



**Tourism Graduate Employability: Stakeholder perceptions
of workplace learning for graduate employment**

By

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(DTech : Quality)

DECLARATION

1. I know and understand that plagiarism is using another person's work and pretending it is one's own, which is wrong.
2. This dissertation is my own work.
3. I have appropriately referenced the work of other people I have used.
4. I have not allowed and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own.

Signature

Daphanie Naicker

DEDICATION

To my mum and dad, Vincent and Seena Naicker

You did it,

In bringing me to where I am now!

It is all through your love and sacrifices.

Thank you!

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Oprah Winfrey once said, *“Every one of us gets through the tough times because somebody there is standing in the gap to close it for us.”* Therefore, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the following individuals who had assisted me in overcoming the challenges in order to complete my degree.

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ABSTRACT

With the accelerating growth in the tourism industry and its anchorage in the service-industry, the utilisation of people is a valuable resource for a tourism organisation. There are increased pressures on educational institutions from the government and the tourism industry to produce employable graduates. Thus, it remains imperative that tourism organisations have access to a pool of human resources that possess the required knowledge, skills and attitudes. As a result, educational institutions build workplace learning (WPL) into tourism curricula to ensure the transferability of skills and a smoother transition for all stakeholders into the tourism industry.

This study set out to determine the impact WPL has on a tourism student's employability in the tourism industry. The literature highlights a number of key issues hindering the success of WPL for tourism graduate employability. These include, a lack of alignment of curriculum, supervision challenges and partnerships with the tourism industry.

Using a mixed methodological approach comprising both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, comparisons among stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes were conducted. The stakeholders are: tourism graduates from 2011-2014, academic supervisors and workplace supervisors in the tourism industry.

Stakeholders' perceptions of WPL structured the depth and sharpened understanding of the success as well as issues hindering the successful implementation of WPL and consequent unemployment. Among the main challenges were the placement of students and the inadequate feedback between stakeholders. The empirical findings underpinned effective communication as imperative in developing and maintaining quality partnerships for WPL. Among the many knock on benefits is the successful transfer of skills to tourism students. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the dearth of literature on tourism WPL and tackle salient gaps in tourism employability.

Keywords: WIL, WPL, perceptions, attitudes, employability, supervision, success.

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LIST OF DEFINITIONS

Andragogy:

Is a learning approach that recognises the need for students to be flexible in learning for the transfer of skills (Monts 2000: 2).

Academic supervisor:

An academic supervisor referred to in this study is the person who facilitates the WPL module at the educational institution for the tourism programme.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR):

CSR is a tourism organisations approach that contributes to the social, economic and environmental benefits of all stakeholder (Smith 2012: 10).

Developing country:

A country that is seeking to become more advanced economically and socially (Oxford Dictionaries 2016).

Graduate:

The graduate's referred to are students' who successfully completed a course in travel and tourism. The sampled respondents in chapters 4,5 and 6 are all graduates or referred to as students during WPL.

Employability:

While a variety of definitions of the term employability have been suggested, this research will use the definition suggested by Yorke and Knight (2006: 22). They explain that employability "is a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefit themselves, the community and the economy".

Galileo:

Galileo is a Global Distribution System (GDS) software that allows tourism organisations to book airline, accommodation, bus tickets for passengers (Smith and Warburton 2012: 121).

Pedagogy:

A pedagogical approach in this study is referred to training of students during WPL is described as the student being dependent on the workplace and academic supervisor for all learning of skills which is structured for completion of WPL (Monts 2000: 3).

Stakeholders:

Throughout this proposal the word stakeholders refers to: educational institutions and academic supervisors for WPL, undergraduate students, tourism organisation and workplace supervisors responsible for WPL.

Tourism:

According to the UN-WTO, “the activities of travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than a consecutive year for leisure or business, and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (George 2008: 360).

Work integrated learning (WIL) programme/module:

Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher and Pretto (2008: iv) defines WIL as a range of approaches and strategies that is integrated in the module or programme at the educational institution with the aim of integrating theory with the workplace practice.

Workplace module:

Throughout this dissertation, the researcher refers to graduates that undertook a WPL module. WPL module is integrated as a module in the tourism course at the educational institutions.

Workplace supervisor:

The workplace supervisors are the tourism professionals or employers that supervise students at the tourism organization during WPL.

Youth:

Mayer, Gordhan, Manxeba, Hughes, Foley, Maroc, Lolwana, and Nell (2011: 6) identify youth as those individuals between the ages of 15-35 with specific characteristics and needs to transition from school to work.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CHE	Council of Higher Education
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DUT	Durban University of Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDS	Global distribution systems
HE	Higher education
HEIs	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
PJBL	Project-Based Learning
RDM	Rand Daily Mail
SA	South Africa
SETA	Sector Education Training Authority
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
UK	United Kingdom
UOT	University of Technology
WACE	World Association of Cooperative Education
WIL	Work integrated learning
WPL	Workplace learning

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Higher educational institutions play an important role in developing and training students. As a result, the enacted content of the tourism curriculum remains imperative and has set an intense debate in motion among researchers in the field of tourism pedagogy (Inui, Wheeler and Lankford 2006: 28; Manwa, Chipfuva and Mahachi 2011: 18). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to ascertain whether the workplace-learning (WPL) module in higher education (HE) tourism programmes is effective for tourism employability. More specifically, this study hopes to identify the competencies required for graduate employability and whether WPL has assisted in enhancing the capabilities. The latter is important as students participate in WPL to develop skills, furthermore, employers in tourism expect students to possess skills for employment.

Chapter One locates the background of this research within a problem statement that underpins the rationale for the intended study. Thereafter, the aims and objectives of the study are presented as the focus of the research study. Limitations and delimitations will be acknowledged and discussed.

1.2 Problem statement

With the greater inclusion of WPL in tourism courses (Fidgeon 2010: 711), key issues identified by stakeholders support the focus of the study. There are three stakeholders that play a significant role in the WPL process namely, tourism graduates, academic supervisors and the workplace supervisors (McNamara 2013: 185). All three of these are pivotal to the proposed study.

1.2.1 Shortcomings in workplace supervisors' learning provision

The first issue lies in the limitation of workplace supervisors' involvement in the formulation of the WPL module. Sattler and Peters (2012: 11) proclaim that the involvement of employers in the curriculum ensures a smoother transition for students into the industry, especially so in the tourism industry that is perceived as

having low entry barriers and a high turnover (George 2008: 207). Moreover, Sattler and Peters (2012: 11) criticise the lack of theoretical research on the perceptions and involvement by workplace supervisors in the WPL module. The authors further point to information gaps and uncertainties in supervision practice between the educational institutions and workplace supervisors during WPL. These shortcomings raise concerns around the quality of the transferability of workplace skills. Therefore, investigation of contributions by workplace supervisors is necessary. In fact, Cooper, Orrell and Bowden (1997 cited in Jugmohan 2009: 2) advance that research involving workplace supervisors assists in avoiding the risk of producing graduates who lack practical experience.

Conversely, workplace supervisors may feel unwilling to report negative feedback on student performance as it will affect their results (Bates 2011: 113). In this scenario, it is difficult for educational institutions to assess the skills graduates learn during WPL without candour from supervisors. With this notion, McNamara (2013: 184) further argues that should WPL rely heavily on workplace supervisors' assessments, it may prove unreliable.

1.2.2 Tourism graduates' perceptions and attitudes towards WPL

The second issue associated with WPL is located in the tourism graduates' perception of the value of WPL. Questions have been raised on whether educational institutions have been fulfilling their role in producing employable graduates, as evidence from studies reveal that graduates found it difficult in gaining employment (Bamford 2012: 45). Maher and Graves (2007) argue that it becomes a formidable task by academic supervisors to make students realise skills and maximise potential employment opportunities.

Solnet, Robinson, and Cooper (2007: 1) argue that a downfall of WPL is that some students fail to cognitively recognise the skills they develop in the workplace, nor do they consciously cultivate these skills to enhance their employability. Martin, Fleming, Ferkins, Wiersma and Coll (2010: 25) assert there is little known about the skills gained from students undertaking WPL. Moreover, students are often placed in working environments where they are regarded as "cheap" labour rather than thriving

from their work experiences (Spowart 2009: 11). As a result, students will develop a negative attitude towards the myriad of tourism careers.

1.2.3 Role of educational institutions in WPL

Although most educational institutions have assimilated WPL into the tourism curriculum, the agreed measure of WPL that should be undertaken to ensure employability is debatable (Fidgeon 2010: 713). Drawing in the need for research on the extent to which WPL in higher education (HE) assists in tourism graduate employability. In practice, one of the main challenges by academic supervisors is the placement of students (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 31); some academic supervisors require students to find their own placements during WPL. Beyond challenging the student and academic supervisors, questions are raised on the quality of students' placement choices for WPL (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 31).

1.3 Background

The Rand Daily Mail (RDM) (2015) reports that South Africa has the third largest unemployment rate on the African continent and the highest rate of youth unemployment. Earlier, Spowart (2011: 169) also lamented the upsurge in youth unemployment rates in South Africa. Yet figures produced by Statistics South Africa indicate that the tourism industry has the capacity to create employment (Statistics South Africa 2015).

Tourism is valuable to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa (Statistics South Africa 2015). In order to continue the growth in tourism arrivals, it is imperative that tourism organisations have access to human resources that possess the required knowledge, skills and attitudes. Therefore, educational institutions need to ensure their graduates have the necessary skills to make them employable (Fidgeon 2010: 711). Educational institutions efforts have manifested in widespread assimilation of WPL into the tourism curriculum.

WPL offers the opportunity for students to enter into the working environment, linking theory with practice and encouraging students to reflectively deliberate upon their experiences (Choy and Delahaye 2011: 158). Keating's (2012: 9) qualitative study

affirms that the concept of WPL is to create partnerships between three stakeholders: the student, the tourism organisation/supervisor and the educational institutions. However, the degree of complexity of the WPL programme is such that each educational institution has individualised policies and modalities to implement the WPL module (Council of Higher Education 2011: 16).

Regrettably, a major challenge identified by Smith (2012: 259) and Fidgeon (2010: 720) is an insufficiency in skills transfer by educational institutions to tourism graduates. The authors argue that educational institutions should give importance to the transferability and accessibility of competencies for students undertaking WPL. Sattler and Peters (2011: 11) proclaim that of the studies they reviewed, there is a general lack of employer engagement in the WPL programme. Bamford (2012: 38) identifies that workplace supervisor involvement in the WPL module potentially impacts on the perceptions and attitudes of students, as this is probably their first experience in the industry and usually determines their career paths.

Fidgeon (2010: 702) asserts that literature does not take the effectiveness of WPL techniques into consideration. With the prevalence of WPL at higher education institution (HEI), it is important to delineate issues in attempts to redress the gap of youth unemployment in tourism. It is equally important that for WPL to be successful, the stakeholders cannot work in isolation but need to work cohesively to gain positive outcomes for the WPL module.

1.4 Aim, objectives and research questions

The following are the aim, research questions and objectives of this study.

1.4.1 Aim and research question of study

This study aims to evaluate the perceptions of stakeholders on the HE WPL module towards increasing tourism graduate employability. Therefore, the research question set for this study is:

What are stakeholders' perceptions of WPL with regards to tourism graduate employability?

1.4.2 Objectives and research questions

This research will be guided by the following objectives and research questions:

(i) Objective One

To investigate the mechanisms used by workplace supervisors for the transfer of capabilities to enhance tourism graduates' employability.

More specifically, this objective of the study seeks to resolve the following questions:

- What strategies are used by workplace supervisors to impart skills to students during WPL?
- Are these strategies used by workplace supervisors to impart skills to students during WPL effective for employment?
- What assurance do academic supervisors have that students learn in the workplace?
- How do various educational institutions' WPL durations affect the transferability of skills?

(ii) Objective Two

To appraise skills accessed by tourism graduates during their WPL that enhance their employability.

This objective will, accordingly, address the following questions:

- What skills accessed during WPL assisted students in being employed in the tourism industry?
- What skills are perceived important for employment by academic and workplace supervisors?
- Are skills accessed by students during WPL aligned with curriculum for tourism graduate employability?

(iii) Objective Three

To compare graduates' perceptions and attitude on the impact of WPL on tourism employability.

Research questions for this objective are:

- What are tourism graduates' perceptions of and attitudes of WPL for their employability?
- How can the various perceptions of tourism students for employability be explained?
- Is the WPL experience rewarding to graduates and why?

(iv) Objective Four

To evaluate educational institutions' inclusion of WPL in promoting tourism graduate employability.

The following questions will provide direct response to this objective:

- What are the benefits of WPL for stakeholders?
- What are the challenges of implementing WPL for stakeholders?
- How do stakeholders measure WPL success?
- Is there a difference in success factors?

1.5 Rationale and benefits of this study

This researcher hopes to make a significant contribution in the following areas:

1.5.1. Knowledge

While a number of studies have been conducted on WPL, this researcher found that there is a dearth of research on WPL in tourism. The limited prior research has questioned the quality of WPL in enhancing tourism employability. The desired outcome of producing this research, from an empirical perspective, is to gain a better understanding of the effects the WPL module has on tourism students' employability.

Furthermore, the use of a WPL module has gained importance in the inclusion of tourism courses at educational institutions. It is vital that there is knowledge and research available as to whether it adds value to the stakeholders. Additionally, the empirical findings may contribute to conferences, such as the World Association of Cooperative Education (WACE) and similar seminars.

Knowledge of workplace supervisor roles and how they are perceived will enrich theory around the conduct and outcome of WPL. In investigating tourism graduates' perception of WPL experiences, conclusions can be drawn about what needs to occur to overcome the skills shortage and unemployment.

1.5.2 Educational institutions

The empirical findings would be beneficial to educational institutions in identifying issues that exist in the WPL module that may not have been addressed or researched. Educational institutions will gain from the recommendations made for improving future WPL policy. Additionally, academic supervisors of these educational institutions may access the results of this study to improve their WPL module. A further benefit would be to gain insight into needed skills to update curriculum, with which to promote tourism graduates' employability.

1.5.3 Tourism Organisations/ Workplace supervisors

Employers will gain from a better understanding of what is required of students during WPL, appreciate the value add to students and, allow them to thrive during their WPL experience. Workplace supervisors participating in this research should also be interested in further developing employees via the WPL module. They may also use the empirical findings to assess the effectiveness of their own workplace teaching mechanisms and processes.

1.5.4 Tourism graduates

Participating graduates will gain insight into the skills, attitudes and cognition required by employers in order to enhance their employability in the tourism industry. Moreover, in order to determine the effectiveness of WPL, an examination from the perspective of the people (graduates) who are involved and will provide valuable suggestions to improve the WPL module, is needed.

1.6 Limitations and delimitations

There are some limitations and delimitations to this research study.

1.6.1 Limitations of this research

The study is limited in the following ways:

- This study represents tourism graduates and supervisors from four educational institutions. Therefore, the results of this study may not be generalised to other contexts and educational institutions.
- As this study is for the period 2011-2014, and the sample size is determined by graduate enrolment numbers, the results may not be generalised to other enrolment contexts.
- The workplace supervisors involved with the educational institution may have changed their jobs. Therefore, their contact details may be invalid.

1.6.2 Delimitations of this research

The study is delimited in its findings in the following ways:

- One of the objectives of this study is to determine the impact WPL duration has on tourism graduates' acquisition of employability skills. Therefore, the researcher selected four educational institutions with various WPL durations that formed the sample frame.
- This study does not attempt to measure actual proficiency in the WPL module for tourism graduate employability. Instead, evaluation judgments are based only on stakeholder views and the attempt to identify the extent to which stakeholders believe WPL is effective for graduate employability in tourism.

1.7 Outline of this dissertation

This dissertation will comprise six chapters, namely:

Chapter One: Introduction to study

This chapter deals with the introduction and background of this research by providing a rationale for the study. From this, the aims, research questions and objectives of the study are formed to help focus the study.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This chapter interrogates WPL around the variables of interest that pertain to WPL.

Chapter Three: Research design and methodology

The research methodology used for this study is the focus of this chapter. Included are research design and methods that will be applied, as well as the rationale for the use of such methodology.

Chapter Four: Empirical findings

Chapter Four focuses on the presentation of empirical findings of the study.

Chapter Five: Interpretation and discussion of study results

This chapter discusses the findings as presented in Chapter Four and explains how they contribute to understanding stakeholders' perceptions regarding WPL, tourism employability and the research questions.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and recommendations

Concluding remarks for the study are made in this chapter. Recommendations will be made by the researcher in order to enhance WPL at educational institutions.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter One has provided a summary of the complexities of the inclusion of WPL at educational institutions, which formed the basis of this research. The contextual background conveyed a need to understand the relationship between stakeholders to determine the effectiveness of WPL. The problem statement, aims and objectives were also discussed in this light. The significance of the study for the three stakeholders were discussed, with limitations and delimitations that affected the research addressed. Chapter Two reviews the literature on the published perspectives of researchers in the field. This is done in order to gain an in-depth understanding of challenges associated with the inclusion of WPL at HE for tourism graduate employability.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One introduced the study by way of a background, the problem statement, rationale and limitations of the proposed research. This chapter reviews relevant literature that sheds more light on the effectiveness of workplace learning (WPL) on tourism graduate employability. The chapter also examines research paradigms of WPL from prior research. The purpose of the chapter is to promote a greater understanding of the variables of interest, which will include the employability, concept, and the success and value of WPL.

The contents of this chapter stem from the objectives presented in Chapter One. At the outset, the concept of WPL and tourism graduate employability are explained, followed by the perceived benefits and challenges of WPL to stakeholders. Prior work on stakeholders' perceptions that will be analysed is sourced from published research across the tourism field and within WPL.

2.2 Tourism education and the emergence of the theory of WPL

Selwyn (2010: 5) defines education as being concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and the ability to solve societal problems, while training deals with the acquisition of practical experience. Within the context of tourism, Baharun, Suleiman and Awang (2012: 8769) identify that a major challenge facing tourism education is that students require training in practical skills, as the tourism industry requires graduates who have hands-on, practical experience, rather than only theory itself.

Another long-standing issue in tourism education, addressed by Ernawati and Pearce (2003: 225), is that tourism education incorporates other disciplines that require different approaches to tourism education. The variety of tourism titles includes: "Tourism management", "Leisure studies", and "Tourism studies" (Crispin and Robinson 2001: 6). Zagonari (2009: 3) identifies that theming tourism, for example, into tourism information technology or tourism sports, will assist in employers explicitly identifying skills required by the graduate for employment. However, one of

the key issues with theming of tourism education, outlined by Crispin and Robinson (2001: 6), is that it may restrict job opportunities after WPL, as employers perceive graduates as being skilled only in their chosen theme.

