as valuable in improving WIL learning outcomes for interns.

Work supervisors may be the most influential factor in the intern learning experience but it is not usually part of their official job descriptions to instil and assess learning in student interns. Furthermore, not all work supervisors are equally motivated to mentor interns, as demonstrated by this observation: “If they get someone like me, they learn. They get some others, they may waste their time” (W07). In Australia, potential host organisations have expressed concern over the capacity of work supervisors to provide adequate mentoring (Smith, Mackay, Challis, & Holt, 2006); this is a particular concern for smaller organisations (AWPA, 2013; Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns, & McLaren, 2016). In Vietnam, this is likely to

be of equal if not greater concern given the historical disconnection between universities and industry and the absence of collaboration between the university and intern work supervisors that emerged across stakeholder groups researched in this thesis, and validated by the limited literature on work supervisor practices in Vietnam (Cam, 2016; Tran, 2013). In light of this historical, educational and cultural context, the willingness of most intern work supervisors to acquaint themselves more fully with intern characteristics, programme details and goals seems remarkable. Their interest in furthering their professional development could be supported by the FUV's including them in FUV training activities such as coaching and mentoring (skills that several participants targeted as important for them to develop). Further research to determine more specifically how to most effectively support both the work supervisors themselves as well as their organisations is recommended.

Boundary-spanning practices are problematic in academic environments and as such are unusual (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). However, researchers have identified boundary spanning as a potential benefit of WIL (Brink, Mearns, & Du Plessis, 2014; Peach, Cates, Jones, Lechleiter, & Ilg, 2011). Academic secondments for industry experience is one avenue of academic boundary spanning; work on projects along with students is another. In the Vietnamese TNE context, this could be problematic for TNE academics who don't speak Vietnamese; suitable opportunities for these secondments or projects in English-speaking multi-national enterprises would need to be located. Nevertheless, cultivation of collaborative relationships with work supervisors will enrich the WIL experience for interns.



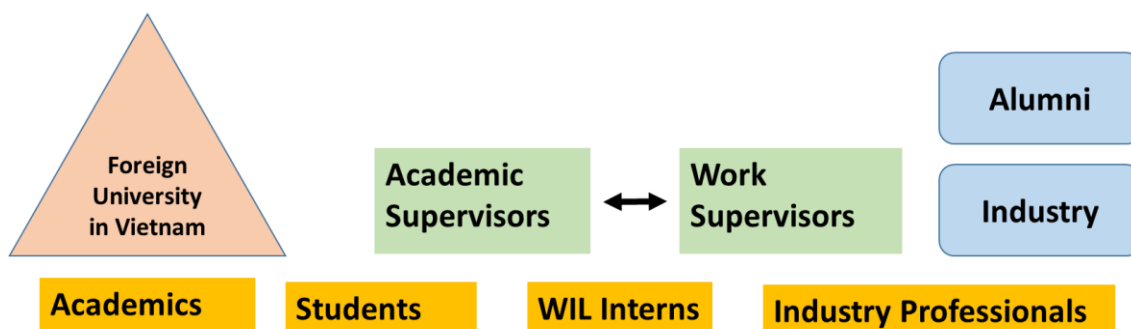


Figure 6.10 Wider collaboration network

Brown (2010) called on universities to recognise the tremendous potential of WIL for staff to share cross-disciplinary knowledge and experience with the aim of enhancing student learning. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) identified the ability to draw on diverse expertise as a key competency of successful organisations. This thesis suggests that these two propositions are particularly pertinent to TNE environments.

As boundary-spanning relationships between academic advisers and work supervisors strengthen, active support from the TNE institution to enable expanded connections with other discipline lecturers can develop into a key cross-cultural competency. Academic advisers can share their connections with local work supervisors across disciplines. A network of connections with local employers and professional associations built and developed by WIL academics and administrative staff can provide teaching staff, particularly international academics unfamiliar with local industry, with ways to increase knowledge about local industry and discipline practice, and ultimately provide students with locally-relevant teaching.

