

Assessment of Work Integrated Learning: A Case of International Hotel and Resort Management Students of Dusit Thani College

การวัดผลของการเรียนรู้เชิงบูรณาการ : กรณีของนักศึกษาสาขาการจัดการโรงแรมและรีสอร์ท (นานาชาติ) วิทยาลัยดุสิตธานี

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วิทยาลัยดุสิตธานี

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Abstract

The purpose of the research is to assess the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) of the International Hotel and Resort Management (IHM) students of Dusit Thani College (DTC) and develop a guideline for the implementation of WIL in IHM students of DTC.

Hospitality programs as an industry requires students to gain experience during their collegiate level on the practical level to gain perception of the professional industry. Thus, IHM students of DTC undergo WIL for Front Office and Housekeeping subjects in Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok.

This study used in-depth interview from a semi-structured questionnaire based on the dimension of WIL (Smith, 2012) such as Authenticity, Alignment, Integrated Learning Support, Supervisor Access and Induction and Preparation process. It was conducted with the IHM students who successfully undergone WIL. The data gathered were analyzed through content analysis. The result of the study developed a guideline for the implementation of Work Integrated Learning for the IHM students in Dusit Thani College.

Keywords: Work Integrated Learning, WIL, Hotel, Assessment, Guideline

บทคัดย่อ

ในการศึกษาคำนี้ มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อประเมินการจัดการการเรียนการสอนที่บูรณาการกับการทำงานของหลักสูตรการจัดการโรงแรมและรีสอร์ท (นานาชาติ) จากนักศึกษาวิทยาลัยดุสิตธานี เพื่อพัฒนาและเป็นแนวทางในการจัดการการเรียนการสอนที่บูรณาการกับการทำงานของนักศึกษาวิทยาลัยดุสิตธานี

หลักสูตรการบริการเป็นหลักสูตรที่อุตสาหกรรมมีความต้องการนักศึกษาในการสร้างเสริมประสบการณ์ในขณะที่กำลังศึกษาอยู่ในหลักสูตรภายใต้สถาบันการศึกษาและได้รับมุมมองของมืออาชีพในอุตสาหกรรมดังกล่าว ดังนั้น หลักสูตรการจัดการโรงแรมและรีสอร์ท (นานาชาติ) จึงใช้วิชาการแผนกงานส่วนหน้าและแม่บ้านเป็นวิชาที่ใช้ในการฝึกที่โรงแรมดุสิต ปริ้นเซส ศรีนครินทร์ กรุงเทพฯ

การศึกษาในครั้งนี้ใช้การสัมภาษณ์แบบเชิงลึกโดยการให้โครงสร้างแบบกึ่งโครงสร้างตามแนวคิดของ Smith (2012) อันได้แก่ ความถูกต้อง จัดตำแหน่ง การสนับสนุนการเรียนรู้แบบบูรณาการ การเข้าถึงหัวหน้างาน และการชี้แนะ และกระบวนการเตรียมการข้อมูลในการศึกษาคำนี้ถูกวิเคราะห์จากการวิเคราะห์เชิงเนื้อหา และผลการศึกษาที่ได้รับจากการศึกษาคำนี้ คือ การพัฒนาแนวทางในการจัดการการเรียนการสอนที่บูรณาการสำหรับนักศึกษาในหลักสูตรการจัดการโรงแรมและรีสอร์ท (นานาชาติ)

คำสำคัญ: การจัดการการเรียนการสอนที่บูรณาการ โรงแรม การประเมิน แนวทางการปฏิบัติ

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the largest employers in the world. Hotel management constitutes an important part of the tourism industry. Whilst, employees in hotels are a major resource that provides hotel competitive advantage from other hotels; the skills and qualifications are deemed significant (Shahrabani, Goziker, & Teitler-Regev, 2015). Training in the hospitality industry is seen as a substantial key in its existence and success. It is defined as the provision of knowledge on how to enhance service quality, satisfy guest while reducing daily operating costs (Hazra, Ghosh & Sengupta, 2017).

Academics recognized the substantial effect of higher education in nurturing hospitality professionals. This drives the continuous development of hospitality management teaching that aims to produce hospitality professionals (Lugosi and Jameson, 2017). Schoffstall (2013) argued that hospitality programs as industry require students to gain experience during their collegiate level on the practical to gain perception of the professional industry.

Most hotel management schools divided the teaching structures into two, first, theory consisting of lectures wherein instructors try to depict real industry situations and secondly, administer theoretical perceptions effectively and practice on areas where the industry exists

(Liasidou, 2016). Brennen (2017) stated that having its practical nature, the challenge is to tailor and maintain the curriculum with the balance between theory and the practical skills required by the industry in line with the dynamic changes to ensure the employability of students.