The most obvious manner in which the gap between theory and practical experience can be bridged, is by including WPL in the tourism curriculum. In this regard, Koc, Yumusak, Ulukoy, Kilic and Toptas (2014: 137) aver that practical skills have been embedded into the tourism curriculum through WPL programmes, to improve the quality of graduates. The concept of WPL, as derived from Dewey (1938: 25), recognises the necessity for students to incorporate experience in their education. Dewey's work influenced other theorists in the field of education, such as Anderson (1988: 4), who further argues that experience alone is not necessarily educational and careful mediation is required to maximise the benefits of WPL in curricula. The author also maintains that WPL presents challenges at educational institutions, since WPL requires a different learning style. In addition, Kolb (1984) provides a comprehensive theory, emphasising reflection as an important component for integrating WPL at educational institutions.

Smith, Meijer and Kielly-Coleman (2010: 410) suggest that educational institutions should recognise the importance and value WPL provides to students, as it is different from the traditional mode of academic learning, which often focuses more on theory. In the same vein, this recommendation is earlier supported by Cushen (2005: 7), who asserts that the relationship between HEIs and graduate employability is realised through WPL. Although WPL is proven beneficial to students, Dann and Richardson (2015:157) caution on the need to be critical in discourses around a curriculum that integrates WPL, to assure effective teaching and learning.

2.3 The concept of workplace learning

The theory of WPL has gained significant importance in HE (Ruhanen, Breakey and Robinson 2012: 183; Keating 2012: 90; Hughes, Mylonas and Benckendorff 2013: 265; Jackson 2015: 351; Robinson, Ruhanen and Breakey 2015: 2). A study by Nixon, Smith, Stafford and Camm (2006: 16) reports that more than 70 percent of learning comes from experience. WPL is used interchangeably with a variety of

terms, such as work integrated learning (WIL), co-operative education, and sandwich year (Fleming, Martin, Hughes and Zinn 2009: 189; Bamford 2012: 36). WPL refers to students undertaking a period of training, either paid or unpaid, for a period of time before completing their diploma or degree (Aggett and Busby 2011: 106).

According to Ruhanen *et al.* (2013: 67), the aim of implementing WPL into the curricula is to enable students to make a smoother transition into the workplace. This aim may be better achieved by adoption of Cooper *et al.*'s (2010: 53) definition of WPL that incorporates the:

- purpose of the WPL programme,
- context,
- nature of the integration,
- curriculum issues in incorporating WPL at the educational institution,
- learning partnerships between the educational institution,
- benefits to the workplace or community, and
- support provided to the student and the workplace during WPL.

In an earlier conceptual model of WPL in Figure 2.1, Nixon *et al.* (2006: 47) illustrate two different perspectives of WPL for an educational institution – a narrow and a broad perspective. The narrow interpretation of the WPL objectives focuses on learning at dedicated workstations and meeting the expectations of that tourism organisation. In contrast, a broad interpretation of WPL objectives indicate learning that relates to the tourism field or industry in general; it is anticipated that students will have the ability to apply these WPL learning objectives in any tourism sector. Broad perspectives allude to WPL objectives driven by societal needs, such as contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country.

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2011: 7) argues that educational institutions aim for a narrow perspective of WPL rather than a broad perspective, hindering graduates' employability. Bohloko (2012: 271) observes that the issue of perspective is critical because of the changing nature of employment.

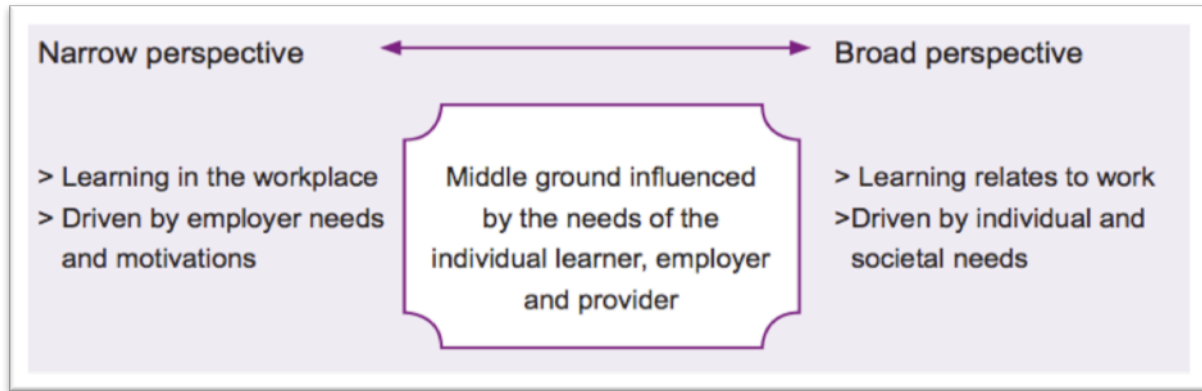


Figure 2.1: WPL learning perspectives (Nixon *et al.* 2006: 47)

All stakeholders need to understand the theory behind WPL, otherwise, there may be tension arising from a lack of shared understanding (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 17). Hence, in order for WPL to achieve its set goals, all stakeholders must be committed (Keating 2012: 94). According to Harvey, Coulson, Mackaway and Winchester- Seeto (2010: 142), WPL should be transparent and understood by all involved, so each stakeholder shares similar motivations and objectives. Therefore, this study will also explore three key stakeholder perceptions on tourism WPL, in order to evaluate its place in the HE tourism qualification.

2.4 Types of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) modules

There are several approaches to impart employability skills at educational institutions. According to the CHE (2011: 16), modalities of WIL vary between educational institutions. CHE highlights four modalities of WIL namely, Work-Directed Theoretical Learning (WDTL), Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Project-based Learning (PJBL) and Workplace Learning (WPL).

2.4.1 Work-Directed Theoretical Learning (WDTL)

WDTL involves introducing theoretical forms of knowledge that meet both academic and practice requirements (CHE 2011: 17). For example, as part of a tourism student's working experience at the University of Johannesburg, this modality is in part, exercised by inviting people from the workplace to address students in the classroom prior to WPL (Spowart 2011: 1). This component seeks to align disciplinary demands with workplace relevance, as students are made aware of

employers' expectations during their experience. Practice enhances the academic quality of the module. Additionally, WDTL will be suitable for tourism courses that are sector specific, such as tourism sports (Zagonari 2009: 3).

2.4.2 Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

CHE (2011: 17) defines PBL as when students are given real-life scenarios, in the form of assignments, projects and other forms of assessment. Problem-based learning is more valuable when more than one subject in the course includes problem solving activities (Moletsane 2012). An earlier study by Huang (2005: 40) of PBL on tourism students showed it to be beneficial for students learning on their own and developing the necessary skills for employment. However, students from Huang's study (2005) mentioned challenges encountered in identifying the acquired knowledge expected from their workplace supervisors or academics. Zwaal and Otting (2015: 23) observe that PBL is valued at HE and problem-based activities are included in their curriculum. However, PBL is not a key driver of the tourism curriculum, as it is mainly suitable for medical and health science education.

2.4.3 Project-Based Learning (PJBL)

PJBL allows students to learn through projects at the educational institution or the organisation, to address real-life problems within the workplace (CHE 2011: 18). Both the academic supervisor from the educational institution and the student workplace supervisor in industry supervise these types of projects. Nevertheless, CHE (2011:18) recognises that PJBL does not always cover all the outcomes of the curriculum and requires extensive resources. PJBL is mainly applied in the education field of Engineering and Science. Moreover, PJBL has gained recognition in sustainable research in tourism at the University of Queensland, as will be discussed in section 2.5 (Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 186).

2.4.4 Workplace Place Learning (WPL)

During the WPL module, students are placed at tourism organisations for a certain period of time, to acquire experience (Brown, Arendt and Bosselman 2014: 60). This is usually conducted under the guidance of academic staff and a workplace supervisor. WPL can be assessed as part of a student's course, or be adopted as

being non-credit bearing and is used solely to gain workplace experience (Griffith University 2004: 9). WPL is important within the tourism industry due to the industry's service nature.

Fanning (2009: 115) found that tourism students responded positively to the WPL programme. WPL assisted in enhancing their options and skills (Fanning 2009: 119; Wang, Chiang and Lee 2014: 87). However, Gibson, Brodie, Sharpe, Wong, Deane and Fraser (2002: 4) establishes integration as the aspect that distinguishes WPL from other modalities. Integration occurs when students apply the practical knowledge they gain from WPL, into the theory-based tourism course (Gibson *et al.* 2002: 4).

2.5 Understanding current practices of WIL programmes

In order to obtain a better understanding of the modalities of the WIL, practices of four educational institutions are presented and reviewed. Although the terminology used to describe WIL programmes varies, the common understanding and considerable interest by all educational institutions is to develop students for the world of work by integrating theory into practise (Gibson *et al.* 2002: 4). An overview of WIL programmes from two South African and two British educational institutions is presented in Table 2.1. This illustrates the commonalities across educational institutions, as well as the differences.

The listed educational institutions are shown to have structured and integrated approaches of incorporating WIL into the tourism curriculum (Table 2.1). This points to the alignment between practice and theory, when integrated in the tourism curriculum at the educational institutions (Hughes *et al.* 2013: 277).

Table 2.1: Comparison of selected WIL practices

Variables of interest	South African practices of WIL		International practices of WIL	
	Durban University of Technology (Durban)	University of Johannesburg (Johannesburg)	School of Hospitality and Tourism (A British University)	University of Queensland (Australia)
Type of WIL practise	WPL	WPL and WDTL	WPL	WPL and PJBL
Duration and timing in practice	6 months in 3 rd year tourism course.	6 months in 3 rd year tourism course.	One year during their tourism course.	10 days in a Tourism Regional internship programme in their final year. Knowledge exchange workshop for several weeks discussing students research project.
Mandatory or optional	Mandatory	Mandatory	Optional	Mandatory
Type of Assessment	Work experience diary	Work experience diary	Not assessed	Work experience diary
Credited	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Role of employer	Mentoring, supervision and evaluation	Mentoring, supervision and evaluation	Mentoring and supervision.	Provide accommodation and transfers, mentoring evaluation and mentoring.
Role of academic supervisor	Assessment, assists with selection, monitoring and mentoring.	Assessment, assists with selection, monitoring and mentoring.	Provide a database of employment opportunities for WPL.	Assists with selection and mentoring and monitoring.

Sources: Faculty of Management Sciences Handbook (2014); Agget and Busby (2011: 108); Spowart (2011: 1); Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 186).

However, what distinguishes the WIL approaches are aspects of assessment, learning, duration and credit. The integration of WIL programmes can occur formally or informally (Sattler 2011: 59). For example, The School of Hospitality and Tourism in a British University, according to Aggett and Busby (2011: 108), does not allocate credits for WPL and regards it as optional, whereas, at some educational institutions, such as the Department of Hospitality and Tourism at the Durban University of Technology (DUT) in Durban, and the School of Hospitality and Tourism at the University of Johannesburg, participation of WPL is a mandatory component of the course. As a form of evidence of assessment, such practice requires students to keep a work experience diary, present their experiences, design posters and write up reports (Kundasami 2007: 38; Sattler 2011: 59).

Alderman and Milne (2005: 8) propose that students require preliminary activities, in preparation, before going out into industry; this will ensure WPL is effective. Some educational institutions adopt permutations of WIL approaches, as indicated by Spowart (2011: 2), such as the School of Hospitality and Tourism in Johannesburg, which incorporates two types of WIL approaches.

The first is a WDTL, where there are two, 60-minute class periods scheduled to orient students before placement. According to Spowart (2011: 1), one of these periods consists of inviting employers to the university, in order to inform students of their expectations of WPL. The second session is used to prepare students on employment factors, ranging from designing curriculum vitae and handling sexual harassment to interview skills. Only thereafter, do students engage in WPL in the tourism industry.

A WIL curriculum practice indicated in Table 2.1 reflects that the University of Queensland, has included WPL and PJBL into tourism curricula. Two components, as identified by Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 186), are significant for the present study. Firstly, students are selected by the university through a detailed application and interview process. Students then undertake WPL with various industry operators in the respective tourism destinations where they live and work, over the mid-semester university break for a total of 10 days. In the second component, students undertake a strategic research project, in each of the tourism destinations nominated by the host region. On completion, a Knowledge Exchange Workshop is held to discuss students' experiences. Following WPL, Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 186) found that students displayed a positive attitude towards employment opportunities. Furthermore, students networked with professionals in the tourism industry during WPL.

This section compared selected educational institutions in order distinguish between WIL programmes. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will focus only on literature on WPL concerning its relevance for tourism learning programmes. WPL is of particular importance, as it is not only about work readiness but also about linking

classroom learning with work learning content. The ensuing sections will discuss the value of WPL programmes to stakeholders.

2.6 Evaluating the contribution of WPL to its stakeholders

Much research on the benefits of WPL to stakeholders has been reported (Wardle 2012: 2; Ruhanen *et al.* 2013: 61; Bamford 2012: 37). Ruhanen *et al.* (2013: 61) state that, although students are considered the main beneficiaries of the WPL module, the educational institutions and workplace supervisors also gain from the WPL programme. Nonetheless, Busby (2003: 320) explains that the problem in indicating the benefits of WPL to stakeholders, lies in the difficulty in measuring its benefits. This section will critique the value of WPL for the educational institution and academic supervisor, as well as tourism organisations and tourism graduates.

2.6.1 Evaluation of the WPL contribution to educational institutions

According to Aring (2012: 5), there are two mismatches in producing employable students. Firstly, a mismatch, where companies do not find graduates employable, even though they have the relevant qualification. Secondly, a mismatch, where graduates do not possess the required skills for the job. Jackson (2009: 29) identifies that educational institutions are accused of not producing students who have the soft skills that are required to sustain their industry. Airey (2008: 192) argues that tourism curricula have created much speculation and uncertainty with employers about the different tourism education programmes offered at HEIs, making it difficult for graduates to enter the industry.

Beggs, Ross and Goodwin (2008: 37) affirm that WPL plays a significant role in developing future leaders in tourism, by training students to add value to the workforce, thus bridging the workplace skills and classroom knowledge gap for the workplace. Alluding to mutual benefits, Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 185) and Owusu-Mintah and Kissi (2012: 52) assert that this bridging is important, as employers are aware of what is taught at educational institutions. The authors further add that employers' understanding of the tourism curriculum often promotes employment, as they are able to match the course material with a vacancy.

It is thus imperative that educational institutions ensure their students are equipped with the necessary skills to make them employable. Sattler (2011: 74) explains that students' performance during WPL often impacts on the reputation of the educational institution. For example, should students from a particular educational institution impress the employer during WPL, the employer is more likely to employ graduates from that educational institution in future.

2.6.2 Evaluation of WPL's contribution to academic supervisors

Academic supervisors are the backbone of WPL thus without academic supervisors' participation in facilitating WPL, it will not succeed (Sattler 2011: 78). Academic supervisors benefit by strengthening their partnerships with industry for student recruitment and placement during WPL (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 17).

However, Sattler (2011: 78) detects constraints among educational institutions in finding placements for students. The author outlines challenges to tourism organisations' inability to participate in WPL, as follows:

- financial constraints by the tourism organisation result in an inability to provide a stipend to WPL students;
- limited physical space in the tourism organisation for students to work; and
- the educational institution's poor reputation, as experienced from interaction with previous WPL students.

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 23) argue that academic supervisors are faced with the challenge of ensuring equity between students, where higher academic achieving students are given first preference in their placements. This is as a result of the educational institution not wanting to suffer a poor reputation because of a low-achieving student. Despite being a reasonable argument, the practice limits students' potential, as some are unable to find placements.

Another challenge identified by Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 186), Sattler (2011:77), and CHE (2011: 63) is that academic supervisors are required to invest their time, which is often limited, in placing students, negotiating stipends, insurance and even

transport for visits to a workplace. According to Sattler (2011: 78), there are legal, contractual agreements required during placement of WPL. This agreement between the stakeholders of WPL places financial pressure on both the student and the educational institution in resourcing WPL, such as transport for workplace supervisors to visit tourism organisations.

2.6.3 Evaluation the contribution of WPL to tourism graduates

Literature is awash with examples outside of tourism, of how WPL positively influences a graduate's career choice (Richardson 2009: 387; Kim and Park 2013: 70; Wang *et al.* 2014: 90). Sattler (2011: 64) states that tourism graduates are often uncertain about the career path to follow within the tourism sector. Accordingly, Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 189) identify WPL as beneficial to students, as it encourages an awareness of the tourism industry, enabling students to receive a broad education or obtain a variety of skills, in order to empower them to choose which sector of tourism suits them best for employability.

Additionally, Wang *et al.* (2014: 91) observe that students undertaking WPL change their perceptions concerning the tourism industry, particularly when their expectations are not met. Kim and Park (2013: 72) caution that WPL should reinforce positive perceptions of the tourism industry, so as to lessen negative perceptions that may discourage students from undertaking a career in tourism. Another benefit of WPL, identified by Ferns and Moore (2012: 207), is the students' ability to apply their theory in practice, unlike non-WPL students. Little and Harvey (2006: 12) and Steenkamp (2006: 22) identify that one of the primary reasons for students undertaking WPL at the educational institutions is to evaluate the link between theory and practice.

Hence, studies by Spowart (2011: 176); Owusu-Minthah and Kissi (2012: 523) and Hughes *et al.* (2013: 272) report that WPL enables students to reflect critically on the relevance of theory at the educational institution. Moreover, Busby and Gibson (2010: 11), found in their evaluation that WPL does not only allow students to gain the ability to think critically but also allows them to observe colleagues in the workplace, and thereby develop skills. Through WPL, students may also discover their own strengths and weaknesses (Martin and Hughes 2011: 31), which Owusu-

Mintah and Kissi (2012: 523) conclude, provides them with the opportunity to improve their job-related skills and make informed career choices.

WPL also contributes to a graduate's employment opportunities, over graduates who do not participate in WPL (Bamford 2012: 37; Kim and Park 2013: 70). Jackson (2008: 29) affirms that WPL is advantageous to graduates, as tourism employers prefer to employ graduates with particular skill-sets, while other tourism organisations prefer students to possess both skills and a qualification in tourism.

Another noteworthy benefit of WPL, observed by Sattler (2011: 65), arises where students are, on occasion, given the opportunity of a permanent position with a tourism organisation, after completing WPL. Although WPL increases employment potential, due to students being exposed to the industry, it is not without its criticism. For instance, Owusu-Mintah and Kissi (2012: 523) and Wang *et al.* (2014: 87) note that workplace supervisors tend to exploit students by making them work long hours, not providing a wage or making them do tasks out of their specified roles as a WPL placement. Hence, Bamford (2012: 38) and Sattler (2011: 81) have been critical of the fact that students gain little benefit during their experience to enhance their skills for employability.

In addition, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 27) point out that students face financial constraints that may not be apparent to stakeholders. The authors further discuss the costs that students have to bear, such as additional travel costs that are not taken into account. These researchers found that this may affect students who come from a low socio-economic background and work at organisations during WPL that do not provide a wage (Patrick *et al.* 2008).