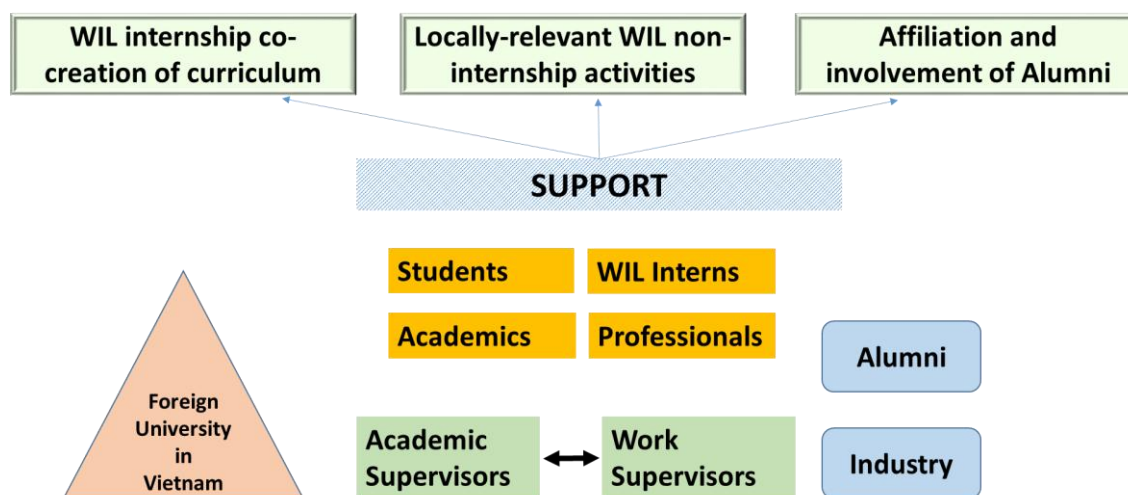


Figure 6.11 Expanded transition-to-work support activities

WIL collaborations incubate relationships between academics and local industry practitioners and associations. As relationships strengthen, and professional knowledge transfer enabled through effective boundary-spanning frameworks (Brink, Mearns, & Du Plessis, 2014) develops, local industry hosts can become valuable partners in programme co-creation (Jones, 2010).

As strength and numbers of WIL frontline boundary-spanning relationships grow and connections between other academics and industry professionals expand, the potential for extended WIL partnerships increases. For example, discipline academics will have a wider base of local practitioners to approach as guest speakers, industry project sponsors, case study sources, and industry visits. Support services such as career centres and student organisations will also have a wider base of potential partners for career events, competitions and event sponsors, and advisers.

Finally, closer connections and wider engagement with local alumni network will increase opportunities to engage alumni as student mentors. Alumni feedback indicated a high level of interest in mentoring FUV interns and students. Alumni mentorships are uniquely valuable in their providing guidance based on personal experience with TNE study,

internships and the transition to local employment. Additionally, alumni are valuable sources of internship placements and other WIL activity support.

### *Collaborative Model*

In a critical analysis of higher education in America, Keller (2008, p. xii) claimed that colleges are shaped by societal context “to an appallingly unperceived extent”, suggesting that the traditional detachment of universities in order to create knowledge is illusory. Although these comments refer to the American situation, the analogy is appropriate in the realm of transnational higher education. Creation of knowledge in a globalised world is a two-way stream.

However, transnational higher education practice to date has largely followed a colonialist, one-way transmission pattern. Gallagher (2011) noted that Australian institutions have failed to widen their outlooks and accommodate host national cultures in their international education endeavours. In 2000, Altbach wrote that collaboration between transnational partners is essential in the internationalisation of education; four years later, he reported the continuation of outmoded approaches to exporting university education (Altbach, 2004). In 2014, Blackmore confirmed this persistence, noting unequal power relationships and a lack of communication between home and host campuses (Blackmore, 2014). Characterised by Coleman (2003) as offshore satellites of Western universities, Lundberg (July, 2013) took this further, referring to offshore campuses as outposts, with limited connection to the knowledge culture of the home institution and limited power to generate recognised, valued resources. Edwards et al. (2014) also branded international branch campuses “outposts”, reporting tensions between offshore branches and their mothership, stemming from academic and research constraints placed on them, at least in the earlier stages of their development. Consequently curriculum, programme and academic models from the more powerful partner prevail; offshore campus needs may be overlooked (K. Smith, 2010; L. Smith, 2009) and locally-relevant education outcomes constrained by elements of tight

centralised control (Ling et al., 2013). As Nguyen and Leihy (2015) put it, “As in any unequal power relationship, the margins have to know the centre whereas the centre can be indifferent to, even unknowing about, the margins” (p. 503).

These power and control-related inequalities limit establishment of the collaborative framework necessary for transnational WIL to achieve its full potential. Naylor et al. (2010) identified solid frameworks as crucial to WIL. In the transnational education context, it is difficult to discover evidence of such collaborative frameworks. The challenges of delivering appropriate and effective WIL in the offshore environment bring this dilemma to the fore. A collaborative model that incorporates host campus stakeholders as equal contributors to WIL offshore strategy, and aims to develop greater understanding and build stronger relationships with local industry stakeholders is proposed in the next section.

### ***Collaborative model for transnational WIL***

Collaboration across academic disciplines, between industry and universities, and between the front-line work supervisor and the university is integral to WIL (Peach et al., 2014; Richardson, Jackling, Henschke, & Tempone, 2013; R. Smith et al., 2006). The collaborative model shown in Figure 6.12 proposes that front-line WIL participants – host supervisors, WIL academics, and WIL students – can distribute insight and facilitate collaborative relationships in the offshore campus environment. Their roles are represented by ovals in Figure 6.12; heavily weighted double connection arrow indicate the rich, two-way communication relationships that represent opportunities for knowledge-generation and network-building across the three stakeholder groups in offshore and home campuses. Solid arrows indicate how that knowledge can be communicated and shared – for example WIL academics share local industry and business knowledge with other teaching staff, enabling them to craft locally-relevant and appropriate lesson content and activities. WIL students and WIL academics can share knowledge and experience across national boundaries using technology

to collaborate on projects and in discussion. Dashed lines represent valuable network connections that can develop from WIL-based relationships, such as connections between management in the home country and local industry representatives in the host country.

