THE CONCEPTUALISATION OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING PRACTICES IN HOSPITALITY EDUCATION TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' CAREER PREPAREDNESS: A PRELIMINARY PAPER

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ABSTRACT

The unwillingness of hospitality graduates to work in this industry after graduation has worsened the labour shortage issue in Malaysian hospitality sector. Collaboration between higher education institutions and industry players through work integrated learning (WIL) is critical for bridging theoretical knowledge and real-world application in the hospitality sector, thereby improving students' learning processes. Including WIL in the curriculum can help students prepare for their future careers, improve employability skills, and gain a rational understanding of 'knowledge' through the practice of 'action'. This article analyses the effectiveness of WIL practices in hospitality institutions by using survey research design to collect data from hospitality graduates, as well as semi-structured interview from graduates, institutions and industry partners in Johor and Klang Valley, Malaysia to meet the current needs of hospitality sector. Particular attention should be focused on enhancing students' self-efficacy, engagement, and satisfaction in WIL activities to increase their enthusiasm for pursuing careers in the hospitality sector. Therefore, upcoming hospitality programmes ought to thoughtfully integrate WIL into the curriculum, considering the needs of the industry and the career development pathways of graduates.

Keywords: Career Preparedness, Collaboration, Hospitality students, Work Integrated Learning.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The hospitality and tourism sector are a broad segment of the service industry that contributes to national income and creates numerous job opportunities. Malaysia's hospitality sector employs 23% of the workforce, or 3.5 million jobs (Kutty, 2024). Despite their potential to create a large number of job opportunities for locals, Malaysia's hospitality industry continues to face a long-term labour shortage and a lack of new talent (Hazim, 2022). The traditional hospitality and tourism roles in Malaysia have encountered considerable obstacles, experiencing a 63% decline compared to the previous year (Kelvin, 2024). In 2026, Malaysia aims to attract 35.6 million visitors as part of the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 initiative, which could potentially generate MYR147.1 billion in national income (Koumelis, 2024). As result, this sector necessitates a sizable workforce to function efficiently and deliver high-quality

services. Typically, it is expected that students who enrol in a hospitality and tourism programme will pursue their careers in this sector after completing the study (Dighliya, 2023). However, after graduation, there is a significant number of students expressed a lack of desire to work in this industry (Mqwebedu et al., 2022).

To address this issue, the hospitality industry must work together with the institutions to build a long-term talent pipeline for the future. Nowadays, students enter the workforce with unrealistic expectations and lack of employability skills. Students need to have full guidance and support from both institutions and industry players to succeed in their future careers. Inadequate understanding of how hospitality education should be approached indicates that learners may face difficulties adapting to future workplaces. Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is recognised as an effective learning technique that has the potential to improve students' learning outcomes. WIL applies theoretical knowledge to practical applications and real-world scenarios (Un Milagro, 2024). Students can gain a better understanding of industrial practices, work cultures, and the current needs of the hospitality sector. The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of WIL practices in hospitality education. This research explores the viewpoint on the importance of updating hospitality curriculum that align with industry demands, career requirements shifting and curriculum improvements. Despite the fact that WIL is deeply embedded in hospitality curriculum and has been extensively researched across multiple disciplines, more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of WIL activities in addressing the future needs of the hospitality sector.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation and Conceptualisation of Work Integrated Learning in Hospitality Education

The underpinning theory that guides this study is Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) which is developed by David A. Kolb in 1984. ELT provides a comprehensive framework on improving students' learning process by integrating concrete experience with reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. By engaging their students in WIL activities, educators can better prepare their students for future careers (Ramakrishnan, 2024). *Concrete experience* represents WIL activities such as internships, work placements, and student-led enterprises that offer a valuable hands-on exposure to the students. Reflective observation involves students engaging in reflection sessions, maintaining reflective journals, or participating in group discussions to evaluate their experiences after completing an internship. Students can formulate theories or concepts informed by their own reflections through abstract conceptualisation. For instance, they might explore theories of customer service or management strategies and apply what they have learnt to real-world experiences. Active experimentation allows students to apply their newly acquired knowledge in new situations, such as taking on leadership roles in student organisations or completing new projects during internships. In the context of hospitality education, ELT provides a framework for creating curriculum and learning experiences that prepare students for the industry's practical demands (Guha, 2022). WIL is a valuable educational tool in tourism and hospitality education that can extend students' learning experiences beyond the traditional classroom. The hospitality industry is a highly practical, comprehensive, and applied profession that requires students to have both theoretical and practical skills to connect classroom learning to real-world industry experience. WIL has grown in order to provide students with relevant skills and experiences that can help them learn better (Croft & Wang, 2023). Many tourism and hospitality institutions now include WIL in their curricula, allowing hospitality students to learn more effectively and enthusiastically. As the industry evolves, hospitality professionals will need to be able to learn from their experiences.