Sattler (2011) believed that work-integrated learning (WIL) has been used similar ways with terms work-based learning, practice-based learning, work-related learning, vocational learning, experiential learning, co-operative education, clinical education, internship, practicum and field education. WIL program allows the student to apply the lecture learned in the ‘real world’, gain practical experience while receiving feedback and provides an opportunity to develop new professional skills (Dwesini, 2017). An effective and authentic assessment of educators to what the students learned from real-life situations imposes an increase of value-added and built character of future-fit graduates that are ready for employment (McLennan and Keating, 2008). Employers prefer graduates that have gone WIL compared to those who gain theoretical knowledge only. (Dwesini, 2017)

The research into the effectiveness of WIL is scarce. Aldridge et al. (2015) mentioned that the problem with WIL is that its benefits are undoubted but difficult to substantiate. The informal and anecdotal evidence in favor of WIL is overwhelming, but the hurdles in the way of proper research into the question need to be overcome.

WIL allows the student to blend the theory and practice thus allows them to gain practical experience during their studies and enhance their qualification (Ngwane, 2016). This also supports the students to enhance their “work-readiness” or the ability to be effective in working upon coming to a workplace (Jackson, 2018). The examination of the effectivity of WIL towards work effectivity of students is a growing area of study with various research suggesting its contribution to the development of student skills.

Also, Peach and Gamble (2011) suggested that WIL should be part of a whole course study as the students need to develop a level of behavioral competencies before placement in the industry. Furthermore, this development could not be left entirely as part of the WIL component.

Dusit Thani College is a private educational institute specializing in hospitality training. It is part of the Dusit Group, one of the best-regarded five-star hotels' groups in Thailand. It provides high-quality teaching from instructors with a wealth of experience in the hospitality

and tourism industry. Its curriculum offers a study in theory in fully equipped facilities and practical classes or application in real-life workplace situations (Dusit Thani College, 2020).

The college offers two international programs in bachelor's degree. The first one is Bachelor of Business Administration Programme in Professional Culinary Arts (Joint Programme between Le Cordon Bleu and Dusit Thani College) or ICA that is designed to engage young culinary professionals in real-life industry environments and to produce professional leaders in the culinary arts, with knowledge of both local and international markets. While the other one is Bachelor of Business Administration Programme in Hotel and Resort Management (Certified by Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne) or IHM which is designed to give young hoteliers the skills and knowledge needed to become leaders in the hospitality industry and to pursue their careers at international levels.

Students for (IHM) program undergo a four-year structured curriculum. During their first years, students are introduced to both theoretical and practical classes in hospitality operations. First-year, students have practical classes, in Housekeeping, Front Office and Food and Beverage Operations. Apart from that is to be integrated to work-integrated-learning program in its nearby hotel, Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok. The aim is to engage young professionals in the hospitality environment, using real-life, business-based challenges. The integration includes Housekeeping Operations and Front Office Operations subjects. The students will be on the campus for both theoretical and practical classes for the first eight (8) weeks of the semester. Then for the next (8) eight weeks, the students will be placed in the work-integrated-learning program.

Objectives

1. To assess Work Integrated Learning of International Hotel Management students in Dusit Thani College.
2. To develop a Work Integrated Learning Guidelines for the implementation of WIL in IHM students of DTC.