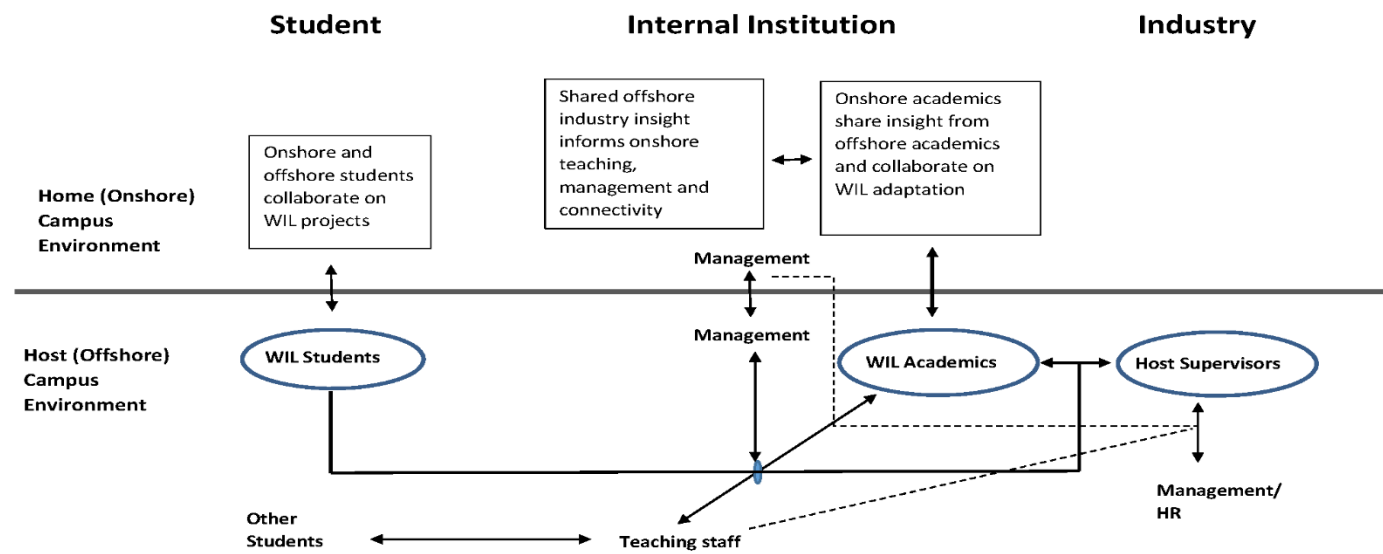


Figure 6.12 Model for collaborative transnational WIL



To focus on WIL stakeholder communication across campuses, Figure 6.12 is an intentionally one-dimensional illustration of central WIL elements – those most rooted in communication and shared knowledge between the front-line stakeholders, illustrated by oval shapes. There is only one nodal point shown to indicate knowledge shared between management, WIL staff, and teaching staff in the home and offshore campus. However, the spirit of the model more closely embodies a de-centred generation of knowledge and productive relationships metaphorically described as rhizomatic by McCannon (2012), and corresponds to Knight's (2015) global university of the future. Greater network representation would recognise other nodes developing in many areas of cross-campus collaborative practice such as research. Although Management – teaching and learning, research, quality, administration, marketing, careers – clearly maintains numerous nodal connections with its students, the range and depth of these connections extend beyond the boundaries of this thesis. In summary, I propose that a model of collaboration across TNE locations is a worthwhile framework for future research, and that due to its dependence on communication and collaboration with local stakeholders, WIL strategies in offshore campuses have a role to play in its development.

### ***Limitations of findings***

Limitations incurred by the qualitative methodology, non-probability sampling, and the research context of Vietnam have been discussed in the Methodology section, and their relevance to each stakeholder group in the corresponding journal articles in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five.

Human resource managers' lack of regular direct engagement with interns at the front-line task level may explain their ambivalent perceptions of FUV students and graduates, and their more conditional expressions of WIL activity support compared to those of work supervisors. Additionally, work supervisors centred their discussion on their experience with interns, whereas human resource managers were clearly referring to both interns and graduate



recruits. Work supervisors may also have a different, higher set of expectations that apply to graduate employees, and therefore apply a different set of performance measures to evaluating full-time employees as part of their formal job requirement. This limitation does not detract from the recommendation for TNE institutions to seek greater insight into how local human resource managers perceive their graduates' work-readiness, and to utilise information from more detailed future research into improving local employability-related initiatives such as WIL and developing effective communication strategies.