Another theory that guides this study is Mark Savickas' Career Construction Theory (CCT), which was developed in 2005. Key components of CCT including career narratives,

constructivism, adaptability and flexibility, and meaning making (Wang & Li, 2024). Integrating CCT into hospitality education can help students manage the industry's complexities and pursue rewarding careers in various ways. Firstly, career development should be aligned with individual needs. CCT facilitates a more tailored approach to career growth by helping students create their own career paths by reflecting their personal values and interests. Secondly, enhanced career adaptability. CCT prepares students to navigate the ever-changing and often unpredictable hospitality industry. Third, more self-awareness. Reflective activities and narrative techniques assist students to become more self-aware, allowing them to understand their motivations and make sound professional decisions. Finally, explore relevant career options. CCT emphasizes the importance of meaning-making by aiding students in creating coherent and purposeful career narratives that promote job satisfaction and career fulfillment.

There are several WIL practices in hospitality education. Internships and work placement programmes provide students with hands-on experience in real-world settings, bridging the gap between academic theory and practical application. Internships produce overall positive results and demonstrate that they are mutually beneficial (Kroon & Franco, 2022). Internships significantly improve employment outcomes because employers value practical experience. Furthermore, Ritter et al. (2018) found that internships help employers identify potential employees for their businesses while also helping students develop employability skills. Internship experience positively influences students' willingness to enter the industry. Collins and Pearlman (2023) discovered that internships help students identify long-term career opportunities, become more creative, and produce satisfied interns. Supervisors can increase learning satisfaction during internships by developing strong Leader-Member Exchange relationships with their interns.

Simulation-based learning allows students to engage in realistic scenarios in a controlled environment (Collett, 2024). Simulation learning uses live-case studies, role play or computer programmes to simulate a real-world scenario. Simulation activities can help participants improve their skills, knowledge, and abilities in a variety of areas (Skagen et al., 2018). Simulations improve decision-making skills and adaptability, making students more appealing to employers. Utilising simulation as a teaching method is highly advisable because it aids students in identifying their mistakes and understanding how to connect theoretical concepts with practical applications. Simulation simplifies real-world scenarios and provides a risk-free environment where students can cultivate essential employability skills such as critical thinking, negotiation, time management, and self-directed learning. This on-campus WIL initiative also facilitates genuine collaborative learning, encouraging the sharing of knowledge and experiences as well as fostering teamwork among students (Lohmann et al., 2019). To enhance the effectiveness of this initiative, it is beneficial to incorporate face-to-face formative feedback, facilitate issue-based discussions between teams and tutors, and implement reflective practices.

Service-learning activities combine academic learning with community service to achieve meaningful educational outcomes (Moore, 2024). This program benefits students, communities, and institutions by promoting civic engagement and developing practical skills. Educators can integrate hands-on experiences with problem-solving tactics and interactive teaching techniques. Engaging students in service-learning acitivities could enhances their interpersonal skills such as problem-solving, critical analysis, effective communication, teamwork, and other abilities which is essential for their future employment (Aldridge et al., 2010). Furthermore, service-learning encourages students to address real community problems which allow them to reflect on their service experiences, democratic values, and

citizenship, thus strengthening the link between academic study and its real-world application in the community.

Project-Based Learning (PBL) allows students to explore, experiment, and collaborate with industry professionals in environments that simulate real-life scenarios. This activity develops competencies such as project management, collaboration, and technical skills, all of which are in high demand in the job market. Students gain first-hand knowledge and can work independently as a team to solve real-world industry problems with project-based learning (Jackson, 2017). Furthermore, industry projects also could develop and strengthen students' knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for effective teamwork (Mutereko & Wedekind, 2016). Students exercise their autonomy by engaging and collaborating with real-world industry partners to identify issues, establish objectives, and propose solutions.