Despite the many positive studies (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 25; Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 186; and Bamford 2012: 39) indicating the benefits of WPL, their findings have also indicated that students who perform inappropriate tasks hold negative perceptions, have financial constraints and a lack of support by industry, present challenges to WPL. However, evidence is mixed and circumstantial variables must be considered when evaluating the impact of WPL.

2.6.4 Evaluation of WPL's contribution to employers and tourism organisations

Studies demonstrate that WPL has also proven beneficial to tourism employers and the tourism organisation (Reeve and Gallacher 2005: 220; Zagonari 2009: 4; Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 185). Sattler (2011: 70) affirms that the workplace benefits students, as they are energised and often more committed, offer new ideas, want to prove their worth, and are consequently, more hardworking than other employees.

Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 185) state that employers engage in WPL in order to benefit their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) objectives. In echoing this argument, Reeve and Gallacher (2005: 220) add that although WPL is beneficial for both students and employers, tourism employers find challenges in fulfilling their CSR when WPL does not align with business objectives. In tandem, there is a view by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 25) that organisations put themselves at risk when participating in the WPL programme, as employers regard students as unskilled and inexperienced.

Tourism organisations also benefit from a labour cost perspective; students may well be placed at organisations that do not offer a stipend. Another likelihood is that students who have been 'mentored on the cheap' may find permanent employment, reducing the need for the organisation to employ and train someone new (Sattler 2011: 68; Sattler and Peters 2012: 16; Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 185). For this reason, Zagonari (2009: 4) further points out that larger firms do not recognise the need for training, as there is no assurance that the trained student will remain in the organisation. Furthermore, Zagonari (2009) concludes that small firms cannot afford to train students, resulting in students being unable to find placements to complete WPL.

Sattler and Peters (2012: 30) found that among the greatest challenges of employers in student recruitment, is the student's lack of soft skills. The authors assert that this shortcoming adversely affects employers' time and increases the pressure of supervising students during WPL. Furthermore, students lacked specific skills expected by workplace supervisors during WPL.

According to Sattler (2011: 72), WPL adds value to both the tourism organisation and educational institutions. The author further points out that employer feedback can assist in overcoming differences between a curriculum designed by educational institutions and the needs of the industry. By engaging in WPL, employers have the opportunity to liaise with the academic supervisor on students' lack of skills, thus providing a mechanism to incorporate needed learning areas into the tourism course.

Additionally, another challenge highlighted by Sattler and Peters (2012: 64), is that employers claim a lack of support by educational institutions in the supervision and assessment areas during WPL. The authors assert that there is an information gap, whereby communicating with educational institutions is a challenge, as information and how workplace supervisors are involved in WPL, is often overly documented.

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 27) emphasise the financial constraints students face that may not be apparent to stakeholders. The costs explained in section 2.6.3 that students have to bear are not taken into account; students from a low socio-economic lifestyle and who work at organisations that do not provide a stipend may be affected. Given the many limitations and issues, Bamford (2012: 48) unsurprisingly proclaims that further research of stakeholders' perceptions could contribute to a greater success of WPL at HEIs.

2.7 Stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes of WPL

Perceptions are the way in which individuals view things, based on a situation encountered before (Pickens 2005: 44). However, the author highlights that one's perceptions may be different from reality. Alluding to Pickens' assertion, Hsu (2012: 5) prompts that a good understanding of students' perceptions is important in ensuring employable graduates. A person's awareness of the situation or experience, as explained by Pickens (2005: 54), plays an integral role in the perception process because the situation is highly selective, based on a person's beliefs, attitude and personality.

Within the context of WPL, perceptions are important, because students could shut-off situations related to the workplace and WPL that may cause anxiety. Therefore,

Robinson *et al.* (2015: 10) exhort the importance of understanding among employees of educational institutions and the tourism industry of the impact WPL has on students' perceptions and career goals. In another line of enquiry, Fong, Luk and Law (2014: 71) argue that identifying students' perceptions during WPL cannot necessarily ascertain whether students are satisfied with their WPL; therefore, attitude should also be measured.

Attitude, according to Pickens (2005: 44), comprises three components namely, an effect, a thought and an action. The author outlines that a person's thoughts or point of view on a topic determines specific actions. If WPL students hold a positive attitude in the workplace, better opportunities would arise for students to acquire skills with zeal and enthusiasm, thus enhancing their employability.

2.7.1 Tourism graduates' perceptions and attitude towards WPL

Aggett and Busby (2011: 107) state that tourism graduates are perceived to be employable following WPL placements, as undertaking WPL stimulates their abilities to develop employability skills. Similarly, Beggs *et al.* (2008: 35) found that students perceive placement as full-time employment, believing that WPL acts as a probationary period. The WPL module is perceived by students as a time to demonstrate their skills to tourism employers. Hughes *et al.* (2013: 269) point out that the valuable experience from WPL enhances graduates' career prospects. Brauns (2013: 1) consequently explains that graduates have high expectations that their qualification will enhance their ability to find employment, which influences their perception of their employability.

2.7.1.1 Tourism graduates' perception and attitude skills acquired during WPL

According to Beggs *et al.* (2008: 35) students perceive the period of training in the tourism industry during WPL as invaluable. Prior studies among graduate respondents recognise the value of WPL towards skill acquisition necessary for employability. The top five skills acquired during WPL include self-confidence, achievement orientation, ability and a willingness to learn, organisational awareness and organisational skills (Spowart 2011: 174).

In another study, Tse (2010: 257) affirms that skills, such as communication and interpersonal and language skills, are effectively acquired through WPL, more so than at an educational institution. Beggs *et al.* (2008: 34) add that communication, as well as problem-solving skills, can be further developed through practical experiences and opportunities in the workplace. In a similar study, Jackson (2015: 358) found that while students did not value group-work communication in the classroom, they found value in communication skills gained during group-work during the WPL period.

2.7.1.2 Tourism graduates' perceptions and attitudes of the tourism industry and employers

Although students acquire skills and gain value from WPL (Section 2.7.1.1), Beggs *et al.* (2008: 37), Tse (2010: 252), Wang *et al.* (2014: 87) and Ruhanen *et al.* (2013: 64) argue that students' perceptions of the tourism industry change drastically, either negatively or positively, over time. Beggs *et al.* (2008: 34) discovered differing perceptions among students and workplace supervisors, regarding the skills, role and responsibilities that are given to WPL students.

Negative WPL perceptions are reported by Bamford (2012: 38), revealing that graduates describe their colleagues as 'being lazy, unapproachable, and angry and seldom making time to work with them'. Such experiences affect students' perceptions of the quality of the WPL module and the reputation of the tourism industry (Kim and Park 2013: 75). Similarly, Lexmond and Bradley (2010: 9) affirm that graduates do not share the same perception of WPL as held by workplace supervisors. Consequently, the serious lack of understanding between WPL students and their employers results in students becoming frustrated with employers, resulting in students feeling their tourism curriculum lacks value.

Continuous criticism of employers who provide menial tasks during WPL, with these tasks adding to students' negative perception of the tourism industry, is observed by Chen, Hu, Wang and Chen (2011: 72) and Bamford (2012: 38). Thus, this had led to graduates changing to fields outside of tourism industry vocations. Whilst Brown *et al.* (2014: 65) found that students did not perceive a high stipend at the outset of

WPL, they do have high salary expectations after WPL. The authors advise that graduates should undertake WPL early in their tourism course, so as to shape more realistic perceptions.

In order to address the aim of this study, this section compared, contrasted and sought to present an understanding of various WPL perceptions. The review will benefit the understanding of whether participating in WPL is valuable, from a graduates' employability perspective.

2.7.2 Behavioural impacts of employers' perceptions and attitudes towards WPL

Besides students, McNamara (2013: 185) states that the perceptions and attitudes of both academic and workplace supervisors involved in WPL are to be considered, in order to understand employability of tourism graduates. Tse (2010: 256) establishes that the workplace supervisors' relationship with the student plays a significant role in the WPL experience. These experiences influence perceptions of students concerning the WPL programme. There is therefore, a need to examine tourism employers' perceptions of WPL, along with graduate skills that inform the quality of the WPL module in tourism courses.

2.7.2.1 Employers' perceptions of the skills required for employability

According to Spowart (2011: 25), there is also a lack of research into what students learn, how they learn, and from whom they learn during WPL. Therefore, there is a need to understand the possible relationship between the skill sets students should develop during WPL and the skills developed in the workplace (Martin and McCabe 2007: 30).

An early study by Downey and DeVeau (1988: 20), found that employers argue that students have unrealistic expectations regarding work and are underprepared. Whether employability is based on practical skills sets or academic knowledge is a subject of argument among researchers. More recently, Cooper *et al.* (2010: 4) contend that employers want graduates who possess a wide variety of skills. Martin *et al.* (2010: 25) state that educational institutions do not prepare students for the workplace. Employment relevant skills should be effectively incorporated practically

and academically in every module of the tourism curriculum at the various educational institutions (Ariffin, Raja-Abdullah, Baba and Hashim 2014: 92, Hind 2006: 7), to ensure that graduates are work-ready (Bamford 2012: 34).

Whilst Beggs *et al.* (2008: 34) indicated that employers expect students to develop their problem-solving and communication skills, Busby (2003: 329) argues that during WPL students are not always provided the opportunity to develop problem-solving and communication skills, as the type of situation where this would be relevant, do not occur regularly in the workplace. Furthermore, Busby (2003) adds that employers may perceive students incapable of handling problem-solving related tasks in the workplace.

Spowart (2011: 177) states that employers want graduates to have the ability to work confidently and effectively. A study in the context of hospitality employers' perceptions by Spowart (2011: 176) has identified that a graduate should have the following five essential skills for employment:

- The ability and willingness to learn,
- customer service,
- concern for quality,
- initiative, and
- self-confidence.

2.8 Role of educational institutions and academic supervisors during WPL

There has been an increase in the number of educational institutions offering WPL with tourism courses (Bamford 2012: 45). Ariffin *et al.* (2014: 92) and Kim and Park (2013: 72) are of the opinion that the role of educational institutions and academic supervisors determines the quality of the WPL module. Spowart (2011: 171) establishes that WPL impacts on the educational institution's reputation, once students graduate, as WPL contributes to the quality of the student that educational institution's produce.

Bamford (2012: 46) and Baharun *et al.* (2012: 8790) identify that academic supervisors are responsible for influencing the attitudes of students and play an

important role in their development and training. The role of academic supervisors in WPL shifts, from being a teacher, to a facilitator or a resource for WPL (Baharun *et al.* 2012: 8790). The authors distinguish the following roles for academic supervisors to shape the success of WPL:

- make students aware of the employment opportunities upon graduation,
- develop and maintain partnerships with industry to enable benefits to stakeholders, and
- design a curriculum that meets employers' expectations.

While Kundasami (2007: 20) posits that the academic supervisor facilitates WPL, Sattler (2011: 56) adds that academic supervisors play a limited role in supervision during WPL. The limited role may be explained by Lester and Costley's (2010: 569) contention that WPL does not follow an established academic practice, lacks written examinations and assignments, which makes it less rigorous, as well as easier to administer and participate in. The authors further critique the changing role of the academic supervisor and the educational institution that is required to fulfil employers' skills needs.

Although existing research highlights the necessity to involve academic supervisors for WPL (Wang *et al.* 2014: 93, Sattler 2011: 56, Martin and Hughes 2011: 24), Aggett and Busby (2011: 109) found a decrease in students undertaking work placement at a British University, due to a lack of involvement by academic supervisors in placement and in providing advice to students for WPL. For this reason, it is anticipated that this study will create a better understanding of the relationships between academic roles for employment of tourism WPL students. In conducting research at different educational institutions, academic supervisors' involvement in WPL will be determined.

2.9 Tourism graduate employability

The discussion that follows will assist in gaining insight into the opportunities and gaps that may prevent graduates from being employed; a theme that holds relevance to the second and fourth objective of this study. There is a significant amount of literature that expresses the importance of WPL, which exists as a means of

advancing graduate employability (Hind 2006: 1; Aggett and Busby 2011: 107; Sattler and Peters 2011: 10; Bamford 2012: 43). In addition, Jackson (2015: 358) asserts that skills learnt during WPL could not be better attained in the classroom.

Nonetheless, there is a skill mismatch of the expected skills for employment by the academic and tourism employers that contributes to making education and skills development difficult to address (Cushen 2005: 56; Baharun *et al.* 2012: 8790). Furthermore, developing skills within tourism education is challenging, as Strietska and Tessaring (2005: 9) highlight, with tourism requiring both basic skills (teamwork skills, self-motivation and leadership) and specific skills. Specific skills are those required for a certain job, for example, it has been recognised that students who lack the ability to speak a foreign language will not be an advantage to their tourism organisation.

2.10 The relationship between employment and WPL

Statistics South Africa (2015) shows that the youth unemployment rate in South Africa is 49.9 percent; this is an acute problem (Wardle 2012). Rajab (2013: 3) believes that South African youth lack the necessary skills to become employable. Rajab (2013) explains that the worsening of youth unemployment in South Africa may be explained by the mismatch of skills and knowledge between employers and students. Among the National Treasury's reasons for youth unemployment in South Africa, the following two are particularly relevant to this study:

- Education is not always a reliable indication of capabilities and skill achieved at HEIs as education is not a substitute for skills. It is argued that the poor quality of education feeds poor workplace learning capacity.
- Students who do not have any form of work experience find difficulty in finding employment, as experience is a key factor for employers (National Treasury Report 2011: 36).

These reasons resonate with Bamford's (2012: 51) assertion that it is difficult for graduates to obtain employment in the tourism industry. The National Treasury Report (2011: 5) perceives that employers prefer practical experience over a

qualification, an issue that tourism stakeholders need to address. Martin and McCabe (2007: 32) accordingly assert that tourism students have limited career advancement, without experience-gaining opportunities in the tourism curricula.

WPL is an apparent solution to enhance employability (Aggett and Busby 2010: 106). However, Yorke and Knight (2006: 16) contest that students are not always employable after WPL. In contrast, Rajab (2013: 34) makes an important case for South African educational institutions to focus on two terms - unemployable and unemployed youth. According to the author, understanding the difference between the two can overcome many of the issues concerning employment. Based on Rajab's (2013: 34) arguments, the present study is pertinent in examining the level of employability following tourism WPL. The relevance and applicability of the WPL module determines whether WPL contributes effectively towards tourism graduate employability.

2.11 Learning in the workplace

WPL is pivotal to a student's career choice, as participation provides a realistic experience of the industry (Kim and Park 2013: 72) and imparts competencies to students (Martin and Hughes 2011: 19). Therefore, Cushen (2005: 20) and Keating (2012: 93) identify that the workplace supervisor's involvement in WPL ensures the success of the WPL module. Meyer and Fourie (2004: 88) posit that a workplace supervisor is an experienced person, with the ability to impart wisdom in guiding individuals to progress in their chosen career.

Trigwell, Prosser and Waterhouse (1999, in Keating 2012: 93) agree that, in an environment where the supervisor respects students' freedom to learn and express enthusiasm, students' receive greater inspiration and guidance in their career development. Hence, workplace supervisors shape students' perceptions. In order to address objective two of this study it is important to account for how students engage with work activities and access the support afforded to them by the workplace supervisor.

In this regard, the description by Tse (2010: 252) of two types of learning for WPL in tourism is relevant. Firstly, learning practical skills through customer service, using technology in the workplace and experiencing the organisations' culture. Learning could, secondly, be imparted by the workplace supervisor through student practice and observation during WPL. The opportunity to work in various departments deepens work experiences (Martin and Hughes 2011: 9). However, Harvey *et al.* (2010: 145) caution that the structure of learning experiences is to be guided by the programme's learning outcomes.

2.12 The effectiveness in transfer of skills during WPL

Martin and Hughes (2011: 23) call for further research to understand how skills are applied during WPL and, more specifically, how students learn and from whom they actually learn. Earlier, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 30) state academic supervisors incorrectly presume that workplace supervisors demonstrate the necessary skills to support students during WPL. The study of Henry and Malu (2011: 63) point out that workplace supervisors are challenged in conveying employability skills to students during WPL to accord with learning outcomes outlined by the educational institution. This is a specific issue that will be addressed in objective two of this study.

Consequently, the need arises to formulate strategies that academic and workplace supervisors adopt for the transfer of skills for graduate employability. One such strategy identified by Poell and Van Woerkom (2011: 33) is based on assessment of WPL and may be developed by educational institutions to transfer skills. The authors assert that assessing students effectively during WPL fosters learning, with students consequently having a strong drive to achieve success in the workplace through learning skills that enhance their employability.

A characteristic of effective teaching and learning to foster employability is the choice of teaching methodology (Cleary, Flynn, Thomasson, Alexander, McDonald 2007: 25). Table 2.2 highlights skills along with teaching methodologies. Cleary *et al.* (2007: 25) establish that academic supervisors may adopt this framework for the WPL module, in order to guide learning in the workplace. The skills outlined are to be

adopted as a frame of reference in the present study, for measurement of skills learnt by the responding WPL students.

Table 2.2: Development of employability skills

Employability Skill	Teaching Strategies to enhance/develop skills
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing and presenting written and verbal reports. • Role playing • Working in groups to improve communication.
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team or group projects. • Group discussion.
Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative projects and research using various problem solving tools and techniques. • Involving students in decision-making activities.
Initiative and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming activities for students. • Designing innovative and creative practices and solutions. • Initiating change or designing change processes.
Planning and organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and data collection. • Planning and organizing events. • Time management activities.
Self-management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work plans using log books to record work done. • Time management skills. • Career planning exercises.
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective journals, log books, diaries. • Mentoring and coaching activities. Self-evaluation tools
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICT skills to complete activities. • Industry technology and equipment such as Galileo.

Source: Cleary *et al.* (2007: 25).

Hind (2006: 7) asserts that although these strategies are designed for the classroom, its use encourages commitment and professionalism from students. Committed and professional students can improve WPL activities during WPL, thus enhancing their skills for employability. This is pertinent in achieving the second objective of this study.

2.13 Impediments to the transfer of skills by workplace supervisors

Before reviewing the challenges experienced by stakeholders in the development of skills, Schmeck (2013: 6) identifies that it is important to distinguish between skills and strategies for transferring skills during WPL. The author defines skills as those things one can do, arguing that failure to carry out an activity does not mean a person may lack skills. The author holds that it could mean one may know how to execute a skill but does not want to. For example, within the WPL context, a student may not want to perform a task because of a lack of encouragement by the workplace supervisor or colleagues in assisting students (Keating 2012: 97). On the

contrary, literature argues that some workplace supervisors may feel that students do not have the appropriate communication skills and are therefore, unable to build mutual relationships with those students during WPL (Kim and Park 2013: 76).