The study was conducted in Vietnam and therefore its conclusions cannot be assumed to apply in other TNE locations. Nevertheless, the stakeholder concept framework addresses four consistent elements of any TNE provider's environment. First, the context of higher education in general, and more specifically around employability/work integrated learning, is one of interplay between historical, political, cultural, demographic and socio-economic factors, making a stakeholder approach relevant to TNE activity in any location. Second, to initiate effective employability-related activities, any TNE provider must have knowledge of the workplace context of its host environment in which its graduates will engage with. Third, understanding differences between the local university and the TNE institution student experience is important from TNE alumni perspectives, to understand not only the student experience but the graduate transition experience in the local context. Finally, any TNE institution must understand its key stakeholders in an international business context. Although local human resource managers do not directly impact on the TNE's operation, as employers of TNE graduates their indirect association is crucial. This study indicates that their support cannot be assumed, but that their perspectives must be understood in order to gain their affiliation and commitment to support the TNE institution and its students and graduates. Therefore, the findings and approach taken by the study are significant in the modern context of transnational higher education and TNE graduate employability

### *Conclusions and future research*

Although WIL is undoubtedly resource-intensive and presents an array of challenges to transnational institutions, making WIL part of the offshore campus strategy in Vietnam benefits stakeholders directly involved in WIL internships; the work supervisor and alumni research participants. Alumni gained valuable locally-relevant workplace learning experience, applied learning from the foreign university to local work environments, and overall ranked the experience as integral to an overall “learning journey”. Work supervisors initially sceptical about the motivational qualities and suitability of TNE interns often modified these views after the WIL internship experience. In contrast to prevailing local internship practices, where university and workplace supervisors rarely connect and intern learning is fortuitous rather than planned, work supervisors consistently voiced support of the WIL programme, and recognised interns’ learning needs and their own role in facilitating intern learning.

These findings demonstrate the importance of providing support not only to student interns, but also to alumni and work supervisors. These stakeholders are positively inclined to act as rich learning resources for FUV interns, and are uniquely positioned to do so, given adequate support. Understanding how support can be directed towards providing mutual benefits is important, and should be part of the WIL offshore strategy. For example, work supervisors value the professional development that they derive from mentoring interns. Therefore, further research to identify effective professional development support that the offshore institution is positioned to provide to work supervisors is recommended; successful initiatives may result in a wider recognition of the benefits of partnering with the offshore institution.

Findings from the human resource professional stakeholder group yielded concerns about the work-readiness of university graduates, and particularly around suitability of foreign/TNE graduates as recruits in Vietnamese organisations. The quality of education was seen as adequate, especially in terms of English skills and general knowledge. However, the

reserved support of human resource managers for FUV industry-relevant WIL activities based on concerns over the attitude, mindset and lack of career focus of some foreign university/TNE graduates is important for TNE providers to address. Human resource managers did not clearly differentiate between graduates from foreign institutions and TNE graduates. Although they ranked “practical exposure” as a key factor in recruiting graduates, they did not articulate the connection between foreign and TNE institutions with practical exposure opportunities such as WIL. Their perspectives may differ from those of intern work supervisors due to human resource managers’ higher-level positions that do not entail direct operational contact with interns. Human resource managers are instrumental in providing WIL resources to TNE institutions and recruiting university graduates, therefore it is important to investigate their concerns about TNE graduate work-readiness in greater depth. Research that specifically clarifies their perspectives and identifies actions to address their issues effectively is recommended.

Three aspects of support focus emerged. First, supporting collaborations between workplace supervisors and academic advisers in boundary-spanning relationships are proposed to enrich the WIL programme itself. Second, established WIL relationships can generate wider collaborations between industry practitioners in host organisations and discipline lecturers in the TNE institution. This expanded collaborative network enhances the local knowledge of lecturers and enables them to build industry networks, thereby enriching academic outcomes for students. Third, this wider collaboration supports creation of expanded transition-to-work activities through programme co-creation, a wider range of non-internship WIL collaborations such as industry projects, and alumni affiliation.

A wider collaboration between offshore campus students, academics, and administrative staff with front-line host supervisors promotes interaction that yields insight into the offshore employment environment for the institution. These relationships contribute

to the university's reputation, especially in Asian countries, where attending to intricacies of network building is essential.

A table that summarises the key recommendations of the thesis is provided in Appendix Ten, Key thesis recommendations.