Other than that, field trips are viewed as organised educational excursions to a predetermined location or setting (such as hotel tour or visit) designed to give students insights into industry management and operations, which aligns with the theoretical concepts and comprehension of particular subjects (Campbell & Gedat, 2021). Field trips enable students to apply what they have learnt in the classroom in real-world situations. Several studies have been conducted to assess the effectiveness of field trips in improving students' learning experiences. When students participate in field trips organised by their institutions, they have a better understanding of what they learnt in class (Manner, 2018). Competitions and hackathons encourage innovation and teamwork (Konak et al., 2024). Students who participate in such events develop stronger collaborative and creative skills, which are highly valued in the hospitality industry. Guest lectures and workshops expose students to industry trends and professional insights. The interactions with industry professionals through guest lectures and workshops broaden students' perspectives and enhance their career readiness (Thi Ngoc Ha, 2023). Mentorship programmes provide personalised guidance and career advice. Mentorship programme enhances students' professional development and helps them build valuable industry connections (Wang et al., 2023). Student-run enterprises such as campus cafes or event planning services provide practical management experience which develop entrepreneurial skills and give students a sense of ownership and responsibility (Jackson et al., 2022).

2.2 The Impacts of Work Integrated Learning on Students' Career Preparedness

Career preparation is critical for a successful student's transition into the workforce. Career preparedness provides a framework for graduates to demonstrate the essential competencies needed for job success and long-term career growth (Heine, 2024). Higher education programmes and curricula are increasingly focusing on building graduates' capacity and relevant employability skills for career preparedness (Spanjaard et al., 2018). However, this effort is not entirely dependent on one side's efforts (academic). Providing students with meaningful and supportive learning environments requires the commitment of both educational institutions and industrial partners. Students must participate in these collaborations, and they cannot rely simply on the institution's attempts to align outputs with industry expectations. WIL offers distinct advantages in hospitality education as an effective method for addressing both student and industry requirements, allowing institutions to stand out in a competitive market. Integrating practical experiences into the hospitality curriculum is essential for adequately equipping students to meet industry expectations. When students engage in hands-on learning opportunities, they can develop and implement skills in real-world scenarios, leading to improved learning outcomes. There are few impacts of WIL in students'

learning process in terms of enhance career preparedness, skills development, and industry connection.

2.2.1 Enhance Students' Career Preparedness

WIL programmes have the ability to enhance students' career preparedness for future workforce by equipping them with hands-on experiences and skills development in real-world scenario (Un Milagro, 2024). Jackson (2013) investigated how WIL activities such as practicum placements and co-op opportunities enhance the job prospects of undergraduates by helping them to improve self-confidence, gain a better understanding of employability skills, and become acquainted with workplace norms and culture. WIL programmes contribute to a deeper understanding of appropriate workplace behaviour by enabling students to observe their colleagues and supervisors in action. Additionally, Barron et al. (2005) found that students who are engaged in WIL have greater confidence and feel more equipped for the workforce. Students gain a deeper insight into industry dynamics and expectations, which can boost their confidence and effectiveness in their roles. This level of readiness results in improved performance and quicker career progression. Numerous studies indicate that graduates with WIL experiences have higher employment rates and earn greater salaries than their peers without such experiences.

2.2.2 Skills Development

WIL activities positively influence students' employability. WIL programmes facilitate the transition from university to the workforce by assisting students in developing new skill sets and transferable skills, cultivating a professional identity and career resiliency that cannot be learnt in a classroom setting (Tiessen et al., 2018). WIL is particularly effective in developing the skills required by the industry including technical skills, soft skills and career management skills (Pasahol et al., 2023). Hard skills refer to technical abilities that relevant to specific industries. In hospitality industry hard skills include bed making and cleaning procedures (housekeeping), reservation system (front office), food service and preparation (food and beverage), event management and etc. Technical abilities are important because these skills display your knowledge and proficiency in your chosen subject. Technical skills demonstrate your capacity to fulfill the tasks and responsibilities assigned to you while also keeping you up to date on the most recent industry trends and advances. Meanwhile, soft skills encompass communication, teamwork, leadership, self-management and problem-solving skills. Soft skills allow you to effectively interact with others, face obstacles head on and achieve your goals. These skills also show your adaptability in different circumstances, a good attitude, and a strong work ethic, distinguishing you from others and emphasizing your own personality and potential. Career management skills include planning and managing your professional development. They cover self-awareness, goal setting, networking, résumé writing, interviewing, and negotiating. Career management skills allow you to take control of your career path and achievement. They provide a clear picture of your goals and the techniques for achieving them. They also help you leverage your talents and chances while overcoming flaws and obstacles. Clarke (2017) highlights that employers prioritize graduates who demonstrate all of these competencies.