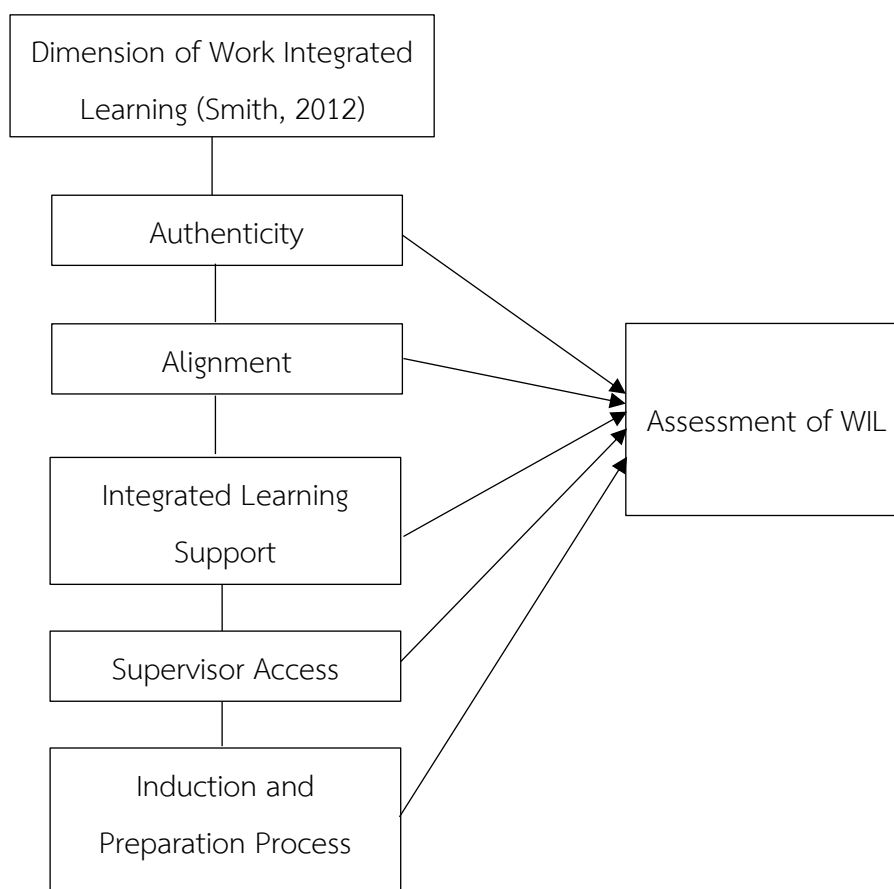
Scope of Research

The research focused on Dusit Thani College students particularly the IHM students who have gone to WIL Program. The research aims to assess the WIL in DTC thru Smith's (2012) framework. Two batches of IHM students were already sent to undergo WIL in Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok.

The researcher decided to choose the first batch as respondents as they have successfully finished the program, while the second batch was interrupted due to the crises of Covid-19.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was derived from the Dimension of Work Integrated Learning by Smith (2012) which dimensions are the independent variables of the study. This study will be the basis for the proposed Assessment of WIL is considered as the dependent variable of the study.



Definitions

Authenticity: The quality of being real and true, not being falsified, copied or controlled.

Host: An organization that provides facilities and receives the students for WIL.

Induction: Introduction to an organization.

Work Integrated Learning: Billet (2009) discussed work-integrated learning as a pedagogical practice whereby students come to learn from the integration of experiences in educational and workplace settings.

Literature Review

Dimensions of Work Integrated Learning

Extensive research has been done by Smith (2012) that developed the five dimensions of work integrated learning. These dimensions were operationalized in the measurement model. The following are the key dimensions, authenticity, integrated learning support (from the school and the workplace), alignment (in terms of teaching, learning activities and assessments with integrative learning outcomes), supervisor access and induction/preparation process.

Authenticity

Smith (2012) describe authenticity as the heart of all workplace-situated learning thus curricula should focus on providing students with the real work environment. Samadi (2013) argues that the students' placements must be in "authentic professional context as a learning environment. As discussed, one of the outcomes of WIL is to allow students to experience the world of work with application and development of acquired knowledge and skills which can be achieved in a highly authentic work/professional settings (Smith, 2014). During WIL, students are ought to participate in authentic activities, or those everyday functions of the workplace (Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma and Coll, 2010). Billett (2001) added, that with this authenticity, students are able to learn the "what to do:" and "how to do" through observing the actions and listening to the conversation of their workplace supervisors. Kaider, Hains-Wesson, and Young (2017), discussed the four characteristics that described an authentic learning involve-real world problems that copy the work of professionals, includes open-ended inquiry, thinking skills and metacognition, engage students in discourse and social learning and empower students through the choice to direct their own learning.

Alignment (in terms of teaching, learning activities and assessments with integrative learning outcomes)

The emphasis of this dimension is the students are can apply the theoretical lessons learned into the workplace. Reinhard (2006) suggested that WIL must have a balance theory and practice and must focus on the students other than serving a specific need of a company. Smith (2012) developed the evaluation framework alignment with the guidance of Bigg's (1996) notion of the constructive alignment of learning objectives with teaching and learning

activities and assessments. Thus, the institution is required to be specific on the learning outcomes that focus the students learning rather than leaving it unclear with the students during the work placement (Partick and Crebert, 2004). Moreover, Smith, Meijer and Kielly-Colema (2010) argued that the assessment process should match the students' ability to work that can cause an effect on the students' focus and attention. Peach and Gamble (2011) added that learning in WIL is supported by appropriate assessment ensuring the maintenance of high standards. Assessment should not only focus on the idea of getting a certificate or feedback from the students on their learning, moreover, it should contribute to their lifelong learning process as an active learner who plays a generative role rather than responsive as a student in the workplace does not take an examination or write essays but decides on a situation on what is good work and how it is being produced or not thus a reflective assessment is integral. (Kaider, et. al., 2017)

Integrated Learning Supports

Smith (2012) believed that the university provides the students with a lot of support services such as counselling, welfare, libraries and study advisory, thus these services may also be available in the host workplace. As Patrick and Crebert (2004) suggested, students need supervision and support to comprehend the objectives of WIL and to develop necessary capabilities.