Perceived benefits of WIL can differentiate the offshore campus in the local market, particularly in Asian countries such as Vietnam that lack historical collaboration between industry and universities. Cultivating trust is a necessary precursor to transnational WIL implementation. If WIL is to be an effective boundary spanning vehicle in TNE, institution leaders need to support and facilitate that trust building from the emergence of the offshore location strategy. Future research aimed at understanding the degree to which the results of this study can be generalised to other TNE environments, in order to gain insight useful to building trust, and implementing mutually-supportive WIL initiatives is recommended. Accounting for differences between the TNE student environment and the home campus student environment is essential to address in order to offer WIL and its supporting activities. Although students value many aspects of the Western education at the FUV, areas of the academic curriculum, WIL assessments were seen as lacking connection to the Vietnamese context. The opportunity cost of WIL internship electives also emerged as a choice factor for students not taking WIL. Of interest is the general alignment of work supervisor and alumni respondents in their inclination to support WIL-related initiatives, in contrast to human resource managers' considerable reluctance to invest in supportive engagement due to their ambivalence about the suitability of foreign/TNE graduates. Future research that focuses on local stakeholders' perceptions of the value and benefits of WIL, and how supporting activities, such as career development services and WIL activities should be incorporated into the students' transition journey, is recommended.

Another recommended avenue of future research is intern employability support available on placement. A significant theme, "learning how to work" through informal social

connections and networks, emerged from the alumni research data. This could be achieved in workshops held throughout the placement semester (as currently done at the FUV), through “internship clubs” as proposed by one local university alumnus, or in online platforms. Face to face sharing of reflections with other interns was mentioned as potentially more meaningful than written reflection assessments. This may have a cultural dimension that would be useful to research. WIL academic advisers who facilitate intern gatherings such as workshops may improve their understanding of the cultural dimensions at play for interns as they transition into local work environments; further research into how this facilitation process itself adds to improved cross-cultural knowledge and effectiveness of academic staff is therefore recommended.

In Vietnam, currently TNE providers do not face legal challenges to internship placements that relate to student visas. In other offshore legal environments, however, it may be difficult to arrange internship work placements for all students, especially for offshore campuses enrolling substantial numbers of international students. Therefore, consultation with local academic staff and industry is important to establish locally-relevant alternative WIL arrangements such as industry projects, simulations and events. Technology could be used to facilitate greater authenticity and boost collaboration across campuses. Appendix Eleven summarises the thesis’ suggestions for future research in a table. Ultimately, this thesis advocates future research into how WIL can be introduced, implemented and managed as part of a globally networked, learning approach to transnational higher education where knowledge and relationships generated at geographically and culturally diverse campus locations can be shared to benefit the institution’s entire system.

### ***References – Chapter Six***

Aldrich, H., & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary spanning roles and organization structure. *Academy of Management Review*, 2(2), 217-230.

- Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency. (2013). Work integrated learning: AWPA scoping paper (pp. 1-34): Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency.
- Australian Government. (2016). Global alumni engagement strategy 2016-2020. Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- Billett, S. (2009). Realising the educational worth of integrating work experiences in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34(7), 827-843. doi: 10.1080/03075070802706561
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Brink, R., Mearns, M., & Du Plessis, T. (2014). Managing information for work-integrated learning at higher education institutions. *Mousaion*, 32(3), 13-28.
- Brown, N. (2010). WIL[ling] to share: an institutional conversation to guide policy and practice in work-integrated learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(5), 507-518. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2010.502219
- Cam, K. T. H. (2016). Work-integrated learning process in tourism training programs in Vietnam: Voices of education and industry. *Asia Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 17(2), 149-161.
- Dao, M. T. N., & Thorpe, A. (2015). What factors influence Vietnamese students' choice of university? *International journal of educational management*, 29(5), 666-681. doi: 10.1108/IJEM-08-2014-0110
- Dobson, G. (2015). Where there is a WIL there is a way (for alumni to make a difference). *Vista*, (Winter 2015), 10-12. Retrieved from International Education Association of Australia website: [http://issuu.com/ieaaustralia/docs/vista\\_winter\\_2015\\_final?e=6827210/14550576](http://issuu.com/ieaaustralia/docs/vista_winter_2015_final?e=6827210/14550576)
- Duoc, T. Q., Metzger, C. (2007). Quality of business graduates in Vietnamese institutions: multiple perspectives. *Journal of Management Development*, 26(7), 629-643. doi: 10.1108/02621710710761261
- Eraut, M. (2007). Learning from other people in the workplace. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33(4), 403-422. doi: 10.1080/03054980701425706
- Hoare, L. (2011). Transnational student voices: reflections on a second chance. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(3). 271-286. doi: 10.1177/1028315311398045
- Jackson, D., Rowbottom, D., Ferns, S., & McLaren, D. (2016). Employer understanding of Work-Integrated Learning and the challenges of engaging in work placement opportunities. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 1-17. doi: 10.1080/0158037X.2016.1228624