2.2.3 Industry Connections and Collaborations

Employers have their own expectations from students as they enter the labor market. Establishing partnerships with employers and community organizations really helps students to make meaningful connections and collaborations. The networking perspective has been identified as an important factor in students' career development and early success (Tiessen et al., 2018). A few studies have emphasised the importance of work integrated learning programmes in exposing students to real-world work situations and industry connections (Riley, 2024). Internships, co-ops, and industry-related projects enable students to build

valuable networks. These connections frequently lead to job offers because employers prefer to hire candidates they know. Other than that, the WIL programmes need to promote continuous feedback from employers to students. This could be enhanced by regularly inviting industry guest lecturers to share insights on what the industry requires from graduates. In addition, mentors from tertiary institutions should arrange visits to hotels so that students, mentors, and employers can interact. Clearly defined work-integrated learning programs should have specific objectives and goals to ensure that employers and students have clear expectations.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an explanatory sequential research design that involves collecting quantitative data first and then determining which quantitative results required further explanation by using narrative data to explain or interpret numerical findings. In survey research, each respondent will get a structured questionnaire. This study will employ a non-probability sampling method which is convenience sampling. The sampling units and scope of this study will be defined to include both female and male graduates from hospitality programmes (from either public or private institutions) throughout Johor and the Klang Valley in Malaysia. This geographical area was selected mainly due to the likelihood of reaching qualified respondents. Additionally, it is essential that the respondents are hospitality graduates, as the focus of this study is to assess the impact of WIL programmes on the career preparedness of students. Consequently, hospitality graduates who have completed their studies are undoubtedly appropriate respondents for this study since they are poised to enter the workforce upon graduation.

The second phase of data collection is semi-structured interviews. The participants for the semi-structured interviews consist of graduates who are randomly selected from those who have completed survey, academic instructors, and industry partners who in charge of WIL activities by using non-probability sampling techniques including purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgement sampling, involves the researcher using their own discernment to select informants for a research study. Participants need to be evaluated for their eligibility, while also determining the number of individuals to be included, the research location, and the methodology to be applied. This method necessitates the identification and selection of individuals or groups who have encountered the relevant issues and phenomena pertinent to the researcher's study. The population for this research comprises informants meeting the following criteria: (1) Hospitality graduates from both public and private institutions in Johor and the Klang Valley, (2) Staffs from these institutions (including educators, management, program coordinators, individuals responsible for WIL activities, and heads of programs), and (3) Industry partners (specifically departments responsible for recruitment and hiring, such as human resources staff and career and learning development personnel). Informants of both genders, male and female, will be chosen. The number of participants will be determined based on data saturation to collect insights on the effectiveness of WIL in improving career readiness for hospitality students. Collaboration with industry representatives in WIL activities allows institutions to learn more about employers' expectations for their future workforce by identifying current demands and trends, systems and technology used, and the knowledge, skills, and work ethics required to work in this industry. This study also identifies effective ways for institutions to improve the quality of their students' learning experiences, increase their interest in working in the hospitality industry, and better adapt to the needs of the job market. The instruments for questionnaires and semi-structured interviews will be based on following research questions:

RQ1: Are there any relationship between work integrated learning (curriculum integration, student engagement and satisfaction, value of collaboration) and career readiness among students?

RQ2: Does supportive learning environment mediate the relationship between student engagement and satisfaction in work integrated learning and career readiness?

RQ3: Does self- efficacy mediate the relationship between the effectiveness of work integrated learning and career readiness?

The specific research activities are outlined below:

1.Graduate survey and interview: The researcher investigates graduates' perceptions of WIL activities in their institutions to assist them in career preparation by measuring the level of student engagement and satisfaction in WIL programmes, assessing students' performance, self-efficacy, development of employability skills and examining the current state of hospitality education in higher learning institutions through visits, networks and conducting surveys.