Another shortcoming in the transfer of skills for students lies with the workplace supervisor. Vaughan (2014: 3) adds that workplace supervisors maybe underprepared or lack experience to supervise students during WPL. This impacts on students' experience and the transfer of skills during WPL.

Among the primary reasons for workplace supervisors being underprepared is a lack of awareness of their role and responsibility towards students during WPL (Vaughan 2014: 3). As a result, workplace supervisors develop a negative attitude towards WPL, due to the inadequate communication between them and the academic supervisor on students' performance and their duties in facilitating WPL (Kim and Park 2013: 71; Ruhanen *et al.* 2013: 66; Ariffin *et al.* 2014: 93).

A significant challenge identified by Jackson (2015: 359) is that workplace supervisors are not supervising students voluntarily, as they have insufficient time to complete their own work. Also Keating (2012: 35) earlier discerns that organisational culture impacts on a workplace supervisor's supervision during WPL; an organisation may not be supportive of WPL or student supervision, owing to dominant business objectives.

2.14 Reflection for learning during WPL

Even though specific employability skills have been identified and supported by literature, the graduate does not fully possess these skills, as students often lack the awareness to reflect on the skills required to develop themselves (Vaughan 2014: 1). Reflection is a valuable tool for learning through WPL and also forms the main purpose of students engaging in WPL (Harvey *et al.* 2010: 138). Smith *et al.* (2010: 413) assert that when WPL is designed effectively, students will have the ability to reflect on developing skills in their chosen field. Therefore, this section is associated with objective one of this study, and examines the role of reflection as a learning mechanism that transitions students towards their employability. Inui *et al.* (2006: 32)

and Fullagar and Wilson (2012: 3) further elaborate that whilst skills are necessary for industry, reflective graduates can improve common workplace practises in tourism.

Among models of how students reflect during WPL are: The Frameworks for Reflective Practice of Rolfe, Freshwater and Jasper (2001); Johns' (2000) Model for Structured Reflections; and Gibbs' (1998) Reflective Cycle. All of these models point to a specific period of time in which reflection can occur during WPL. These models indicate how students reflect, yet there is no evidence that, by encouraging students to reflect, it will increase action or results in learning of employability skills.

McNamara (2013: 187) and Harvey *et al.* (2012: 1) share the view that there is no right model for reflection and that reflection depends on the aims of the WPL module at the educational institution. The authors add that students' reflection of their experiences can be understood and generalised during and after their experience.

Critical thinking may be advanced by the academic supervisor (Martin and Hughes 2011:24). Cushen (2005: 8) and Reddan (2012: 242) argue that such ability may be advanced by assessments of WPL students, that ensure that students exercise reflection on their work experiences. Embo, Driessen, Valcke, and Van der Vleuten (2015: 61) exhort that although reflective writing promotes reflection, it does not lead to critical thinking.

Reflection appears not to be an easily obtained outcome. For instance, Jackson's (2015: 360) study indicates participants found the concept of reflection on their WPL experience difficult to grasp, which was attributed to the short duration of WPL and the lack of support, opportunity and resources for developing skills. It is evident that the impact of reflection is closely related with assessment of WPL and as will be further discussed in section 2.15.3.3.

2.15 How do stakeholders measure the success of WPL ?

Chen *et al.* (2011: 64) hold that one indicator of success for educational institutions is better prepared graduates for work. Smith and Worsfold (2014: 1072) deduce that given the prevalence of WPL at HEIs, it is important to measure both the outcomes of the WPL modules and evaluation of WPL success. Chen and Shen (2012: 30) however, detect that most educational institutions evaluate the success of WPL on students' satisfaction during WPL. The current study will expand on how different educational institutions' learning outcomes, policies, curriculum and assessment, impact on the success of WPL for tourism graduate employability, in addressing the study's fourth objective.

There are multiple proposals for the measurement of WPL in the literature. Smith and Betts (2000: 601) contend that success depends on the quality of the WPL process of reflection. On the other hand, Gibson *et al.* (2002: 5) maintain that clear articulation of the WPL module between all stakeholders of WPL is a key factor for the success of the WPL programme.

According to Smith and Betts (2000: 600), their research results include collaborative self-interest, transparency and negotiation in the evaluation of WPL modules. To account for the argument, Martin (1997: 78), Yorke and Knight (2006: 14) and Choy and Delahaye (2011: 159) discern that there is no specific successful model for WPL. Bates (2005: 12) explains that WPL has different forms and should be designed to meet the needs of the stakeholders of WPL. In this regard, the measures of success identified below by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 37) will be reviewed to answer the fourth objective of this study.

Measures of WPL success include:

- Implementation of appropriate policies and approaches,
- Development of partnerships and stakeholder approach,
- Development of WPL curriculum and pedagogy, and
- Adequate resourcing.

(Patrick *et al.* 2008: 38)

2.15.1 Measure one: Implementation of appropriate policies and approaches

Jaekel, Hector, Northwood, Benzinger, Salinitri, Johrendt and Watters (2011: 30) observe that WPL policies impact on students' experiences, assessments and learning of employability skills. Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38) found that most educational institutions recognise the benefits of WPL, yet find it difficult to develop a policy that is acceptable to WPL stakeholders. Reasons have been advanced for the difficulty in developing a WPL policy. For example, Smith and Worsfold (2014: 1072) assert that policy guided by evaluation of the skills outcomes alone is insufficient to measure WPL, as WPL relates to stakeholders' satisfaction.

Coll, Eames, Paku, Lay, Ayling, Hodges, Bhat, Fleming and Ferkins (2009: 59) argue that the focus on attaining learning outcomes and commensurate policies leave less concern on how, what and from whom students are learning at the placements. In addition, Jaekel *et al.* (2011: 30) stress the importance of accreditation requirements of the programme and enhanced learning in WPL. The literature suggests a gap in practice that ought to be narrowed. The closing of such a gap may be guided by a National Policy that seeks quality assurance among educational institutions, for the conduct of WIL approaches across all components, for all stakeholders (CHE 2004: 21). The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), is an independent South African statutory body responsible for HE policy matters (Groenewald 2009: 75). The HEQC criteria envisage that all educational institutions will present adequate, policy-driven infrastructure to support WIL approaches, effective communication between stakeholders, monitoring and mentoring, as well as recording of students' progress (CHE 2004: 21).

In exercising its mandate, the CHE (2004: 21) specifies national minimum compliance requirements. In respect of WPL, it is envisaged that:

- Learning contracts are implemented by stakeholders who can assess the outcomes of the learning process. Stakeholders should adhere to the contract or agreement on their roles and responsibilities;
- There is regular and transparent communication between stakeholders involved with WIL;

- A system designed by the educational institution and workplace should regularly record and monitor student progress in the workplace; and
- A mentoring system should be in place for students to recognise their strengths and weaknesses in the workplace and enhance their skills and knowledge during WIL (CHE 2004: 20).

Given the multiplicity of tourism programmes, there are different WPL learning outcomes at educational institutions (Bates 2005: 24). The SA National Policy thus affirms that the outcome of WIL drives the WPL module. The module should define the educational purpose of the tourism programme and establish the learning outcomes.

2.15.2 Measure two: Development of partnerships and stakeholder approach

Choy and Delahaye (2011: 158) advance the significance of partnerships between the stakeholders for tourism graduate employability, as academic supervisors rely on partnerships for quality placement during WPL. A study by Beggs *et al.* (2008: 37), underpinned by the need for partnerships between academic and workplace supervisors, found that the success of WPL is based on suitable placement of students. Effective partnerships will create meaningful linkages and assist with producing employable graduates of the future, a substantial indicator of WPL success (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 36).

Moody (1997 in Patrick *et al.* 2008: 38) and Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 192) explain that benefits should be realised by each stakeholder of WPL, in order for effective collaboration to take place. Collaboration by these stakeholders reinforces long-term relationships for better placements, which in turn, ensure success and value for students participating in WPL (Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 192). It is anticipated that the current study will measure selected educational institutions' impact on partnerships, for the enhancement of tourism graduate employability. This will be done to achieve the fourth objective of his study.

2.15.3 Measure three: WPL curriculum and pedagogy

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 39) highlight the need to measure the success of the WPL learning outcomes for tourism graduate employability. The author additionally specifies measures for the WPL curriculum to include WPL alignment and duration, assessment of WPL, and evaluation and quality.

2.15.3.1 WPL alignment

WPL facilitates learning in areas identified by employers as lacking (Zagonari 2009: 3). Concern is expressed by tourism employers' that educational institutions are not educating students in ways that allow entry into the industry (Bamford 2012: 25). Patrick *et al.* (2008: 28) caution that whilst education should not be driven by industry, employers should provide guidance on learning outcomes but allow flexibility for student learning during WPL. Yorke and Knight (2006: 18) argue that learning outcomes limit students in gaining skills during WPL, as workplace supervisors follow the outcomes designed by educational institutions. Whereas, Hodges *et al.* (2011: 194), expand on this, stating that learning outcomes should be developed by students as they are mainly involved with WPL.

2.15.3.2 Duration of WPL

Smith-Ruig (2014: 77) argues that the duration of WPL contributes to the development of producing employable graduates, by enabling them to learn more about the realities of the workplace. It is the role of the educational institution to determine the duration of WPL (Fidgeon 2010: 713). This author adds that educational institutions face difficulties in assessing the number of hours students should spend in WPL to satisfy stakeholders' needs. Kim and Park (2013: 75) determine that a short duration of WPL results in less interaction between workplace supervisors and students. Moreover, some students learn faster than others, therefore WPL durations need to be on average (Kim and Park 2013: 75). By analysing the duration of WPL, complex conclusions are envisaged.

Unsurprisingly, there are wide variations in the duration of WPL. According to Busby and Gibson (2010: 4), WPL modules range from as little as four weeks to longer than 14 months. Beggs *et al.* (2008: 36) conclude that most students do not agree to work

more than 40 hours a week. Thus, measuring the impact duration has on skills developed during WPL will provide an understanding to objectives one and four of this study.

2.15.3.3 Assessment methods

Among the ways to measure the success of WPL are assessments, as these methods of review encourage reflection on the learning of employability skills. Edström, Törnevik, Engström and Wiklund (2003: 4) maintain that it is the assessment that shapes the curriculum and not the curriculum that shapes the assessment. According to McNamara (2013: 185), there is an ongoing debate on the assessment of WPL modules. The author identifies that, although it is obvious what should be assessed during WPL, the key limitation is how WPL should be assessed to ensure a reflection of skills. Thus, this study seeks to understand how WPL assessment adds value to students' WPL experiences and develops their skills for employability.

2.15.3.3.1 Forms of WPL student assessment

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 42) identify assessment as important in the strategy of a WPL curriculum. There are a variety of assessment methods for WPL used by educational institutions that include presentations, workplace projects, monthly reports, a work experience diary, interviews between the three stakeholders involved in WPL, as well as observation logs and group discussions (Kundasami 2007: 38; Sattler 2011: 59).

Some present-day assessment practices for learning of employability skills have been found to be positive. Smith *et al.* (2010: 413) ascertain that reflective journals assist with reflection on the student's WPL experience. For example, Jackson (2015: 357) reveals that the use of reflective journals for assessment assisted students with teamwork, communication and problem-solving skills. Reddan's (2012: 240) study indicates the effectiveness of assessment in relation to reflection; students agreed that an interview reflection was most appropriate for assessments, whilst a poster presentation was the least valid for assessments.

Richardson, Jackling, Henschke and Tempone (2013: 9) contend that workplace supervisors only assess criteria based on the academic learning outcomes. Additionally, Brodie and Irving (2007: 18) discuss that in the assessment of students' written evidence articulating their capability, their ability to write could influence the outcome. Susilawati and Peach (2012: 2) proclaim that students are often required to produce evidence to support their WPL experience. However, Koc *et al.* (2014: 137) find that students frequently submit fake work experience diaries because student numbers are high and supervisors are unable to verify this, contributing to reliability issues in assessing WPL.

Assessment it seems, should be aligned with WPL experiences for the WPL module itself to be successful (McNamara 2013: 188). Consequently, Yorke and Knight (2006: 21) observe that curriculum planners are challenged by needing to integrate competencies for employment into curricula. In order to integrate competencies, Kundasami (2007: 39) suggests effective assessment and teaching strategies to ensure graduates have the necessary competencies to enter the industry.

2.15.3.3.2 WPL philosophy of student assessment methodology

Significant issues associated with the assessment of WPL and its measurement of success are raised in the literature. Richardson *et al.* (2013: 9) explain that the challenges in assessment seem to lie in a lack of understanding of the nature of WPL. The difficulty in assessing WPL is argued by Manwa *et al.* (2011: 22) stating that assessments from each educational institution vary and may not be a true reflection of the student's competencies, as each student performs and learns different competencies during WPL. Smith and Betts (2000: 601) contest that WPL success does not depend on students' satisfaction of experience but on the quality of the process of reflection.

Whilst, Brodie and Irving (2007: 17) question the appropriateness of the stakeholder taking on the assessment of students WPL. Sattler (2011:61) maintains that the final assessment should be determined by the educational institution, based on student reflection, summative work and employer evaluation. On the other hand, Kundasami (2007: 38) indicates that academic and workplace supervisors generally seem to

dictate the final assessment for WPL, thus limiting the student's opinion in assessment procedures, which could add value. Nevertheless, McNamara (2013: 188) argues that employers are the only source of data to evaluate students during WPL and therefore they should determine the assessment method, suggesting an employer-based philosophy to assessment.

In this line of enquiry, Kundasami (2007: 5) argues that it is workplace supervisors who should assess WPL, as academic supervisors do not visit their students' placements regularly. Nonetheless, in some instances academics assess the success of WPL. Sharing of student WPL assessment between academic and workplace supervisor represents the integration of academically specified learning outcomes and professional development (Richardson *et al* 2013: 30).

Lester and Costley (2010: 560) report that WPL does not follow traditional academic practises, such as a written examination, and the academic supervisor performs the role of the facilitator of WPL. Therefore, students' assessments should be assessed by the workplace supervisor. The identification of who should assess WPL is one of the focal points of this study, which is to examine the quality of learning experiences towards a tourism graduate's employability.

2.15.3.4 Evaluating the WPL module through feedback

One way in which evaluation of WPL modules is achieved, is through feedback (Harvey *et al.* 2010: 140, Robertson 2008: 6). Patrick *et al.* (2008: 42) proclaim that feedback is an important measure of WPL modules, for curriculum improvement and development of employability skills. Peach, Ruinard and Webb (2014: 243) further add that feedback enables students to critique and develop their skills, whilst facilitating transition to the workplace.

Harvey *et al.* (2010: 140) proclaim that feedback is necessary to move from 'better thinking' to 'better action' and is key for critical reflection. Smith and Worsfold (2014:1092) assert that feedback is an influential communication tool that when used correctly, can enhance students' reflection on learning and consequently their employability. Jackson (2015: 350) adds that WPL provides an opportunity for

students to reflect critically on the tourism industry. The significance of feedback makes it necessary for the current study to build on how feedback is reviewed between stakeholders to advance graduates employability skills.

Both formal and informal WPL feedback, according to Patrick *et al.* (2008: 42), Martin *et al.* (2010: 34) and Peach *et al.* (2014: 247) is delivered through different stages of WPL and can be encountered pre- (in preparation of placements for WPL) or post-WPL or during supervision of WPL. Formal feedback comprises evaluation forms, interviews and surveys, whereas informal feedback is indirect guidance from the academic and workplace supervisors to students. Hence, assessment methods that incorporate feedback are favoured (Vaughan 2014: 3).

Richardson *et al.* (2013: 9) establish that benefits to be derived from feedback are not always guaranteed. For instance, Sattler (2011: 60) contests that the valuable feedback provided by students on their WPL experience may not always be passed on or reviewed by employers. While feedback is usually positive, or should be (Pepper 1996: 56), negative feedback is known to hamper learning when not managed correctly by the workplace and academic supervisor (McNamara 2013: 190).

Similarly, inappropriate delivery of feedback results in students having a negative perception of academic and workplace supervisors, the WPL module and the tourism industry (Baker, Perreault, Reid and Blanchard 2013: 261). To eliminate issues of negative perceptions, educational institutions adopt a formative feedback approach to WPL, which allows workplace supervisors to maintain their role as a supervisor, without formally assessing WPL (Richardson 2013: 31). The author explains that in this way, students acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses, without their weaknesses impacting their WPL results.

There has been considerable debate about whether workplace supervisor feedback should be included as a part of formal results, due to it not being assessed in the same manner as an academic supervisor (Richardson *et al.* 2013: 31). Peach *et al.* (2014: 241) contend that the complexity of feedback lies in integrating the different

perspectives of the academic and workplace supervisor from the different work settings. This study will examine how feedback is delivered between stakeholders and how educational institutions integrate evaluations of WPL to improve graduate employability.

2.15.4 Measure four: Resourcing of WPL

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 50) acknowledge that adequate resourcing of WPL contributes to a successful WPL module. Martin *et al.* (2010: 35) state that adequate resourcing translates to policies being effectively implemented to ensure the WPL module is sustained and improved, in order to enhance a graduate's employability. Peach *et al.* (2014: 242) observe that the availability of resources impacts on WPL feedback, while any lack of feedback impacts negatively on resources to manage feedback between stakeholders.

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 50) include physical resources, such as transportation, to advance ongoing and regular interaction between the student, academic and workplace supervisors during work placement, along with physical space and technology, for student development and skills enhancement in the workplace. In addition, Martin *et al.* (2010: 27) point to a time-consuming process for academic supervisors to network with professionals in the field, requiring administration for placement, assessment and feedback procedures. Resourcing becomes more challenging as the number of students increases and the adoption of WPL as a part of their tourism programme by more educational institutions (Smith and Worsfold 2014: 1072).

2.16 Conclusion

The chapter explained the various types of WPL modalities that exist, as well as the theoretical links between emerging perceptions of students in the industry. Literature shows that students with WPL have high expectations of employment while undertaking WPL. This offered valuable insights into the perceptions of the stakeholders.

This chapter also examined literature on the perceived benefits of WPL to its stakeholders. Some of the reported benefits of WPL include post placement employment and increased partnerships between academic and workplace supervisors, which strengthens employment opportunities for graduates. On the other hand, WPL presents challenges to stakeholders that threaten the quality of the WPL programme. The reviewed literature reveals that there are discrepancies between stakeholders on the perceived duration, assessment and workplace supervision of WPL. As an educational strategy, WPL has gained significant importance in the tourism industry and students' employability. Therefore, the WPL module should become more meaningful at HEIs, rather than merely fulfilling the requirements of graduation. WPL should set a solid foundation for the student to gain entry into the tourism industry.

The next chapter focuses on the research methodology, with descriptions of the methods and techniques that will be used for the gathering of the appropriate data. This section will substantiate reasoning for methods and techniques selected.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two provided an insight into the theory underpinning the impact of WPL on tourism graduates' employability. Chapter Three will discuss the methodology selected in the primary study towards reaching the aims and objectives of the study. In doing so, the chapter will explain the methods and techniques used in the collection of data for the study.