- Ly, T. M. Chau, Vickers, M., & Fernandez, S. (2015). Master of Business Administration (MBA) student outcomes in Vietnam. *Education + Training*, 57(1), 88-107. doi: 10.1108/ET-08-2013-0104
- Nguyen, T. N., & Leihy, P. (2015). Vietnam, the West and the generalized Self in transnational education *Asia as Method in Education Studies: A Defiant Research Imagination* (pp. 82-96).
- Peach, D., Cates, C., Jones, J., Lechleiter, H., & Ilg, B. (2011). Responding to rapid change in higher education: Enabling university departments responsible for work related programs through boundary spanning. *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships*, 45(1), 94-106.
- Peach, D., Ruinard, E., & Webb, F. (2014). Feedback on student performance in the workplace: The role of workplace supervisors. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education, Special Issue*, 15(3), 241-252.
- Perry, A. L., & Perry, L. G. (2015). Final-Year Transition and Service-Learning: Working Together as a Vehicle for Student Engagement, Development, and Life Preparedness. *The International Journal of Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement*, 3(1).
- Pyvis, D., & Chapman, A. (2007). Why university students choose an international education: A case study in Malaysia. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 27(2), 235-246. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2006.07.008>
- Rowe, A., Mackaway, J., & Winchester-Seeto, T. (2012). ‘But I thought you were doing that’ – Clarifying the role of the host supervisor in experience-based learning. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 13(2), 115-134.
- Smith, R., Mackay, D., Challis, D., & Holt, D. (2006). Seeking industry perspectives to enhance experiential education in university-industry partnerships: Going beyond mere assumptions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 7(2), 1-9.
- Tran, T. T. (2010). *Enhancing graduate employability: Challenges facing higher education*. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference, Melbourne
- Tran, T. T. (2013). Limitation on the development of skills in higher education in Vietnam. *Higher Education*, 65(5), 631-644. doi: 10.1007/s10734-012-9567-7
- Trung, T. Q., & Swierczek, F. W. (2009). Skills development in higher education in Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 15(4), 565-586. doi: 10.1080/13602380802364175.

- Wilkins, S., Balakrishnan, M. S., & Huisman, J. (2012). Student Choice in Higher Education: Motivations for Choosing to Study at an International Branch Campus. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(5), 413-433. doi: 10.1177/1028315311429002
- Wilkins, S., & Huisman, J. (2013). Student evaluation of university image attractiveness and its impact on student attachment to international branch campuses. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(5), 607-623. doi: 10.1177/1028315312472984





## APPENDIX ONE Coding example

Appendix One Figure 1 illustrates a sample of Nvivo coding from the node “Difference local university internships” and its associated annotation (linked to text highlighted in purple).

I: did anyone else you know have any interesting internships? In third year.

I think there are not a lot of interesting internships. Just one month. Most people don't have a lot of work to do. Some don't do it, just for the good mark. **Actually I think that in our university in third year we are not given a good career orientation – so it is hard to know what we should do. If we have good relationship we have internship – we don't care about the procedure**

Annotations	
Item	Content
2	echoes I03 comment, local uni students focus on othre units where grades are given

Appendix One Figure 1. Coding with annotation

Appendix One Figure 2 illustrates part of a memo linked to the coding sample (blue highlighted text in Figure 1).

The screenshot shows a window titled 'Differences FUV internships'. Below the title bar, the text 'Internship differences' is displayed. Underneath, the text 'No meaningful work to do' is highlighted in blue. Below this, a table summarizes the coding references.

Type of difference	# coding refs
no meaningful work to do at placement /local/govt ADV	11
assessment nonrelevant/bought ADV	1/11(local alumni)
No work visit ADV	1/11(local)
No industry project for local uni ADV	1/11(local)

Appendix One Figure 2. Coding with linked memo

Appendix 2-4 of this thesis have been removed as they may contain sensitive/confidential content

## APPENDIX FIVE Memo example

Name	Nodes	Referen
difference between local VN unis	0	0
differences between local and foreign and	0	0
Differences FUV internships	0	0
Final Research Activities (cross sample Nviv	0	0
Fitting in to organisational culture	0	0
Grooming and appearance	0	0
Hotels and transnational internships	0	0
Hungry to learn	0	0
Improvements	0	0
Internships and skills by degree ~ RMIT Un	0	0
Introductory Memo	0	0
ITHM int'l internship program expands to	0	0
IV18_Hai	0	0
Lack of time limits WS support	0	0
Memo about improvements	0	0
Networking node memo	0	0
Our 5 Best Tips For a Successful Internship	0	0
Plans for future RMIT internships	0	0
Problems with coding	0	0
Sheraton hotels mentoring	0	0
Similar age of interns and supervisors	0	0
Similar age of interns and supervisors (2)	0	0
step by step task responsibility increase no	0	0
Teamwork	0	0
Tran, L.- Insights Blog - Engaging Internati	0	0
UniProject assignments for interns	0	0
Views of graduates on benefits of universit	2	2

Type of difference	# coding refs
no meaningful work to do at placement /local/govt ADV	11
assessment nonrelevant/bought ADV	1/11(local alumni)
No work visit ADV	1/11(local)
No industry project for local uni ADV	1/11(local)
Depends on company interning with rather than uni NEUTRAL	1/11(local alumnus)
Internship not taken seriously by local unis /internsADV	1/11 (local alumni)
Choice to take int ADV	1
Students must find int themselves so learn to be proactive DIS/ADV	111 (local)/1
Uni support ADV	11(local - reported lack of support)

Internship differences

No meaningful work to do

Note for HR paper - the comments local interns made mirror comments by not only local fuv alumni about the experiences of their local alumni friends, but also validate the comments of the work supervisors when reflecting on their own internship experience - ie lack of support, relevant work to do if any work to do at all, unrelated assessments and in fact could be purchased/plagiarised - no collaboration between the uni and the workplace supervisors.