2. Institution interview: The researcher examines the efforts of higher learning institutions especially educators to enhance student's learning process by using interactive WIL techniques to be embedded in their curriculum as well as providing industry connections, resources, facilities, students' career support and services.

3. Employer interview: The researcher meets with hotel's employers and industry associations to learn more about employers' current demand and future labour needs such as employment market trends, employability skills, knowledge, technology and systems requirements. Aside from that, the researcher also examines the level of industry participation in WIL activities in an effort to enhance students' learning process by providing them with exposure to hospitality operations as well as to encourage them to work in this industry by introducing and explaining them on career opportunities and growth so that they have a clear career path and direction after graduation.

Data collected from survey will be analysed by using SPSS version 26 to produce statistical data related to demographic information such as age, gender, level of qualification, major of study and employment status. Multiple linear regression analysis will be utilised to investigate the impacts of WIL on students' career readiness in term of enhancing career preparedness, skills development and industry connections and collaboration. Additionally, the qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interview will be analysed by using thematic analysis to identify emerging themes relevant to the study.

4.0 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This analytical process will be carried out with the goal of assessing the effectiveness of the WIL programme and identifying areas for potential improvement. Offering more practical and hands-on experiences, increasing student engagement and satisfaction, promoting self-efficacy in students, and providing a student support and evaluation system in WIL activities have a significant impact on students' perceptions and expectations of working in the hospitality industry.

4.1 Providing More Practical Based and Hands-On Experiences

WIL activities focus on students' learning process, progress, and improvement. WIL activities are inextricably linked to practical experience and exploration of real-world of work. It is critical to develop and strengthen the collaboration with industry and communities through WIL initiatives. A range of practical hospitality activities can be incorporated into learning sessions in WIL such as making beds, conducting cooking demonstrations, understanding front office operations, developing food and beverage service abilities, arranging table settings, and much more. Aside from that, industrial visits, entrepreneurship, projects, networking, and other WIL platforms could also provide students with hands-on experience, professional services, social practice, and work-study opportunities. The institution must focus

on developing students' innovative thinking as well as emerging technical support and new changes in industrial practices. Furthermore, institutions must incorporate new technologies to keep up with emerging trends as technology advances. It is possible to establish a blend class of theory and practical to stimulate students' interests and engagement in WIL activities.

4.2 Enhance Students Engagement and Satisfaction

Successful WIL depends on student engagement and satisfaction, which are essential for motivation and empowerment. Students' motivation to participate in WIL is most likely driven by industry expectations for relevant work experience and a desire to stand out in a competitive labour market. Students who took part in WIL reported greater confidence and job readiness. This readiness results in better performance and faster career advancement. Graduates with WIL experiences outperform their peers in terms of job placement and salary. Students who participate in WIL also improve their disciplinary knowledge, self-efficacy, leadership skills, self-management, analytical ability, critical thinking, self-awareness, self-confidence, effective communication, time management, networking, project management skills, and teamwork. They improve both workplace understanding and academic performance. The confidence to set and achieve career goals grows as theoretical skills and knowledge improve. These abilities are expected to help university graduates make a smooth transition to the workforce.

4.3 Building Self-Efficacy in Students

A positive learning environment can greatly help students develop their self-efficacy. Educators play an important role in shaping students' perceptions of their own abilities. Work integrated learning is an interactive teaching approach that requires active collaboration with industry partners to improve students' learning processes and allow them to believe in their abilities to develop their future careers while also facing challenges with confidence and resilience. Cultivating self-efficacy entails more than simply encouraging students; it also entails instilling a growth mindset, providing meaningful learning experiences, and providing scaffolding support to assist students in developing the skills and strategies required to navigate academic and personal challenges. WIL allows academic staff and industry supervisors to provide supportive guidance, constructive feedback, and opportunities for achievement. In addition, educators can highlight the accomplishments of others by inviting industry representatives for career talks that inspire them with their achievements in the hospitality industry while also exposing them to the nature of work and industry operations. Students who see others succeed are more likely to believe that they, too, can improve. Instructors can also help students develop a sense of self-relevance by connecting their personal interests and career readiness by exposing them to real-world situations and practical training in the hospitality industry through work-integrated learning experiences such as practical training, mentorship, and industrial visits. Institutions must review their course curricula to support student learning and growth by providing clear course content and future work expectations, as well as actionable and timely feedback that builds trust and encourages ongoing engagement and learning in WIL activities. When students see that their course is connected to their sense of purpose and relevant to their future career, they become confident and more motivated to work in hospitality industry.