The primary research will be explained in this chapter. The study adopted quantitative methods, through the use of surveys, to gain information from the three stakeholders groups. The study also adopted a qualitative research design, by way of structured interviews of academic supervisors, to gain in-depth information. The chapter will conclude with the reliability and validity of the applied research methodology, as well as applicable ethical measures.

3.2 Research design

Following Adams and Lawrence (2014: 104), the type of research design used to study the four educational institutions is classified as descriptive. As this study is descriptive it allows for the collection of accurate data and provides a clear picture of the phenomenon to be studied (Kuada 2012: 45; Mouton and Marais 1988: 44). This involved observations of the WPL modules in practice, in order to understand how tourism graduate employability is affected.

The methods of research for the research design are often categorised as qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods (Kumar 2014). Kumar explains that the core difference between the approaches is the flexibility it provides to the researcher in the research process.

The first approach of research is quantitative. Kumar (2014) state that quantitative research is represented by numerical data and is pre-determined. Primary data for quantitative research can be obtained through questionnaires that are self-

administered, postal, web-based and telephone surveys; it is often associated with large-scale research (Kuada 2012: 105).

The second approach of research is qualitative. According to Saunders *et al.* (2009: 480) qualitative research focuses on the interpretation of words rather than numbers. Qualitative data often focus on smaller numbers of people than quantitative data, yet the data tend to be detailed and rich (Kuada 2012: 94). Techniques used to obtain qualitative data are focus groups, observations and qualitative interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 432).

The third approach is mixed methods, which can include multiple methods belonging to one or both of the research paradigms, or more than one method from the research paradigm (Kuada 2012: 119). As the appropriate strategy of inquiry for this study is mixed methodological approach, the study employed techniques from quantitative and qualitative approaches with concurrent triangulation of data. The study benefitted from an observation by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 22) that a mixed methodological approach strengthens inferences for the study and the use of both a positivist and anti-positivist approach is necessary to uncover perspectives that may increase accuracy of data.

The purpose of concurrent mixed methods is to better understand a research problem by converging both quantitative and qualitative data and analysis for interpretation (Creswell and Clark 2007: 64; Hesse-Biber 2010: 4). Questionnaires for workplace supervisors and tourism graduates were used in order to assess the behaviour and attitudes of stakeholders (George 2008: 108). In parallel with this process, following Saunders *et al.* (2009: 480), the effectiveness of WPL for tourism employability was explored by conducting interviews with academic supervisors, to gain in-depth opinions of practice at the selected educational institutions.

3.3 Study Area

This study was located at four educational institutions within Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN). In addition to being geographically convenient to the researcher, this province is deemed suitable for this study as it is rapidly becoming a sought after tourist destination (Statistics South Africa 2015). Hence, many students are showing an

interest in tourism courses and with an increase in tourism graduates entering the market, employment opportunities need to increase (Fidgeon 2010: 723). Consequently, WPL, as a mechanism implemented by educational institutions in KZN to benefit tourism graduate employability, will be the focus of this study.

Initially, it was thought that a sample frame of three, consenting, educational institutions would be appropriate for this study. However, due to the slow response rate from educational institutions, the researcher successfully obtained permission to include another educational institution into the sample frame. There are three private higher educational institutions and one University of Technology (UOT) used in this study.

All four of the selected educational institutions withheld permission for the researcher to mention them by name. Therefore, the researcher has coded the educational institutions into: educational institution 1 (UOT), educational institution 2, educational institution 3 and educational institution 4. Each of these educational institutions was selected based on their integration of WPL into curricula sourced from the Department of Higher Education and Training (Register of Higher Education Institutions 2015: 10) and their accessibility to the researcher.

Table 3.1 summarises the methodology used for recruitment of the three stakeholder populations from each of the four educational institutions that were in the sample frame:

Table 3.1: Summary of methodological choices for the study (by researcher)

Target population	Instrument design	Population size	Sample technique	Sample size	Instrument distribution
Academic supervisors	Questionnaire; of both open and closed questions. Structured interview.	Academic supervisor from each educational institution – size: 4.	Census	4	Self-administered survey during interview. Face to face interview
Tourism graduates from 2011-2014.	For tourism graduates and workplace supervisors: Questionnaire; open and closed questions.	Educational institution 1: 120 (Obtained from Integrated tertiary system software – ITS).	Stratified	92	Self-administered - web based survey via Google docs and administered by Academic supervisor.
		Educational Institution 2 (2013-2014): 25 (Obtained from Integrated campus administration system – ICAS).	Stratified for graduates. Purposive sampling for 2014 graduates.	24	Self-administered-web based survey via Google docs. Purposive sampling during class at educational institution.
		Educational institution 3: 67 (Obtained from System for Academic management – SAM).	Stratified sampling.	59	Administered by Academic supervisor – web based survey.
		Educational institution 4: 50 (Obtained from ICAS).	Stratified, Purposive sampling for 2014 graduates. Snowball sampling for 2011 graduates.	44	Self-administered-web based survey via Google docs.
		Educational institution 1: 40	Census and stratified according to each educational institution	40	Self-administered-web based survey via Google docs.
Workplace supervisors'		Educational institution 2: 10		10	
		Educational institution 4: 10		10	
		Educational institution 3: 10		10	Administered by Academic supervisor-web based survey.

3.3.1 Population one: tourism graduates from 2011-2014

The researcher surmised that the participation of tourism graduates in this research would contribute to the data on tourism graduate employability. As a key informant group, Higher Education (HE) tourism graduates' responses would elicit their perspective on WPL and thereby, offer a greater understanding of the issues relating to employment in tourism. All third year tourism graduates from 2011-2014 were chosen to deduce a valid conclusion over the three-year period.

3.3.2 Population two: workplace supervisors

Workplace supervisors are from tourism organisations who have had students for WPL in the past from the four educational institutions. They were selected to participate, as this study involved their perceptions on the transferability of WPL skills to the workplace. The survey instrument was addressed to the person involved with the WPL, identified by the academic supervisor from the educational institution. These workplace supervisors were deemed relevant and able to furnish valid answers in the survey. Thus, suitability was based on the position they held in the tourism organisation.

3.3.3 Population three: academic supervisors from the four educational institutions

This group of respondents were deemed suitably qualified in tourism studies and experienced in the WPL programmes of the educational institutions of the surveyed tourism graduates. Moreover, they are well positioned to access information from other institutional representatives.

3.4 Sampling technique

A sample is a selection from the entire population from the study (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2006: 57). There are two types of sampling techniques namely, non-probability and probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on each unit of analysis of the population being studied and enables the researcher to make generalisations (Welman *et al.* 2006: 56). On the other hand, the use of non-probability sampling was advantageous to this research, since the research

objectives of this study did not require generalisations in terms of characteristics of the population but rather perceptions of WPL from stakeholders (Mouton 2001: 153).

This research used non-probability sampling techniques comprising of snowball, quota and purposive sampling techniques. Non-probability sampling selects units of analysis for a sample, where the researcher understands it does not make up the population but simply represents itself (Sekaran and Bougie 2010: 275). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 113), non-probability sampling is used for small-scale research where it is less complicated to set up and is inexpensive in determining whether a problem or issue exists.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005: 208) define bias as any influence or condition that may distort data and unfortunately, all communication research has some error. In descriptive studies the presence of bias is an issue in research, with the researcher selecting the sample for the study (Murphy 2006; Penwarden 2015). Therefore, in reducing bias the use of non-probability sampling techniques allows the researcher to be unbiased in selecting the sampling.

It is maintained by Van Selm and Jankowaski (2006: 441) that non-probability sampling is best suited for web-based surveys, as adopted in this study. The authors point out that the use of the internet cannot guarantee a random sample of participants. There are a number of known limitations, such as: duplication of an email address; malfunctioning email addresses that are not found or do not appear on the user's screen; the absence of an e-mail address provided to the researcher; and 'bouncing' mails that are no longer current. Therefore, web-based surveys favour a non-probability approach.

3.4.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling enables the researcher to make a judgement on the units being studied. The selected units of analysis must best answer the research questions (Babbie 2013: 200). Therefore, as described in section 3.3 the mentioned stakeholder groups met the eligibility criteria for this study.

3.4.2 Quota sampling

Quota sampling is deemed suitable for this study since comparisons amongst variables of interest, such as educational institutions and workplace supervisors, can be drawn to infer conclusions. As with stratified sampling, where the sample is stratified or grouped for example, into educational institution 1 versus educational institution 2, quota sampling is aimed at the same technique. However, it differs in that it is non-random and represents the entire population being studied (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 235). Quota sampling divided the population into strata within each educational institution.

3.4.3 Snowball sampling

As academic supervisor D did not have access to graduates' e-mail addresses, snowball sampling was used to acquire them. Rather than abandoning the study, the use of this non-probability sampling technique provided an opportunity, as observed by Rubin and Babbie (2009: 149), with an alternative in collecting responses. More importantly, snowball sampling was used to fit within the researcher's time frame, accounted for not knowing the sample at the educational institution and thus provided a solution in locating graduates for participation. Wardle's (2012: 3) study warns that snowball sampling yields a low average of a 26 percent response rate. Therefore, the researcher obtained graduates' contact details from academic supervisors and telephonically encouraged graduate participation.

3.5 Sample selection

An appropriate sample size is of vital importance for its association with the level of confidence in data obtained; the larger the sample, the smaller the margin of error and greater the precision (Sekaran and Bougie 2010: 261). According to the authors, the sample size also ensures that sufficient data is available to reach a conclusion for the empirical study. It is feasible to undertake a census where the population is small so that all views are represented. Census sampling was adopted for the academic and workplace supervisors.

Table 3.1 indicates the sample size for each unit of analysis. Graduates' contact details were provided to the researcher by the academic supervisors, from the

educational institution's database. The total population size for the graduates was 262. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 104), a sample size of 151 respondents is appropriate for the study's research objectives.

3.6 Selection of measuring instrument: Graduates and workplace supervisors

The first step in the data collection process is selection of the instrument that would be appropriate in responding to the research objectives. According to Saunders *et al.* a common method of obtaining quantitative data that is valid and reliable, is by the use of surveys (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 144). However, Mouton (2001: 153) argues that one of the main sources of errors affecting a study's reliability and validity occurs through the use of questionnaires, data capturing, sampling and a high non-response rate.

Observation studies have a low level of researcher control, whilst using questionnaires presents a medium level of control, meaning that the responses can be manipulated to some extent through the use of certain questions, to reflect minimal bias. Adopting surveys is beneficial to collect responses from a fairly large sample, where each person is asked to respond to the same set of questionnaires, allowing for easier data analysis.

Among the reasons for adopting a survey is the basis provided for extrapolation where similarities and differences in perceptions can be identified across subsets of the sample (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 144). Although, obtaining comparable data can also be achieved through the use of structured interviews and observation studies, the researcher chose surveys due to the lower cost over conducting structured interviews (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 234). Moreover, the graduates being studied had already completed WPL. Therefore, an observational study is deemed inappropriate for the objectives of this research.

Workplace supervisors and graduates completed a questionnaire (Appendix B; Appendix C). The researcher had to select from the various types of questionnaires suggested by Welman *et al.* (2006: 160-165), to ascertain the most applicable for the collection process. Postal or telephonic questionnaires could not be used for two

reasons. Firstly, both telephonic and postal surveys did not fit the time and budget constraints of the research. Secondly, the researcher did not have access to graduates and workplace supervisors' postal addresses to post the questionnaire. Moreover, according to Kuada (2012: 110) postal surveys are less appropriate for research as the response rate is low. Kuada further adds that this is because respondents are not interested in the research when administered via post.

3.7 Selection of measuring instrument for academic supervisors

Face-to-face interviews (Appendix E) were conducted with each of the four academic supervisors per educational institution to derive data on their WPL curricula. Interviews were suitable as the population was smaller, compared to the workplace and academic supervisors. A structured interview for the academic supervisors was the most appropriate selection, as Saunders *et al.* (2009: 365) affirm that the response rate is high based on prior appointments made with the interviewee.

Another advantage of interviews is flexibility (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 218). However, one of the disadvantages of interviews is the lack of anonymity (Phellas, Bloch and Seale 2011: 185). This drawback was alleviated by way of a consent letter providing an assurance of anonymity before conducting the interview. Additionally, codes were assigned to ensure the anonymity of participants.

3.8 Increasing response rate for questionnaires

Phellas *et al.* (2011: 184) identify that the use of web-based surveys is limited by its low response rate. In order to increase the response rate, the researcher included an incentive to promote graduate participation. The incentive was placed at the end of the questionnaire to avoid biased data. As there was no obligation for graduates to participate in this study, the incentive did not influence responses nor did it introduce bias.

Web page style and layout was important to attract attention, as was the purpose of the study explained in a covering letter. Follow-up emails were sent every two weeks to those who did not reply. The reminder thanked early participants and reminded potential participants to complete the questionnaire. Four reminder emails were sent

because the researcher experienced a low response rate in the first month of conducting the survey. Additionally, telephonic calls were made to the graduates and workplace supervisors who had not completed questionnaires.

In a further attempt to eliminate non-responses, the researcher asked the academic supervisors to send out the questionnaire on her behalf. This ensured that participants perceived the questionnaire as important, thus increasing the response rate. Taking into account the preceding discussion on the elements for the sample size, 161 responses were collected for this study, which was deemed reasonable.

3.9 Planning the empirical research

This section reflects on the decision to use the most appropriate design and layout of instruments mentioned previously. These include questionnaire design, classification and layout of questions, pre-testing, and the refinement of the instrument used.

3.9.1 Questionnaire design for quantitative research

Objectives 1, 2 and 3 (Chapter One) could only be addressed by quantitative data; therefore, structured questionnaires were adopted. The questionnaire was developed based on the variables raised in the literature review, per the alignment of each with the objectives of the study. The items in the questionnaire were drawn from Cushen (2005: 128), Martin and McCabe (2007: 40); Kundasami (2007: 127) and Fleming (2009: 200). However, this questionnaire is still unique as it is context specific to four South African educational institutions and its local stakeholders.

3.9.1.1 Classification of questions

The layout of the measuring instrument used templates of type fonts, colours and page layout, provided by Google Docs. The distribution of open and closed-ended questions for the graduates and workplace supervisors' questionnaires is illustrated in tabular form (Table 3.2). Furthermore, each question was directed to obtaining answers in response to variables in the study objectives.

A closed-ended question limits the respondents' choice in the survey. It requires minimal typing and is faster and easier to answer, due to the answers being pre-determined and an option of 'other' is available (Colorado State University 2012).

Using closed-ended questions also facilitates the collection and analysis of data (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 375).

Mouton (2001: 153) recognises that when rich data is sought for a research study, surveys are not suitable, as it leads to criticisms of “surface level” responses being gauged. To overcome surface level analysis, the application of some open ended questions can be adopted in the questionnaires. Open-ended questions may provide reasoning for certain issues that cannot be explained by the closed ended questions (Mouton 2001: 153).

Therefore, the researcher can refer to the open-ended responses to validate the research study (Hesse-Biber 2010: 3). This study adopted open-ended questions to gain data for a more in-depth analysis of the research topic. Previous studies lack the use of open-ended questions (Cushen 2005: 128; Kundasami 2007: 127; Fleming 2009: 200; Martin *et al.* 2010: 40). These questions allowed graduates and workplace supervisors to express themselves freely, without being biased and affecting their assessment of WPL.

Table 3.2: Question distribution

Stakeholders questionnaire	Number of open- ended questions	Number of closed-ended questions
Academic supervisors	14	5
Workplace supervisors	3	20
Tourism graduates	8	13

There are six types of closed-ended questions as explained by Welman *et al.* (2006: 156) namely, category, list, ranking, quantity, grid and rating, which were adopted in the questionnaire design. Ratio scales were used in the design to measure the gender, age, work status and the duration of stakeholders being active in the industry. An added benefit of selecting questionnaires and using rating scales is that bias is minimised, with all participants given the same questionnaire to complete, thus eliminating the possibility of misinterpreting the results (Mouton 2001: 153).

According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 328), using a rating scale is useful for gaining attitudes, perceptions and opinions. Therefore, Section B of the questionnaire contains a five-point Likert scale to collect data (Appendix B). In the Likert scale the respondent was requested to indicate how strongly they agree with the statements on the respondent's attitude and response towards WPL on tourism employability by stakeholders. The respondents were also requested to indicate whether the skills are perceived on a range from important to unimportant.

3.9.1.2 The layout of the questionnaire

The final graduates' questionnaire (Appendix B) consists of five sections for tourism graduates that completed WPL. Section A asked for respondents' demographic details, Section B measured graduates' perceptions of and involvement in WPL, Section C required the rating of 14 skill items acquired during WPL, Section D asked questions on graduates' employability during WPL and Section E enquired after the duration and assessment of WPL.

The workplace supervisors' questionnaire (Appendix C) comprised of five sections, alphabetically labelled A to E. These are designed as follows:

- Section A includes the demographic details of workplace supervisors.
- Section B requires the rating of 13 variables on involvement of workplace supervisors in WPL and the importance of 14 skills for employment.
- Section C enquires about the employability of students having undergone WPL.
- Section D focuses on workplace supervisors' practices.
- Section E addresses the perceived assessment and duration of WPL.

The academic supervisors also completed the questionnaire in Appendix C. These included three sections consisting of their demographic details, rating of 14 skills important for employment and questions relevant to the duration and assessment of WPL.

3.9.1.3 Pre – testing and refinement of instruments

Saunders *et al.* (2009: 355) proclaim that formulating a questionnaire is challenging, as it is unlikely that the researcher will have more than one opportunity to collect data. Therefore, the aim of the pre-test or pilot test was to refine the questionnaire, thus eliminating problems in responses to the questionnaire and in accessing the web-based survey link.

The respondents for the pilot study of questionnaires comprised of:

- Ten third-year hospitality students from Durban University of Technology (DUT);
- and ten workplace supervisors from Blue Skai, an international tourism organisation.
- The interview questions were piloted with two academic supervisors from the Department of Maritime Studies at DUT.

Consistent with Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 159), the pilot test ensured that the questionnaire was unambiguous and would achieve the purposes of the research. Adaptations in wording, clarity in ambiguous questions and minor editing were conducted on the questionnaire. Moreover, the time it took the pilot study participants in completing the survey was identified to ensure it was adequate for respondents.

In respect of the piloted interview, feedback was provided to the researcher on the duration. In addition, the researcher found that although ambiguity in questions existed it provided reliable results, as the responses were the same. The exercise also assisted in identifying which questions respondents felt uneasy answering. Minor adjustments were made to the original questions.