Supervisor Access

Supervisor access is defined as the interaction between the students and the supervisor during the placement period. Supervision from the supervisor in the placement site is known to play an integral part in WIL programs (Coll and Eames, 2000; Winchester-Seeto, Rowe and Mackaway, 2016; Samadi, 2013) to become professional as they work closely together (Samadi, 2013). Patrick and Crebert (2004) argued that during WIL, students need appropriate supervision and support to comprehend the purpose of the training and develop the necessary skills to be a professional.

In a study made by Winchester-Seeto, et. al, (2016), although supervisors may have few teaching and assessment skills, they contribute in the learning by training in specific skills such as being a role model, and mentor and providing feedback. Whereas, Samadi (2013) added that the supervisor is required to exhibit the necessary knowledge and experience in order to give effective guidance. Moreover, the same studies also mentioned that the

pedagogy used by host supervisor is more informal in nature and consisted of inductions and one-on-one mentoring (Winchester-Seeto, et. al, 2016). Thus the quality of supervisors engaged in WIL is equally significant with the quality of WIL experience (Samadi, 2013). Furthermore, Samadi (2013) argued that in order to give appropriate guidance, supervision must be regular and constant. Worrall (2009) discussed the diversity issue that can sometimes hinder learning, as some students come from different cultural backgrounds, in terms of respect and related issues. Bates (2003) argued that students learning, and experience can be influenced by its individual context of social and culture.

Induction and Preparation Processes

Studies show that the students feel demotivated when they report to their assigned stations and find that they have no sitting space, no allocated supervisor or role (Kiriri, 2019). The effectiveness of work experience in placements is supported by induction of students and supervisors.

In a study conducted by Samadi (2013), it listed (5) five broad areas of activity for the placement supervisors entitled as “Job Needs Analysis”:

- Building and maintaining relationships
- Designing the learning experience
- Mentoring the student
- Monitoring and evaluating the placement
- Assessing learning against objectives

Research Methodology

This research incorporates both primary and secondary data. A semi-structured interview questionnaire is used to gather primary data in addition to the secondary data derived from journals, academic research and other online sources. Furthermore, this research used qualitative approach with the aid of semi-structured questionnaire.

Non-probability sampling was used in this research as a sampling technique in which units of the same sample are selected based on personal judgment or convenience (Zikmund, 2003). Convenience sampling was used to collect primary data. Consciously, the researcher created a criterion to include in the sample, as the researcher aims to assess the Work Integrated Learning.

The population of the study are the IHM students who are studying at Dusit Thani College, specifically the batch who finished undertaking the WIL Program. The sample size of 5 students was reached through e-mail and via Line application in order to explain the research objectives and to request for an online interview. These requests were followed up through calls and once approved, the set of interview questions were sent prior to the scheduled interview. The interviews were conducted via Zoom app which took an average of 30 minutes. Guide questions were printed, and the interview were recorded for researcher's reference.

Content analysis was used to analyze the gathered data from the transcript of in-depth interview. It allowed the researcher to examine the difference and similarities of the data encoded and obtain the primary information from the interview content of the respondents. The transcripts were reviewed and analyzed thoroughly. Afterwards, relevant data that are explicitly and consistently mentioned are coded.

Results

The researcher thoroughly reviewed and analyzed the data from the transcript of the five (5) respondents of the semi-structured interview consisting of questions developed from the five dimensions of Work Integrated Learning. The researcher summarized the results based on the objectives 1, to assess Work Integrated Learning of International Hotel Management students in Dusit Thani College.

Authenticity

The respondents agreed that the workplace was considered not fully authentic and was controlled at some point due to either the department has a lot of staff and other trainees or the hotel has a lot of guests at the moments thus it is busy and staff has no time to train the students consequently only simple tasks were assigned. For instance, in Front Office Department, the students could do check-in and out process for guests however with no contact during the process, e.g. Airline guests. Mostly, students could process documents, update information on guests' profile, provide keys and welcome drinks. Similarly, in Housekeeping, in cleaning guestrooms, students were allowed to only do the vacuum and undressing of bed with a very limited if none in making bed and cleaning the toilet.