4.4 Offering Student Support and Evaluation Systems

WIL activities can improve close collaboration with industry partners, cultivate employability skills and work ethics, help students gain professional experience, and instil a positive attitude towards working in the hospitality industry. Various types of WIL can shift from knowledge-oriented to literacy-oriented; keep up with current trends and demands in industrial practices; and incorporate network information technology, simulation experiments, and other

new technologies to increase student engagement in the learning process. It is necessary to strengthen the incentives for educators to participate in WIL; consider converting them into class hours; provide workload recognition and remuneration; and affirm and reward teachers who perform exceptionally so that students, academic staff, and industry representatives are widely and deeply involved in WIL activities. Academic staff in charge of WIL activities should have a high level of theoretical knowledge and professional skills, as well as a labour-oriented, practical subject background or long-term professional talents in a specific practical field, to ensure the quality of WIL programs that meet industry demands. At the same time, industrial representatives should be invited to conduct cooperative teaching for WIL. Exposure to the industrial nature of work, industrial visits, project collaboration, and other WIL activities may promote interactive exchanges and cooperative teaching among academic staff and industry managers. They can evaluate students' performance after WIL activities and provide career advice to them. Evaluation of students' performance and feedback after WIL programmes is critical to ensuring their full engagement. A strong team of educators and industry partners is needed to successfully implement WIL programs in institutions. WIL can help students improve their career awareness, preparedness, and employability skills. These are the keys to developing a qualified workforce for the future.

4.0 CONCLUSION

This paper describes the conceptualisation of WIL for nurturing students' career preparedness in the context of hospitality education. A strong collaboration between Hospitality industry and educational institutions in regard to WIL is necessary for enhancing students' interest and understanding of career prospects within the hospitality sector, as well as for improving their career preparedness. To do so, it is pertinent to create more practical and hands-on learning experiences such as real-world industry projects, programme simulations, and workplace-based learning into the curriculum. Additionally, some kind of WIL activities can be conducted through internships, apprenticeships or cooperative education programmes, which providing students with the opportunities to involve in real work environment. Encourage students to actively engage in WIL activities such as workshops and case studies that relate to industrial practices. Develop a mentorship program involving industry experts to assist students in practical projects, providing feedback that reflects real-world practices in the workplace.

Educational institutions must collaborate with industry partners to present real-world challenges for students to address, resulting in improved practical skills and enhanced problem-solving abilities. Creating an educational environment that encourages students to engage in both academic and practical opportunities of learning is the key to increase students' satisfaction and engagement in WIL. This may involve employing active learning techniques such as collaborative group projects and peer evaluations to boost engagement and participation. They also should consistently collect student feedback regarding the curriculum and adjust based on their preferences to enhance satisfaction and the relevance of the course. To boost students' self-efficacy, educational institutions should offer opportunities for skill development, self-reflection, and personal growth by incorporating resources for self-assessment and goal setting into the curriculum, aiding students in tracking their progress and strengthening their confidence in their capabilities.

Other than that, create opportunities for students to showcase their work and receive constructive feedback, fostering a sense of accomplishment. Organise workshops that focused on resilience and professional development to assist students in cultivating essential soft skills such as communication, time management, and stress management, all of which contribute to enhanced self-efficacy. Student support and evaluation systems require comprehensive support frameworks that help students not only for academic learning but also instant feedback and guidance in their WIL experiences. It is important to set up academic and career support services which are easily accessible to students including counselling

session, career guidance, as well as resources for mental health. Institutions also should adopt cumulative assessment mechanisms that provide constant feedback for students to track their progress in real-time and encourage strong communication channel among academic staff, industry mentors, and students to ensure alignment in expectations and progression for all parties involved. Enhancing the curriculum in WIL can be significantly achieved by prioritizing practical experiences, boosting student engagement in learning, improving self-confidence, and providing strong support systems. Implementing these practical recommendations into action will not only improve students' academic performance but also prepare them for their future careers by providing them with the essential skills, confidence, and assistance needed to excel in the job market. It is crucial for educators, industry professionals, and students to collaborate to ensure that the curriculum evolves in response to the ever-changing demands of the professional world.

CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

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