3.9.2 Administration of instruments to stakeholders

Self-administered questionnaires are found by Roney and Oztin (2007: 6), Keating (2012: 96) and Wardle (2012: 2) to be useful in accessing confidential information from a large number of participants and in gaining insights on perceptions. Therefore,

based on such prior success, web-based questionnaire surveys were used to gather data from graduates and workplace supervisors.

Phellas *et al.* (2011: 184) identifies that one of the greatest advantages of using web-based surveys is its versatile nature in reaching a larger population within a limited time frame. In addition, a web-based survey was chosen as it was the most efficient way of collecting responses from students who graduated from WPL and are no longer at the educational institutions. Furthermore, this survey method is deemed suitable as it ensures the confidentiality of graduates' opinions, thus enhancing reliability as respondents remain anonymous (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 158).

Timing of administration, according to Creswell and Clark (2007: 54), for mixed method instruments must receive careful consideration. Unlike other methodological designs, using a mixed method approach requires a researcher to decide on whether data will be collected concurrently or sequentially from the stakeholders. For this study, the data was collected concurrently.

Creswell and Clark (2007: 54) describe concurrent timing as both qualitative and quantitative data being collected and analysed in a single phase of the research study. This study accordingly collected, analysed and interpreted data from the stakeholders at the same time. The rationale for collecting the data concurrently was to eliminate bias, especially when face-to-face interviews were conducted.

After identifying the timing of the instrument's administration, the next step was to decide on the type of communication medium to be used in collecting data. A web-based and self-administered survey was used (Table 3.1). The survey was designed using Google Docs, which is part of the Google Drive package. Google Docs enables users to compile surveys and send them via e-mail (Holzner and Holzner 2009: 1).

The researcher approached the four educational institutions for permission to conduct the study, with an introductory meeting with each gatekeeper, followed by sending each a study proposal. Arising from the different levels of approval by gatekeepers to conduct research at each of the educational institutions, the

questionnaire administration to graduates of the educational institutions was not the same. The administration practices used in each educational institution are discussed in the ensuing section.

3.9.2.1 Questionnaire administration to graduates of educational institution 1 and 4

Data collection was conducted from 17 September 2014 to 30 October 2014 from graduates at educational institution 1 and 4. Graduates' email addresses were obtained by the academic supervisors and through snowball sampling of graduates, respectively. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 158), one of the greatest advantages of web-based questionnaires is the elimination of bias in research, since the researcher does not affect the responses, as they are not physically present at the time of completion.

The invitation to respond to the questionnaire was an introduction by the researcher about the topic, followed by a link to the questionnaire. Two weeks after the questionnaire was sent out, there was still a low response rate, especially from educational institution 1.

Web-based surveys are susceptible to low response rates (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 158). Among reasons for the low rate justified by Van Selin and Jankowski (2006: 447) is that the invitation to the questionnaire is being filtered to the participants' junk mail box or that their inbox is full and potentially will not open. Additionally, technological issues and Internet security may hamper access. Although the researcher had limited control over the technological issues, the pilot study successfully tested that respondents had access to the link. Graduates that were interested in participating in the study were requested to contact the researcher if any technological challenges were experienced.

To overcome the issue of internet security identified by Van Selin and Jankowski (2006: 447) the researcher approached academic supervisor A from educational institution 1, who then assisted by sending out the questionnaire on her behalf. The outcome of this request proved beneficial as graduates' responses increased, due to a recognised individual having sent the survey link from the educational institution.

3.9.2.2 Questionnaire administration to graduates and students of educational institution 2 and 4

In an effort to increase the graduate response rate at educational institution 2 and the 2014 student cohort at educational institution 4, the researcher issued the self-administered questionnaire during their class time from 22 until 24 October 2014. The researcher's direct involvement is useful in assisting with any queries students may have and ensures that all questions were completed (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 344). This type of administration was used only at educational institution 2 and 4 because the 2014 students had already completed their WPL, whereas the 2014 students at educational institution 1 were undertaking WPL in the tourism industry and were away from the educational institution for six months.

The limitation with this type of administration is that some students were absent during the researcher's visit. Therefore, to ensure that all students participated, the researcher left the questionnaire and provided instructions to the lecturer to give to absent students to complete. Students who were willing to participate were introduced to the study and completed the questionnaire.

A disadvantage with having the researcher present is that the participants may feel uncomfortable about completing the questionnaire and may want to have extra time to do so (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 344). To overcome these issues, the researcher followed ethical requirements by providing students the opportunity to participate voluntarily, after being given a non-threatening introduction. However, the researcher could not allow the participants to complete the questionnaire in their own time, as there would be a knock-on delay in collecting responses from the educational institutions, potentially leading to delays in the study and additional costs occurred to the researcher, such as transport. At the end of the year, the researcher checked that students who completed the questionnaire had graduated, thus making their responses applicable to the present study.

3.9.2.3 Questionnaire administration to graduates of educational institution 3

The researcher was not granted access to graduates' e-mail addresses from educational institution 3. Therefore, the researcher arranged with academic supervisor C to receive the online questionnaire link with the introductory letter. All graduates have an email account on the educational institution's database. A follow-up was done to ensure that the academic supervisor C sent out the questionnaire.

3.10 Interviews with staff

Consistent with Steenkamp's (2006: 38) study, interview questions contributed 70 percent to the research undertaken for this study; thus increasing the instrument item's reliability. Modifications were made to the interview in order to suit the requirements of this study area. Items on the face-to-face interviews (Appendix E) comprised 27 questions, based on the nine themes that aligned to the variables in the study objectives.

The themes comprise questions on:

- The process of WPL at the educational institution,
- relevance of WPL for the academic supervisor and educational institution involved,
- eligibility of tourism organisations for students during WPL,
- feedback to stakeholders during WPL,
- employment of students after WPL,
- supervision practices of WPL by academic supervisors,
- the appropriateness of the duration of WPL,
- assessment of WPL, and
- resources required for implementation of WPL at the educational institution.

3.10.1 Administration of interviews

Personal interviews were conducted at interviewee workplaces from October until November 2014. The interviews (Table 3.3) were arranged to suit the availability and work schedules of the academic supervisors. The interview setting was consistent with Cohen, Manion and Morrison's (2011: 361) advice that interviews should be conducted in a quiet setting without interruptions.

Table 3.3: Schedule of academic supervisor interviews

Academic supervisor	Date	Time	Venue
A	06 November 2014	12h00	Office
B	28 October 2014	13h00	Office
C	26 November 2014	11h40	Office
D	08 October 2014	13h10	Office

Prior to the commencement of the interview, each academic supervisor received a letter of information introducing the study, an informed consent form and a questionnaire. The preparation and facilitation of interviews adopted guidelines by Welman *et al.* (2006: 165). Participants were reminded of their rights to anonymity when undertaking the interview. In every interview, the researcher read the questions aloud and the answers were immediately captured from each of the academic supervisors. Academic supervisor A, B and C declined to have the interview recorded. The interview with academic supervisor D was audio recorded and the full duration was transcribed into notes. The duration of interviews was between 25-30 minutes.

3.11 Data analysis

Data analysis is vital to an empirical study for its determination of the instrumentation to be used, thus impacting on the layout of research items and the statistical analysis (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 86). For this study, preparing and inputting data, handling blank data and analysing the data will be discussed in the next section.

3.11.1 Preparing and inputting data

Following the capturing of data, the output file was automatically generated into Excel spread sheets from Google Documents. Thereafter, the data was analysed by the researcher using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 22.0) for statistical analysis. In the exploratory stage of the analysis, the use of descriptive techniques was applied for the three sets of questionnaires. Descriptive statistical tools used to report findings include graphic presentation of bar graphs, pie charts and cross-tabulations. This enables comparisons to be made effectively (Raulin and Graziano 2004: 105). The statistical measures in this study consisted of central

tendency and dispersion, frequency analysis, cross-tabulations and chi-square analysis.

For the qualitative data, the audiotape was transcribed verbatim and photocopies of the transcripts were used for analysis. Thereafter, pattern and revising codes on themes and content were used to ensure that more information that is meaningful was identified (Welman *et al.* 2006: 214). The analysis of the data was guided by the research workshops attended by the researcher at the Durban University of Technology.

3.11.2 Handling blank responses

In order to avoid blank responses, the Google Docs format allows the researcher to make a question compulsory, hence effectively eliminating blank responses and assisting with precise data capturing on SPSS. Although the practice is advantageous to the researcher it has the potential to be a disadvantage. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 234) identify that respondents may be forced to answer questions that they find inappropriate to them. Therefore, piloting the questionnaire and including a 'neutral' or 'don't know' option, as a solution from Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 234), was exercised. Such inclusion increased the validity of the questionnaire.

3.11.3 Analysing the data

The study adopted a mixed method approach, supported by Creswell and Clark's (2007:83) assertion that determining how the data will be mixed will strengthen the research design. For this study, the researcher adopted the merging of data sets. Qualitative and quantitative data will be reported separately in Chapter Four and will be merged during the discussion and interpretation sections in Chapter Five and Six, respectively. The rationale for merging the two data sets in the interpretation and analysis are firstly, to explain or elaborate on perspectives of stakeholders on WPL and secondly, to answer the research questions that required both qualitative and quantitative data.

3.12 Assessing the quality and rigour of instruments

Validity, pre-testing and reliability exercises were considered in an attempt to eliminate any errors and bias for the study. These measures affect the research methodology, especially when face-to-face interviews are conducted (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 150; Leedy and Ormrod 2005: 208). Relevant for this study, is Hesse-Biber's (2010: 3) argument that including mixed methods for a research study ultimately enhances the credibility of the research findings, as triangulation enriches the study's conclusions, making them more acceptable.

3.12.1 Validity

Saunders *et al.* (2009: 143) identify both external and internal validity that will be addressed in the next section.

3.12.1.1 External validity for the research study

External validity is the extent to which inferences can be generalised to other contexts (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 136). For this study no inferences can be generalised to the population as the research adopted a non-probability sampling (Trochim, Donnelly and Arora 2015: 105)

3.12.1.2 Internal validity for the research instrument

Three measures of internal validity were used. Firstly, content validity detects whether the questionnaire measures what is intended (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 137). This was ensured in the use of questionnaire items adapted from the validated instruments by similar studies in Fleming *et al.* (2009: 199), Kundasami (2007: 137), Martin and McCabe (2007: 32) and Cushen (2005: 118).

The instruments were also subjected to tests of face validity. Face validity is the extent to which the measurement reflects objectives of the study (Saunders *et al.* 2009: 603). Moreover, the objectives of the study and the number from the questionnaire that relates to the objective were mapped (Appendix F). The researcher has been reflective about her own view to ensure that inconsistencies in the results do not arise. In addition, the writing centre of the Durban University of Technology (DUT) conducted an assessment of the instrument. Hesse-Biber (2010:

90) asserts that this measure enhances validity, in that the researcher is aware of different perspectives within the research study.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 150) assert that by validating interviews with another, already known measure increases validity. For this reason, the researcher conducted convergent validity using selected interview questions from Steenkamp's (2006: 38) study. The researcher adopted Steenkamp's (2006: 32), Creswell and Clark (2007: 134) and Hesse-Biber's (2010: 89) convergent validity measures by having respondents check the captured interview responses to verify their responses. The researcher further followed up specific points with the academic supervisors in the research process. Hesse-Biber (2010: 89) indicates that such exercises detect errors that may lead to the breakdown of the research operation that make a study less reliable and viable.

3.12.2 Reliability for the research study

Reliability in research, according to Sirakaya-Turk (2011: 66), measures consistency in the results of data. For the questionnaire, reliability compromised a Cronbach Alpha test. Cronbach Alpha provides a coefficient of inter-item correlations, namely, the correlation of different items on the same test (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 506). With respect to the interviews, the researcher adopted an internal reliability measure using Cronbach's Alpha to determine consistency in results (Welman *et al.* 2006: 149). Internal consistency is used as it is less time consuming for the researcher and there is a high degree of generalisation. The reliability coefficient of 0.70 to 0.95 is considered acceptable in Social Sciences (Tavakol and Dennick 2011: 54). For this research Table 3.4 illustrates that the results of Cronbach Alpha deem all questionnaires reliable.

Table 3.4: Results of Cronbach's Alpha for questionnaires

Tourism graduates' questionnaire	Workplace supervisors	Academic supervisors
.857	.744	.794

Although audio-recorded data of interviews is richer, it eliminates the contextual elements of the interviewee, with regards to how they felt and their physical non-

verbal communication on a certain question or aspect. Therefore, the researcher followed the guidelines presented by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 266) and ensured that for all the interviews the interviewer noted the interviewees inflection of voice, what was being said, and the mood of the speaker.

In analysing the data from interviews, the researcher tested for stability by adopting participant verification in line with Steenkamp's study (2006: 38). The exercise intended to ensure reliable results after completion of the interview with the academic supervisors. The researcher was also watchful of leading questions and retaining the exact same format and sequence of words for each respondent, as suggested by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011: 147).

3.13 Ethical considerations/confidentiality and anonymity

Steenkamp (2006: 46) cautions that research studies are confronted with ethical predicaments. The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act (South Africa 2013: 4) essentially regulates how anyone who processes personal information must handle, keep and secure that information. Therefore, researchers should ensure they adhere to these ethical principles (Hofstee 2006: 211). All feasible and available measures were undertaken to ensure that all aspects of DUT research ethics were secured.

3.13.1 DUT research ethics approval

This research was approved by the Faculty of Management Sciences Research and Ethics Committee of DUT. This indicates that this research protocol satisfies the ethical requirements set out by the University.

3.13.2 Integrity during execution of the study

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009: 178) discuss the issue of access to respondents, with respect to permission from participants to be studied. For this study, permission was granted by the academic supervisors from the educational institutions. On receipt of the proposal of the research study, the management of the educational institution approved the study. The researcher subsequently obtained workplace supervisors' and graduates' e-mail addresses. Thereafter, an informed

consent letter (Appendix A) was sent to participants to respond, without any pressure placed on them. Some workplace supervisors who did not want participate asked the researcher to remove them from the database. This was adhered to in order to be POPI compliant.

3.13.3 Anonymity during data analyses

The identity of the educational institution, graduates, workplace and academic supervisors for this study remains confidential. The data supplied will not be disclosed without respondent permission. Respondent anonymity was maintained by means of coding. For example, reference to educational institution is coded as 'educational institution 1', 'educational institution 2' and so on. The researcher did not use the names of any persons in reporting the study.

3.13.4 Confidentiality and privacy

The voice-recorded interview will not be played by anyone outside the study unless the researcher has academic supervisor D sign a separate permission form granting permission to air the voice-recorded interview. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Policy on Retention of Collection Forms and Administrative Material (2008) recommendations for storing and disposing of data and to be POPI compliant (Evans 2010: 21), includes:

- To keep electronic data for five years,
- to destroy physical data such as the paper after two years, but to keep the open-ended comments from questionnaires (scan and store electronically), and
- to keep informed consent agreement letters as a scanned pdf file and stored electronically.

In addition, on completion of the study, the list showing the coding will be shredded. Information received from this study for publication or presentation will not identify individuals or educational institutions.

3.14 Limitation of the methodology

Slight adaptations were found in the planned collection of data. The principal of educational institution 3 granted study permission; she however, passed on at the beginning of 2014. The second person in charge left office and the researcher was referred to a new principal at educational institution 3. The new principal did not have the database for graduates' that had been requested from the deceased principal. The database was being compiled and would only be completed in January 2015. Not being within the researcher's time-frame for the empirical study, the target population was expanded to include a relevant fourth educational institution to meet the required sample size. Although, the study was delayed, the inclusion of the fourth educational institution provided the researcher with a greater understanding of WPL and increased the sample size.

Another limitation for the research were that only 40 surveys was sent out to workplace supervisors' because the database containing graduates' email addresses was dated. Some email addresses were no longer valid or the workplace supervisor had left the service of the tourism organisation.

It was also found that some of the graduates were not placed in tourism organisations during WPL and were therefore not suitable for this study. Although, this negatively affected the study, with those graduates' responses excluded, this finding helped in understanding the issues facing academic supervisors at educational institutions on placement of students during WPL.

3.15 Conclusion

Chapter Three described the research design and highlighted specific techniques employed to conduct the research. A non-probability sampling technique was used. This research used qualitative and quantitative data gathering instruments. The chapter also accounted for reliability and validity and thus, the findings were found to be acceptable. This discussion of research methodology provides a better understanding of the next chapter, which presents the results and analyses of the data collected by stakeholders involved in the WPL module. Chapter Four will provide a graphical presentation of the results obtained from using this methodology.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to evaluate the perceptions of stakeholders of the workplace learning (WPL) module towards improving tourism graduate employability. Chapter three discussed the qualitative and quantitative methodology to obtain results from the stakeholders using surveys and interviews. This chapter will present the findings of the primary study among representative samples of graduates who attended four educational institutions from 2011-2014, current workplace supervisors and current academic supervisors involved in WPL. Three private higher educational institutions and one University of Technology was selected as discussed in Chapter Three.

The presentation of results that follows will be patterned by the order in the literature review and guided by the study objectives. The first objective was to investigate the mechanisms used by workplace supervisors for the transfer of capabilities to enhance tourism graduates' employability. The second objective set out to appraise skills accessed by tourism graduates during WPL that enhance their employability. The third objective sought to compare tourism graduate perceptions and attitudes towards the impact of WPL on tourism graduates' employability. The fourth objective was to evaluate the educational institutions' adoption of WPL in promoting tourism graduate employability.

In order to address these objectives, data from workplace supervisors, academic supervisors and graduates will be presented collectively in the earlier mentioned patterns. These groups were considered to be the primary informants for this study.

4.2 Response rate

Two hundred and seventy-four questionnaires were to sent graduates via e-mail. The researcher received 161 completed questionnaires back, representing a response rate of 59.7%. A web-based survey was conducted among workplace supervisors. Forty questionnaires were sent out to workplace supervisors with 32 responding,

representing a response rate of 80%. A 100% response rate was achieved for both the survey and interview of the participating four academic supervisors. Similar studies report varying response rates. For example, Wardle (2012: 1) reports a 26% response rate, Spowart (2009: 12) 53% and Martin and McCabe (2007: 33) just 10%; therefore, the response rate is acceptable for this study. The response rate is also considered satisfactory against mitigating factors presented in section 3.8 of Chapter Three.

4.3 Originating institutions and demographics

Demographic data is useful in identifying and comparing trends (Hoftsee 2006: 215). Brink (2007: 194) describes demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level as an inherent in the study population prior to the researcher's study. The demographics of the stakeholders assisted in establishing a profile that underpin the perceptions stakeholders develop and hold of the WPL module.

4.3.1 Tourism graduates

Table 4.1 includes data such as age, gender, and year of completing WPL. At 77.6% the graduates' respondents were predominantly female (55.2%) with just 22.4% male. Furthermore, age was included in the questionnaire as people have different expectations and experiences according to their age (Blauth, McDaniel, Perrin and Perrin 2011: 2). The graduates were in the age groups 20-25 years (78.9 %), 25-30 years (19.9%) and 30-40 years (1.2%). Blauth *et al.* (2011: 2) identified that people between 17 and 22 years are expected to be computer literate full time students with part-time work whereas, students over 22 are mature individuals studying full/part-time towards a degree, or they are already working.