Alignment (in terms of teaching, learning activities and assessments with integrative learning outcomes)

Learning outcomes of WIL were clearly explained to the students before the training began. Moreover, students believed that the theoretical and practical classes were aligned to the WIL training in fact they were expecting for more in WIL as they had an extensive class from the college. One of the respondents emphasized that the classes in school, provided the details, the know-how, and the WIL demonstrated the how-to apply. Assessments for WIL were different for Front Office and Housekeeping thus made it confusing for the students.

Integrated Learning Support

The college has been supportive to the students, supervisor comes for a visit and the constant communication is done through Line application for reporting of daily work situations and updating of the required reports to be done. Furthermore, the hotel support from the hotel supervisor, were limited. Due to the number of trainees, and shift hours of the supervisors that normally works night shift. Another concern is the language barrier for a non-thai student. Respondents speak to the supervisor mostly in terms of explaining the grade acquirement. While Human Resource and Learning and Development Department were approachable, there was no scheduled meeting in updating the learning process and acquirement during the WIL.

Supervisor Access

During WIL students spent most of their time with another staff or other trainee as their buddy. The Supervisor interaction, while being approachable, was mainly for the purpose of grading. E.g. Supervisor asks questions to the students and if student was able to answer then they will get the grade. Supervisors were also open for students' inquiries.

Induction and Preparation Processes

The college provided an orientation with the students in order to explain the requirements of WIL. This included discussion of the logbook and reports to be submitted after WIL which the respondents insisted that should be done for at least two sessions for further explanation. This was followed by a hotel orientation facilitated by the Learning and Development Manager, the hotel orientation included introduction of the hotel chain and hotel familiarization and introduction of Front Office and Housekeeping Department's Managers. Although the respondents found it more meaningful if the supervisors were the

one introduced and had an exchange of contacts or conversation since its who they will be working closely with one. It was also mentioned that the introduction of the hotel chain was less interesting as it has not much relation with the WIL.

Discussion

The researcher concluded the results based on the objectives 2, to develop a Work Integrated Learning Guidelines for the implementation of WIL in IHM students of DTC

Work Placement

As Smith (2012) described an authentic work placement sets as workplace-situated learning thus should be a focused on providing students with real work environment. The knowledge and skills that are acquired from the college in order to match with the everyday functions / authentic activities of the workplace that the students are ought to participate (Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma and Coll, 2010). Consequently, by explaining the objective of the program. This will allow the host to assess the level of the students and assignment of tasks will be adjusted accordingly adhering to the characteristics of authentic learning (Kaider, Hains-Wesson, and Young, 2017)

In a similar way, support must be available for the students as Patrick and Crebert (2004) suggested, students need supervision and support to comprehend the objectives of WIL from the host workplace to develop necessary capabilities.

Responsible Personnel

Supervisors of WIL play an integral part on the process of learning Smith (2012). Thus, college supervisors should be able to:

- Explain the learning outcomes of the WIL program (Patrick and Crebert, 2004)
- Assess students' individual social context to inform host supervisor for effective feedback (Bates, 2003)

While hosts supervisor should,

- Supporting and mentoring the student throughout the WIL (Samadi, 2013)
- Be aware of students' expectations based on the learning outcomes (Patrick and Crebert, 2004)
- Provide regular feedback and final assessment (Winchester-Seeto, et. al, 2016)

- Assess students' individual social context in order to provide effective feedback (Bates, 2003)

Induction and Preparation Process

The effectiveness of work experience in placements is supported by induction of students and supervisors (Sattler, 2011). Hence the following activity (Samadi, 2013) for the placement supervisors are the following:

- Building and maintaining relationships

Supervisors of WIL play an integral part on the process of learning Smith (2012).

- Designing the learning experience (Bates, 2003; (Patrick and Crebert, 2004)
- Monitoring and evaluating the placement
- Assessing learning against objectives (Winchester-Seeto, et. al, 2016)

Implication of the Study or Research

This study assesses the Work integrated Learning of IHM students which is considered as limitation of this study. Thus, the further study of the following is recommended:

1. To be able to assess the WIL Program of Thai Program, which has bigger population in comparison to International Program.
2. To be able to evaluate the proposed framework of WIL upon implementation.
3. To be able to understand the importance of language in the dimension of Supervisory Aspect of WIL in International Program students.

Implication of the Study or Research

The researcher recommends furthering the study that involves another hotel program of Dusit Thani College in Thai program. As recently, the program started to conduct Work Integrated Learning Program in Dusit Princess Srinakarin Bangkok. The program includes Rooms Division and Food and Beverage subjects. This will allow future research to have bigger population for data gathering.

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