Appendix Five Figure 1. Memo sample from Memo folder

## APPENDIX SIX Research journal entry example

Comparisons between East a   Nodes added for Final Conclu   Demonstrating significance in t

12/10/2015 12:47 PM

Have been mostly Writing up transition paper - in developing that paper proposed the alumni transition process across 3 stages - student, graduating, alumni.  
Thinking how this will be significant in the big picture.

1. Supporting mentoring/coaching for the student in all stages of the transition.  
Proposal for further action and, research - longitudinal since FUV has it all in place.  
A model integrating support between stakeholders along the entire process might be good to develop.
2. Knowledge transfer from TNE to Industry - facilitated through interns/graduates. Nguyen DR Ngo 2015 - Can knowledge be transferred? indicates theory that business students also transfer knowledge from the institution to company they join based on the degree of culture innovatin in that company (see model p.1333). Need more detailed reading. but could be part of wider support model;

IE - from WS paper - interns provide benefits. expand to HR paper. HR can drive innovative culture that is critical to knowledge transfer. Therefore TNE can research better ways of supporting effective knowledge transfer and is a proposal for further research. Very exploratory at this state but the Nguyen paper is interesting food for thought here.

Appendix Six Figure 1. Nvivo research journal entry

**APPENDIX SEVEN See also link example**

This Nvivo see also link contributed to the sense of ambiguity that progressively emerged around human resource managers’ perceptions of graduate work-readiness.

HR\_IV4\_21.1.2014\_Thao [Click to edit](#)

1 and shared, supported and guided him.

I: Wow he doesn't know how lucky he is

But ..coming back to the fact that almost all of the students from the difficult background will have the work ethic rather than students coming from good family background. Maybe because the students coming from difficult background have to get used to fighting for something while the people coming from the good background get used to having everything without the effort, and when they have the chance to make the dreams come true, and when they have the chance I have to say all of the students coming from difficult backgrounds have the better ways of working, I don't know why

I: that is interesting...so

I don't say all but mostly the students coming from good background don't take the opportunities seriously

See Also Links			
Item		To Name	To Folder
5		Ambiguities in individual work readiness	Nodes
6		Ambiguities in individual work readiness	Nodes

Appendix Seven Figure 1. Nvivo see also link sample

## **APPENDIX EIGHT Interview guide: Alumni**

1. When did you do the internship for this course? (If Respondent did not do internship skip to Q#15 )

If Respondent completed an internship – follow questions 2- 14

2. Where was the internship done? (Company, location, department)
3. How did you select the company you interned with? (FUV, company recruitment, advertisement, friend/family contact, other)
4. Why did you decide to do an internship?
5. Do you know interns from other Vietnamese universities? How are their internships different from the internship you did at FUV?
6. Did you stay employed with the company after the internship was over? For how long?
7. What were the main things you personally wanted to achieve during the internship?
8. How were you supported by your workplace supervisors?
9. How were you supported by your academic supervisors?
10. What did you think of the assessment activities? (Reflections, goal proposals, final reflection, industry project if relevant)
11. What aspects of the internship were most helpful in adapting to the work environment?
12. How do your colleagues and friends adapt to the workplace after participating in internships?
13. How do internship experiences affect workplace adaptation?
14. What comments do people have about improving internships to help graduates adapt more easily, quickly, effectively.

If Respondent did not complete an internship – follow questions 15-20

15. Why did you decide not to do an internship? What other options were available? (probe for the influences) (find out if they did an internship through an outside organisation, what it involved, how it compared to the university internship programme)
16. What did you do instead of doing the internship? (other elective courses if they remember; start right into a company; continue with job if they were studying while working; enter a graduate programme right away...)
17. Do you know students who did internships? If so what did they say about their internship experience?
18. Have any of the companies you have worked for taken on interns (e.g. from other universities)?
19. Who would you recommend to do an internship? Reasons?
20. If you could go back in time, would your decision be different? Why/why not.

All Respondents q.21-23

21. How did you feel about your transition to the working environment?
22. How were you supported by your university in general in the transition from university to work?
23. What could the university do to help its graduates transition to the workplace?