Table 4.1: Tourism graduate demographics

Educational Institution % (n =161)		WPL Duration % (n =161)		Year of WPL % (n =161)		Age % of all graduates % (n =161)		Gender % (n =161)	
1	57.8	6 months	57.8	2011	14.3	20-25	78.9	Males	22.4
2	8.7	150 hours	8.7	2012	31.1	25-30	19.9	Females	77.6
3	13.0	150 hours	13.0	2013	23.0	30-40	1.2		
4	20.5	150 hours	20.5	2014	31.7				
Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100

During WPL workplace supervisors are expected to work with different age groups because of the variances in age at the educational institution. This places significance on the learning mechanisms during WPL as Mountford *et al.* (2006: 135) suggest that the way a student is supervised is based on their maturity and understanding. Therefore, during WPL the workplace supervisors should adapt their mentoring mechanisms to transfer skills for tourism graduate employability.

Most respondents completed their WPL module in tourism in 2014 (31.7 %) followed by 2013 (23%), 2012 (31.1%) and 2011 (14.3 %). Graduates' responses from educational institution 1 comprised of the majority of graduates in the sample size (57.8%). The second was from educational institution 4 (20.5 %) and educational institution 3 being 13%; educational institution 2 offered the smallest sample size of only 8.7%. The results are therefore, skewed with educational institution 1 having the greatest influence on the analysis.

4.3.2 Workplace supervisors

The demographics of workplace supervisors' illustrated in Table 4.2 show a response rate from workplace supervisors of 80% (32 out of 40). Similar to the graduate respondents there is a significantly greater number of female (71.9%) compared to male (28.1%) workplace supervisors.

Table 4.2 : Workplace supervisor demographics

Educational Institution % (n =32)		Tourism sector belonging to % (n =32)		Years In Industry % (n =32)		Years supervising WPL % (n =32)		Province working in % (n =32)		Gender % (n =32)	
1	71.9	Accommodation	6.3	1- 5 years	18.8	Less than a year	53.1	Eastern Cape	3.1	Males	28.1
2	6.3	Adventure Tourism	6.3	5- 10 years	12.5	1-5 years	6.3	Gauteng	3.1	Females	71.9
3	12.5	Events and Conferences	12.5	10-15 years	37.5	5-10 years	9.4	KwaZulu Natal	87.5		
4	9.4	Tourism services	25.0	15 years and more	31.3	10-15 years	28.1	Mpumalanga	3.1		
		Transportation	21.9			15 years and more	3.1	Western Cape	3.1		
		Travel Trade	28.1								
Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100

The workplace supervisors that responded were predominantly participating in WPL for educational institution 1 (71.9%), educational institution 3 (12.5%), educational institution 4 (9.4%) and educational institution 2 (6.3%). Table 4.2 shows that the majority of workplace supervisors have between 10-15 years' experience (37.5%) with 31.3 % having 15 years and more experience in the tourism industry. The number of years of experience in the supervision of WPL is, however, generally less than a year (53.1%).

4.3.3 Academic supervisors

Table 4.3 explicitly depicts the participating academic supervisors' profile. The sample represents more females than males. Academic supervisors from educational institution 1 and 3 have supervised WPL for 5-10 years. The academic supervisor from educational institution 4 has supervised WPL for 1-5 years and academic supervisor B has supervised WPL for less than a year.

Table 4.3: Academic supervisor demographics

Educational institution % (n=4)		Years supervising WPL % (n =4)		Gender % (n =4)	
1	25.0	5-10 years	25.0	Males	25.0
2	25.0	Less than a year	25.0	Females	75.0
3	25.0	5-10 years	25.0		
4	25.0	1-5 years			
Total %	100	Total %	100	Total %	100

4.4 Rights and responsibilities for WPL

It can be deduced from Figure 4.1 that the sampled graduates (60.2%) and workplace supervisors (62.5%) are aware of their rights and responsibilities during the WPL module. A cross-tabulation of the results in Appendix G provides a closer analysis of graduates who disagreed. A minority of graduates (13%) disagreed and remained neutral (8.7%) about knowing their rights and responsibilities. It was found that graduates mainly from educational institution 1 (6.8%) and educational institution 4 (4.3%) were unaware of their rights and responsibilities.

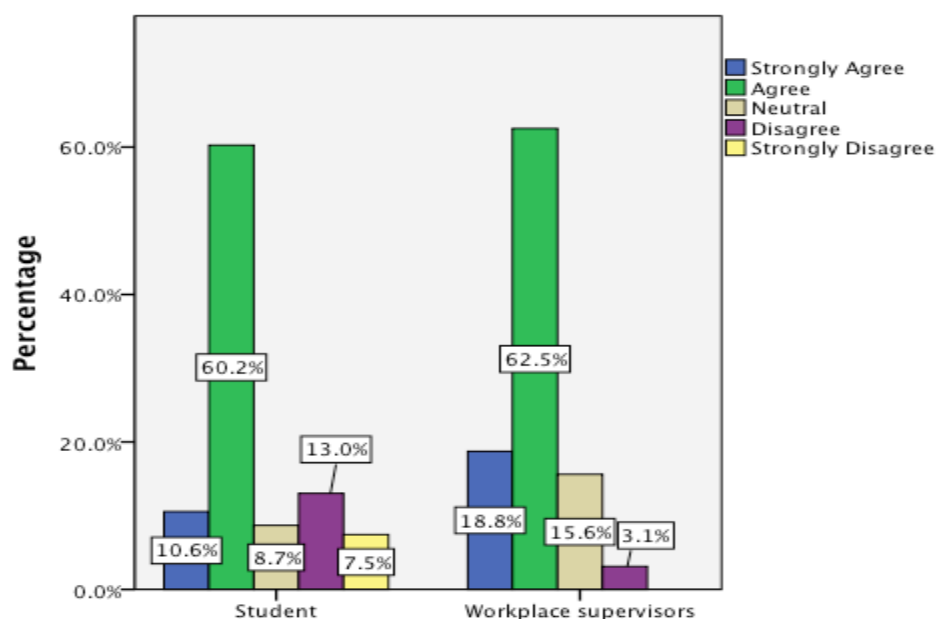


Figure 4.1: The extent to which graduates and workplace supervisors are aware of their rights and responsibilities in WPL

4.5 Placement for WPL

As illustrated in Figure 4.2, graduates agreed (44.1 %) that they were assisted in locating placements for WPL. However, 20.5 % of graduates disagreed. Appendix H demonstrates that graduates from educational institution 2 have indicated the highest amount of placement concern in respect of the WPL module. Although academic supervisor B and C are not required to assist with placement, they do as depicted in Appendix H attempt to find placements for students during WPL.

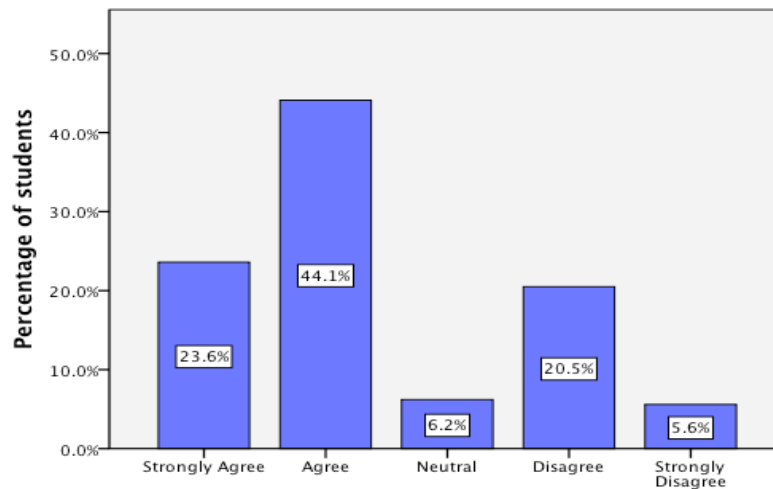


Figure 4.2: Overall assistance with work placement

Table 4.4 indicates observed variables affecting WPL placements. These include race, gender and the lack of perceived industry contacts between the academic supervisors and tourism employers.

Table 4.4 Academic supervisor views of conditions affecting placement

Educational institution % n=4	Race % n=4		Gender % n=4		Perceived industry contacts	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1	0.00%	25%	0.00%	25%	0.00%	25 %
2	25 %	0.00%	25%	0.00%	25 %	0.00%
3	25 %	0.00%	25%	0.00%	25 %	0.00%
4	25 %	0.00%	0.00%	25 %	25 %	0.00%
Total %	75 %	25%	50%	50%	75 %	25 %

Seventy-five percent of academic supervisors' responses' in the interview identified that employment equity plans in a tourism organisation influences placements of graduates for WPL. From the qualitative responses, academic supervisors' B and D expressed that tourism employers prefer female students during WPL. The latter is perceived by workplace supervisors to have reached an advanced emotional and mental state and more likely to display responsibility towards the tourism organisation during WPL.

4.6 Relevance of WPL to stakeholders

This study was necessary as literature concludes that WPL closes the skills gap in the tourism course (Beggs *et al.* 2008: 37). Frequencies (strongly agreed and agreed) in Figure 4.3 prove that WPL is significantly relevant to both graduates' (88.82%) and workplace supervisors (93.8%). However, 8.1% of graduates and 6.3% of workplace supervisors disagreed and strongly disagreed to the relevance of the WPL module. A cross-tabulation in Appendix I distinguishes graduates who found WPL irrelevant to the tourism course.

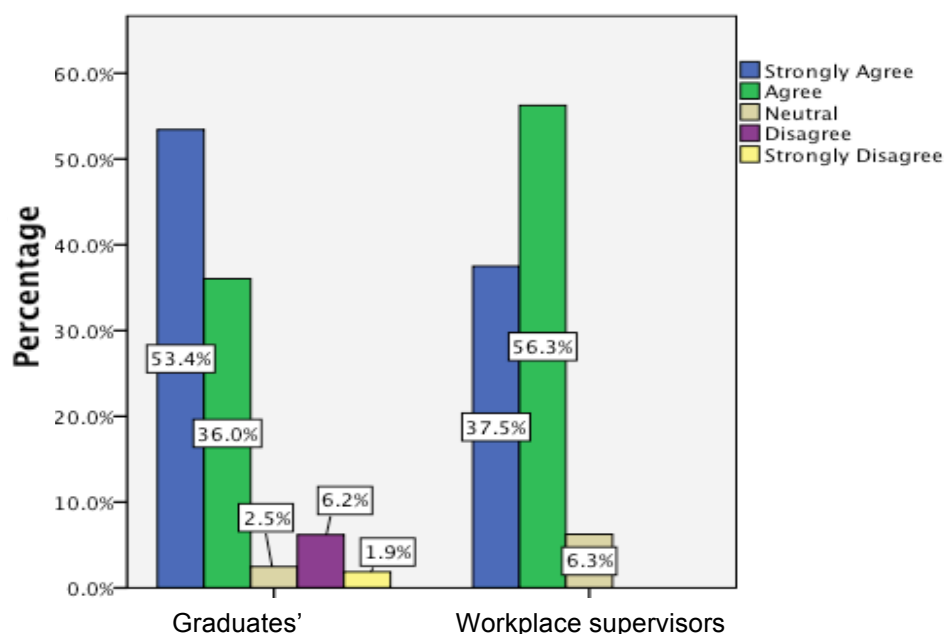


Figure 4.3: Relevance of the WPL module to graduates and workplace supervisors

The above negative responses from graduates are distributed between educational institution 1 (4.9 %), educational institution 3 (1.9%) and educational institution 4 (1.2 %). Appendix I reveals that workplace supervisors who remained neutral on WPL being irrelevant to the tourism course were mainly those that support educational institution 1.

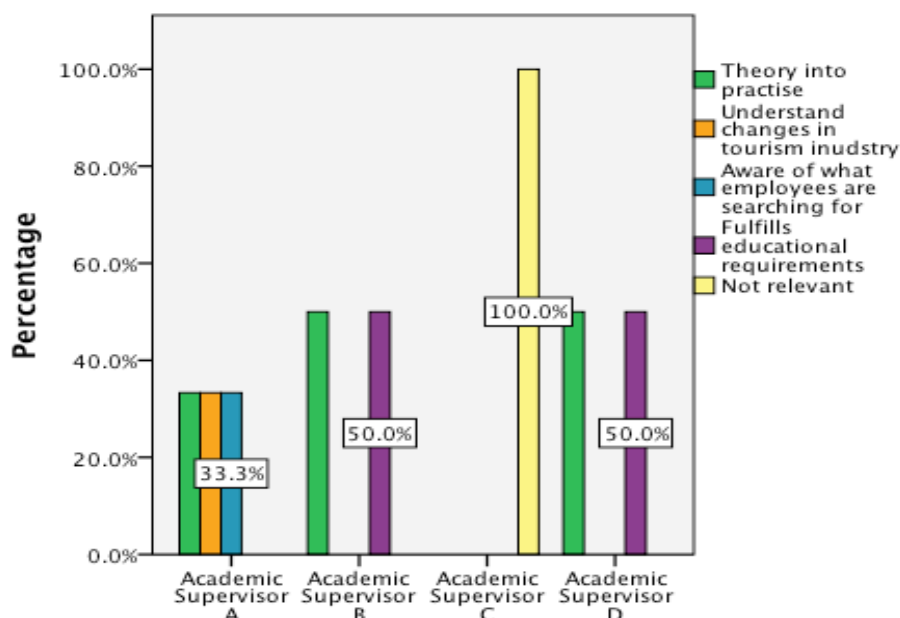


Figure 4.4: Relevance of the WPL modules to student learning

As can be seen from Figure 4.4, the main advantage of WPL for academic supervisors A, B and D is integrating theory into practice in the work place and fulfilling the educational requirements for WPL. However, academic supervisor C found WPL not relevant to the educational institution. In the qualitative response, she mentioned that WPL is mainly significant for graduates to develop employability skills.

4.7 Benefits of the WPL modules

Results presented in this section will directly respond to the fourth objective on the success of WPL at educational institutions. These findings could provide data for understanding the advantages of WPL practices at educational institutions. The section will reveal the benefits of each stakeholder.

4.7.1 Benefits of the WPL module to graduates

In addition to selecting from a list of possible WPL benefits, graduate respondents were also offered an “other” option for those benefits that have been omitted or not identified by the researcher. As can be seen from Figure 4.5, graduates (32.14%) viewed WPL as significant for employment opportunities. In addition, 25.82% of graduates believed that they gained work experience during their placement.

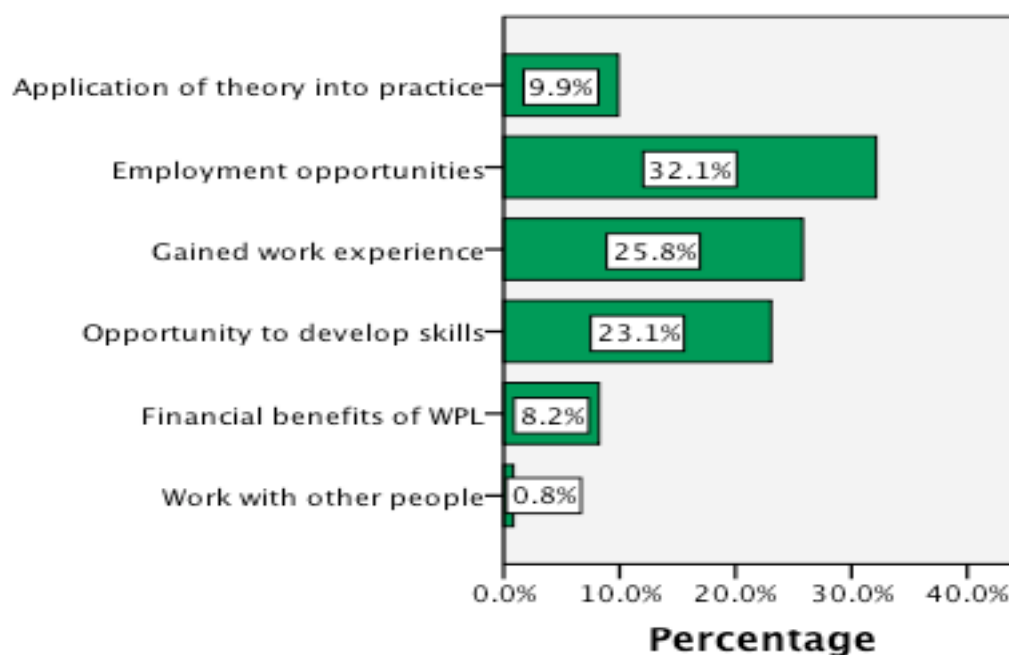


Figure 4.5: Benefits of the WPL modules to graduates

Another positive benefit was that 23.1% of graduates felt that WPL assisted them in developing specific skills for employment. A minority of graduates responded that they applied their theoretical learning in the workplace (9.9%), gained financially through WPL (8.2%) and 0.8% benefitted by working with other people in the industry.

4.7.2 Benefits to workplace supervisors

Table 4.5 depicts factors that motivate workplace supervisors to participate in WPL. One of the main reasons stated by 65.6% of workplace supervisors arises from an opportunity for their organisation to contribute towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Cross analyses of the surveyed sectors in the tourism industry identified that 21.9% of tourism services, 15.6% transportation and 15.6% travel trade were the main contributors of CSR via WPL study. Secondly, 31.3% of workplace supervisors develop their supervisory skills through WPL and recruit graduates after completing WPL. Only a small percentage, primarily from the events and (6.3%) travel trade sectors (6.3%) reported that WPL was used to claim skills development levies.

Table 4.5: Cross-tabulation of the perceived benefits of the WPL module

Tourism sector	CSR	Recruiting staff	Enhancing supervisory skills	Skills levy
Accommodation	6.3 %	0.0%	6.3 %	0.0 %
Adventure tourism	3.1 %	6.3 %	0.0 %	0.0 %
Events and conferences	3.1 %	3.1 %	3.1 %	6.3 %
Tourism services	21.9 %	9.4 %	6.3 %	0.0 %
Transportation	15.6 %	6.3 %	6.3 %	0.0 %
Travel trade	15.6 %	6.3 %	9.4 %	6.3 %
Total %	65.6 %	31.3 %	31.3 %	12.5 %

4.8 Challenges of the WPL modules to stakeholders

Any evaluation of the success of WPL must incorporate examination of challenges associated with integrating the WPL module in the tourism curricula. The findings that follow will assist in responding to the fourth objective that sought to ascertain the adoption of the tourism WPL module on offer at educational institutions.