## **APPENDIX NINE Interview guide: Human resource managers**

1. How much importance does your company place on sourcing university business undergraduates?
2. What does “work-ready graduate” mean to you? Can you tell me a bit about the skills they require?
3. What are your general expectations of university business graduates? (could be linked to Q2)
4. What are the greatest strengths of graduates in general?
5. What are the biggest areas for improvement of graduates in general?
6. How can universities prepare graduates for ethical practice?
7. If your company is made up of several departments or business units, can you describe whether any of these departments is more or less suitable for university graduates? (Probe for reasons and insights.)
8. How likely are you to hire fresh graduates as
  - a. Permanent staff
  - b. Interns
  - c. Contract/temporary project staff?
9. In general, how do graduates adapt to the working environment in your organisation?
10. Are there any universities that, in your experience, supply graduates that adapt remarkably well or quicker to the work environment than others? If so, can you tell me a bit about the differences in adaptability?
11. What do you think of internships? (probe for reasons)
12. How likely would you be to take on an intern from a university business degree programme? (Probe for reasons)
13. Do you consider internships a recruitment strategy for your organisation? Can you tell me of your experience with this?
14. How could universities provide your organisation with more “work-ready graduates”? What are the activities you would most want to see?
15. How likely are you to support universities to deliver more work-ready graduates by collaborating in;
  - a. Internships and cooperative programmes
  - b. Industry projects with university students and/or staff
  - c. Industry seminars
  - d. Networking events and career fairs
  - e. Guest speaking and experience sharing
  - f. Mentoring
  - g. Other?

## APPENDIX TEN Table of key recommendations

This table identifies key recommendations from each research chapter.

<b>Chapter 3 Recommendations - Work supervisor research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Provide WIL guidelines to offshore work supervisors, but first adapt these to the local industry and cultural environment</li><li>- Include work supervisors in the intern interview and selection process</li><li>- Plan work visits carefully to maximise communication and trust building</li><li>- Provide introductory support to new work supervisors</li><li>- Support work supervisors' role in intern learning goal setting and evaluation</li><li>- Offer workshops and training sessions for work supervisors</li></ul>
<b>Chapter 4 Recommendations – Alumni research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Acknowledge various stages of transition TNE students experience</li><li>- Acknowledge possible tensions students experience in the transition from TNE academic to local working environment</li><li>- Provide WIL as electives to students, but also provide career and academic support for alternate paths (students value WIL but may opt to find their own internships or work experience)</li><li>- Reach out to students, encouraging them to engage in extra-curricular activities, volunteer work, and other activities that build employability skills in the local context</li><li>- Recognise the strong affiliation TNE alumni have with their institution by providing effective alumni network support</li></ul>
<b>Chapter 5 Recommendations - Human Resource Manager research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Communicate the practical exposure that TNE students receive through WIL (as it may differ from local internships)</li><li>- Engage with them to explore mutual benefits of WIL – e.g. the benefits of supervising interns as a staff training activity</li><li>- Address concerns about TNE and foreign university graduates</li><li>- Provide opportunities for students to develop greater awareness of less fortunate sectors of local society eg charity activities to address perceptions of TNE students as privileged</li><li>- English skills of TNE graduates are highly sought , however importance of attitude and mindset should be incorporated into academic and career support activities</li></ul>
<b>Chapter 6 Concluding recommendations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Support collaboration between work supervisor and academic advisers in the TNE location (boundary spanning roles) to improve the WIL experience (see Figure 6.9)</li><li>- Support development of a wider collaborative network generated through WIL relationships to enrich the wider TNE university experience (see Figure 6.10)</li><li>- Utilise collaborative network to provide greater support for expanded transition-to-work initiatives (see Figure 6.11).</li><li>- Consider the role of WIL in a collaborative model seeking to share knowledge between a TNE institution and its host campuses (see Figure 6.12)</li></ul>

## **APPENDIX ELEVEN Summary of proposals for future research**

This table summarises future research proposals from each research chapter.

<b>Chapter 3 Work supervisor-related research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Extend research to non-business programme interns and state-owned organisations (Vietnam)</b></li><li>- <b>Evaluate effectiveness of WIL support initiatives</b></li><li>- <b>Work supervisor research in other major TNE locations</b></li></ul>
<b>Chapter 4 Alumni-related research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Incorporate local employability into TNE academic curriculum</b></li><li>- <b>Connect the curriculum to the local context</b></li><li>- <b>TNE graduates' transition to the local workplace</b></li><li>- <b>Effective alumni networks, relationship strengthening in TNE locations</b></li><li>- <b>Research which WIL activities best meet TNE student/graduate needs</b></li></ul>
<b>Chapter 5 Human Resource Manager-related research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Ambivalence towards TNE and foreign university graduates</b></li><li>- <b>Mutual collaboration with TNE</b></li><li>- <b>Potential value of WIL action research</b></li></ul>
<b>Chapter 6 Concluding recommendations for future research</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <b>Comparative research in other Asian/TNE environments to assess how findings may be generalised</b></li><li>- <b>Cultural dimensions of supporting students on WIL placement</b></li><li>- <b>Alternative WIL activities in TNE legal environments that render internships problematic</b></li><li>- <b>Typology of WIL activities that meet needs of TNE stakeholders</b></li><li>- <b>WIL as part of a globally networked learning approach</b></li></ul>