4.8.1 Challenges of WPL to graduates

As shown in Figure 4.6 the main challenge in participating in WPL for more than half the graduates was financial constraint (69.9%). The second challenge affecting the effectiveness of WPL is the negativity of students before undertaking WPL (14.2%). Graduates (3.8%) also mentioned that finding placement for WPL was challenging. Only 2.7 % of graduates indicated that WPL did not pose any challenge at all.

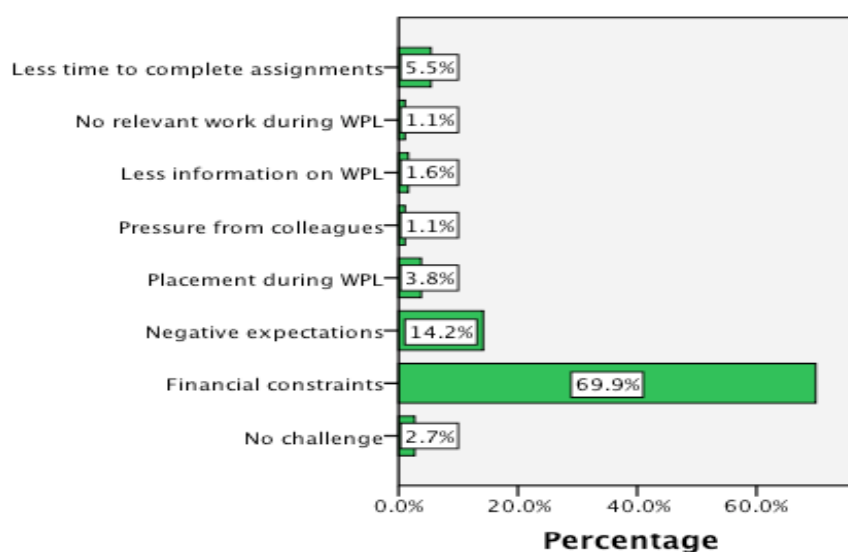


Figure 4.6: Challenges of the WPL module to graduates

4.8.2 Challenges of WPL to workplace supervisors

Figure 4.7 reveals that workplace supervisors do not have enough time to supervise students during WPL (40%). The second was the difficulty in challenging the student during WPL whilst providing value to the firm (35.6%). The third challenge was that 17.8% of workplace supervisors felt that students did not come with the necessary skills expected of them. Only a small percentage of workplace supervisors indicated that there was no suitable work for them during WPL (4.4%). Over 97% of workplace supervisors felt that their educational institutions provide enough support to them.

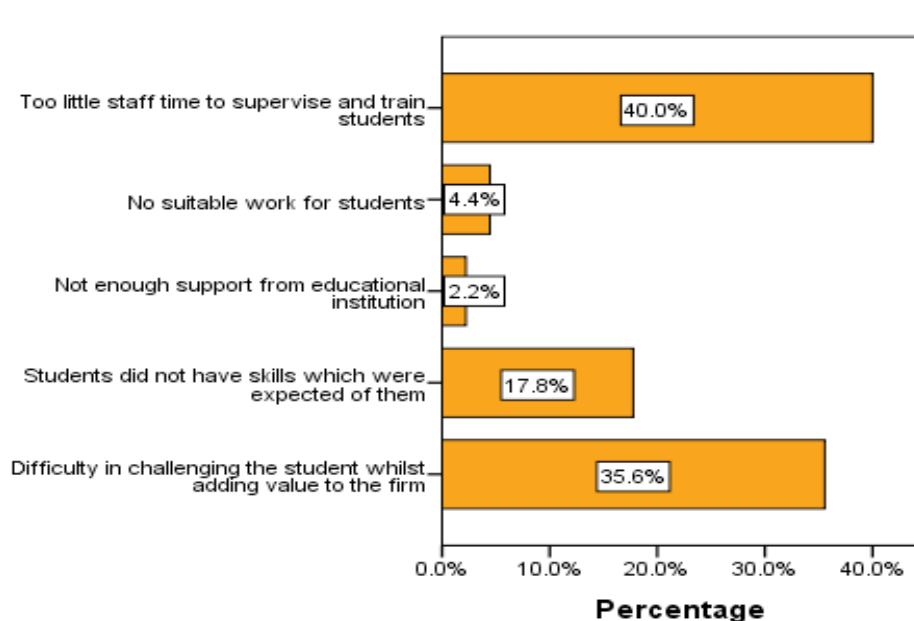


Figure 4.7: Challenges experienced by workplace supervisors during WPL

4.8.3 Challenges of WPL to academic supervisors

Table 4.6 summarises academic supervisors' responses from interviews on the theme of challenges they experienced during WPL. The common challenge faced by all academic supervisors was the poor partnership between the tourism industry and educational institution in sharing commitment to WPL. Academic supervisor B added that there is a lack of understanding between themselves and the students on the limitations of preferred placements.

Table 4.6: Challenges affecting the implementation of WPL

Academic Supervisor	Placement	Poor partnerships on placements	Financial challenges	Underprepared students sent into industry
A	25.0 %	0.00 %	25.0 %	25.0 %
B	25.0 %	25.0 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
C	25.0 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
D	25.0 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Total %	100 %	25.0 %	25.0 %	25.0 %

Academic supervisors reported that students expect a higher position in the tourism organisation during WPL. Academic supervisor A raised the financial constraints students experienced during WPL such as costs attached to travelling to the tourism organisations and accommodation. In addition, academic supervisor expressed that underprepared learning negatively affects the educational institutions' reputation.

4.9 Skills acquisition during WPL

As study of skills is key to this research, the reliability of the responses about the preferred skills for employability was considered important for the study. Before presenting findings on stakeholders' perspective of preferred skills for employability, verification of their reliability in Table 4.7 used the Cronbach alpha measure.

4.9.1 Instrument reliability

The Cronbach Alpha provides a coefficient of reliability; Cronbach Alpha is the sum of all the relevant variables that is useful for multi-item scales (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2011: 148). Table 4.7 shows a coefficient of 0.812 for workplace supervisors, 0.875 for academic supervisors and 0.878 for graduates. Section C of the graduates and workplace supervisors and Section B of academic supervisors in the questionnaire is in Appendix B,C and D. These respectively match the standard for internal reliability, where the acceptable Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranges from 0.10 to 0.95 (Tavakol and Dennick 2011: 54).

Table 4.7 Survey scales and predicator variables in quantitative analysis

Survey scales	Cronbach alpha	Survey item
Related to perceptions of important skills – workplace supervisors	0.812	13 items Section B
Related to perceptions of important skills – academic supervisors	0.875	13 item Section B
Related to perceptions of important skills – Tourism graduates	0.878	13 items Section B

4.9.2 Rating of skills

In this section, the skills that are perceived crucial for employment by stakeholders are presented. The results for this section will assist in answering the second objective of this study. On a 5-point Likert scale (1=very important, 2=important, 3=moderately important, 4 = not very important and 5= unimportant), stakeholders were asked to rate the skills they found important for employment in the tourism industry.

Table 4.8 Stakeholder rankings of skills for graduate employability in tourism

Skills	Graduates mean (standard deviation) (ranking)		Workplace supervisors mean (standard deviation) (ranking)		Academic supervisors mean (standard deviation) (ranking)	
Technical expertise	1.29 (.454)	1	1.78 (.553)	10	1.75 (.500)	12
Customer service	1.44 (.498)	2	1.10 (.177)	1	1.25 (.500)	3
Relationship building	1.46 (.524)	3	1.69 (.471)	6	1.25 (.500)	4
Self confidence	1.49 (.614)	4	1.72 (.457)	7	1.25 (.500)	5
Teamwork and cooperation	1.55 (.547)	5	1.72 (.457)	8	1.25 (.500)	7
Initiative	1.58 (.556)	6	1.50 (.672)	2	1.50 (.577)	8
Self-control	1.60 (.563)	7	1.66 (.483)	3	1.25 (.500)	6
Ability and willingness to learn	1.65 (.478)	8	1.69 (.471)	5	1.25 (.500)	1
Flexibility	1.65 (.606)	9	1.69 (.535)	4	1.75 (.957)	11
Written communication	1.70 (.680)	10	1.81 (.644)	11	1.50 (.577)	9
Time management skills	1.70 (.473)	11	1.81 (.471)	12	1.75 (.500)	13
Concern for order, quality and accuracy	1.74 (.555)	12	1.75 (.718)	9	1.25 (.500)	2
Organisational awareness	1.88 (.886)	14	1.81 (.693)	14	2.00 (.000)	14
Analytical thinking	1.78 (1.59)	13	1.59 (.798)	3	1.75 (.500)	10

Note: The highlighted standard deviation reflects the top five skills for each stakeholder.

Table 4.8 highlights that the five most important competencies for the tourism graduate group were: technical expertise (1.29), customer service (1.44), relationship building (1.46), self-confidence (1.49) and, teamwork and co-operation (1.55).

Similarly, the skills that were valued most by employers were customer service (1.10), initiative (1.50), self-control (1.66), flexibility (1.69) and the ability and willingness to learn (1.69). From the academic supervisors' perspectives, a mean of 1.25 was tabulated for five skills namely, ability and willingness to learn, concern for order and quality, customer service, relationship building and self-confidence as important skills for employment.

4.10 Tourism graduate perceptions of and attitudes towards WPL

The results that will be presented in this section are key to addressing objective three of this study that seeks to compare graduates' perceptions and attitudes of the impact of WPL on tourism employability. The results have been cross-tabulated and presented in a bar graph (Figure 4.8) per educational institution, to compare perceptions and attitudes.

4.10.1 Expectations of tourism graduate for graduate employability

Results in Table 4.9 indicate that 16.8 % of graduates disagreed post WPL that their expectations of employment were met. The reasons for graduates' expectations not being met were derived from responses to an open-ended question and are represented graphically in Appendix K. Among these, the main reason was that 31.1% of graduates had an expectation of post-WPL employment before WPL.

Pre- and post- expectations of graduates' employment were asked. The results illustrated in Table 4.9 reflect discrepancies in graduates' expectations before and after undertaking WPL. Overall, it was found that 72% of students had high expectations of employment prior to undertaking WPL. However, 18.6% of graduates strongly agreed and 55.9 % of graduates responded positively to their post WPL experience.

Table 4.9 Pre- and post-WPL expectations for employment by graduates

Educational institution	Expectations	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total % n=161
1	Before	11.8%	41.6%	3.1%	1.2%	0.0%	57.8%
	After	11.8%	36.0%	3.1%	3.7%	3.1%	
2	Before	1.9%	6.2%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	8.7%
	After	0.0%	4.3%	0.6%	3.1%	0.6%	
3	Before	4.3%	8.1%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%
	After	0.6%	8.7%	0.6%	3.1%	0.0%	
4	Before	4.3%	16.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	20.5%
	After	6.2%	6.8%	0.6%	6.8%	0.0%	
Total %	Before	22.4%	72.0%	4.3%	1.2%	0.0%	100.0%
	After	18.6%	55.9%	5.0%	16.8%	3.7%	

Stratified analyses depicted that only 1.2% of graduates from educational institution 1 did not hold expectations of employment and graduates from educational institution 2 and 3 were neutral (0.6%). Although there is general positivity from students before WPL, after their WPL experience graduates' perceptions of WPL changed in respect of finding employment.

4.10.2 Tourism graduate perception on performing inappropriate tasks during WPL

The survey indicated mixed responses from graduates of their perception of performing inappropriate duties outside their specified tasks that are not beneficial in developing a graduate's skill in the workplace. As shown in Table 4.10, 2.5% of graduates from educational institution 2 experienced minor concerns of performing inappropriate tasks during WPL compared to the other educational institutions. Graduates from educational institution 1 expressed the highest number of performing inappropriate tasks during WPL (26.7%).

In the interview, questions were posed to the academic supervisors on the topic as represented in Appendix L. Academic supervisor A from educational Institution 1 and academic supervisor D from educational Institution 4 had received complaints from students who had been performing tasks not related to WPL in the workplace.

However, academic supervisor B from educational institution 2 was not aware of students experiencing this problem from workplace supervisors during WPL.

Table 4.10: Allocation of inappropriate functions to students during WPL

Educational Institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total % n=161
1	4.3%	26.7%	2.5%	18.6%	5.6%	57.8%
2	0.0%	2.5%	0.6%	4.3%	1.2%	8.7%
3	0.0%	5.6%	2.5%	5.0%	0.0%	13.0%
4	0.6%	9.9%	1.2%	8.7%	0.0%	20.5%
Total %	5.0%	44.7%	6.8%	36.6%	6.8%	100.0%

As can be seen in Appendix M academic supervisors A and D resolved this issue by speaking to both the students and workplace supervisors and in some cases removed students. However, academic supervisor D reported helplessness in guiding task allocation of students, as the education institution does not want to risk any chance of buy-in from tourism organisations that may threaten existing and future students' placements to complete their WPL module.

4.10.3 Contribution of WPL to graduate employability

It is evident from the graduate responses in Figure 4.8 that WPL has contributed significantly and positively to graduate employment at educational institutions 1 (84.9%), 3 (90.5%), and 4 (60.6 %). However, graduate responses indicate that WPL did not contribute to employment for 42.9% of the cohort from educational institution 2. The results obtained from the open-ended questions for graduates provides possible explanations for WPL not contributing to employment. Appendix N depicts the eight themes that have been identified, and illustrates that although WPL did not contribute towards graduates' employment, 37% of graduates gained experience in the tourism industry and 28% developed their skills and knowledge. These were two of the most important contributions of WPL to graduates.

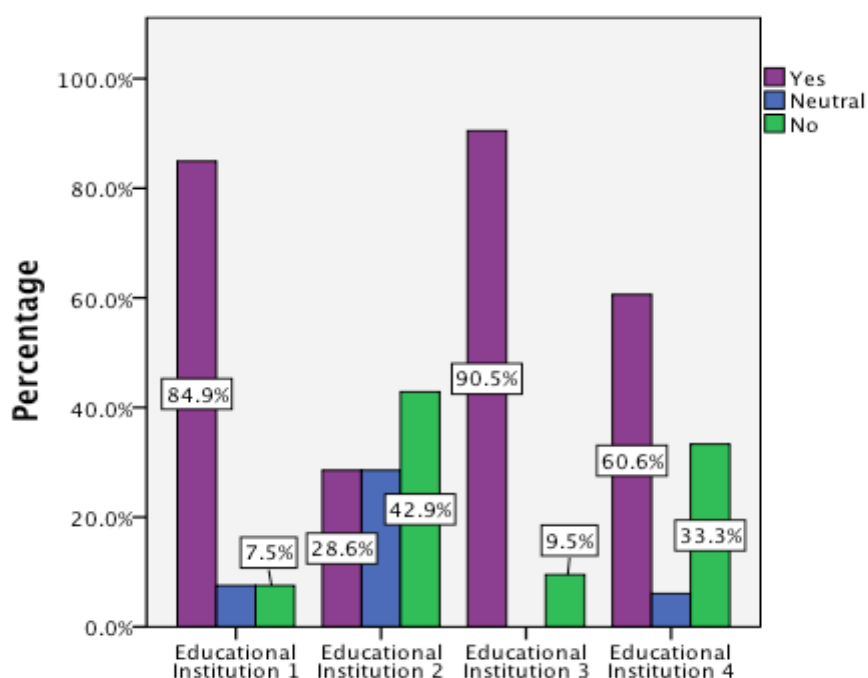


Figure 4.8: Tourism graduate responses to the contribution of WPL for employment

Among the other contributions highlighted in the Appendix N were that students were exposed to the tourism industry during WPL (6%), WPL assisted in applying their theoretical knowledge into the workplace context (2%) and 15% noted that completing WPL enabled them to graduate from their tourism course. However, 15% of graduates indicated that WPL did not contribute at all to employment and the contributions mentioned above.

4.10.4 Tasks performed during WPL

Figure 4.9 illustrates that 92.5% of graduates did enjoy the tasks they were involved in during WPL. In Appendix O, only 3.73% of graduates stated that they did not enjoy the tasks mainly because the tasks were not challenging (2.49%), 0.6% did not relate to and 0.6% did not understand the tasks during WPL. Coincidentally, in Figure 4.9 another 3.73 % of graduates felt neutral or negative about the tasks performed.

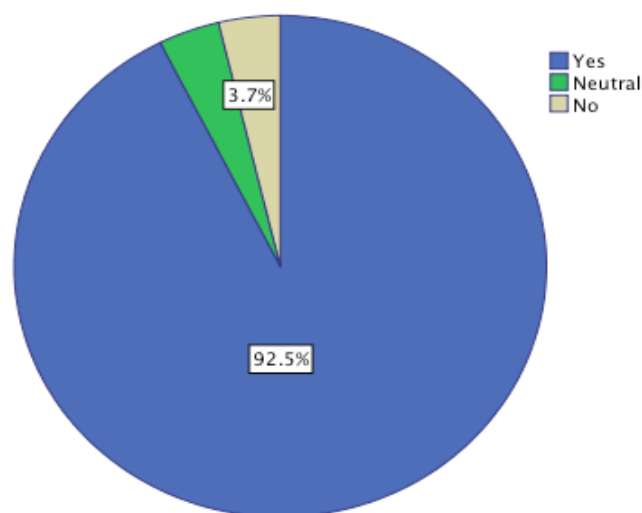


Figure 4.9: Tourism graduate satisfaction of tasks during WPL

4.10.5 Tourism graduate attitudes on the transfer of theory into practice during WPL

An open-ended question was asked to examine whether graduates' skills and knowledge attained during WPL related to their tourism course. Over three quarters of the respondents (76.4%) stated that WPL did relate to their tourism course (Table 4.11). Learning across all four educational institutions identified by graduates, as being related to their tourism course were customer service and destinations. In addition, students of educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 viewed Galileo as being related to their tourism learning programme.

Table 4.11: Tourism graduates' responses to putting theory into practice

Educational Institution	No, not at all	Some, aspects	Yes. all aspects	Total % n=161
1	7.5%	4.3%	46.0%	57.8%
2	0.0%	2.5%	6.2%	8.7%
3	1.2%	1.2%	10.6%	13.0%
4	4.3%	2.5%	13.7%	20.5%
Total %	13.0%	10.6%	76.4%	100.0%

Although, 10.6% of graduates felt WPL related in some learning areas of their tourism programme, 13% of graduates believed that their WPL experience was unrelated to the tourism curriculum and lacked alignment. The unrelated aspects students identified were reported to be in the areas of tourism management and tourism development. These are further discussed in Chapter Five, section 5.5.3.1.

4.10.6 Tourism graduates' reflection of WPL

It is important to understand whether graduates reflected on their WPL experience as Harvey *et al.* (2010: 138) point out that it provides valuable insight to ascertain graduates' learning. Depicted in Figure 4.10, the empirical study found that 73.29% of all graduates agreed that they were able to reflect on their WPL experiences compared to the 6.21% of graduates who were unable to do so.

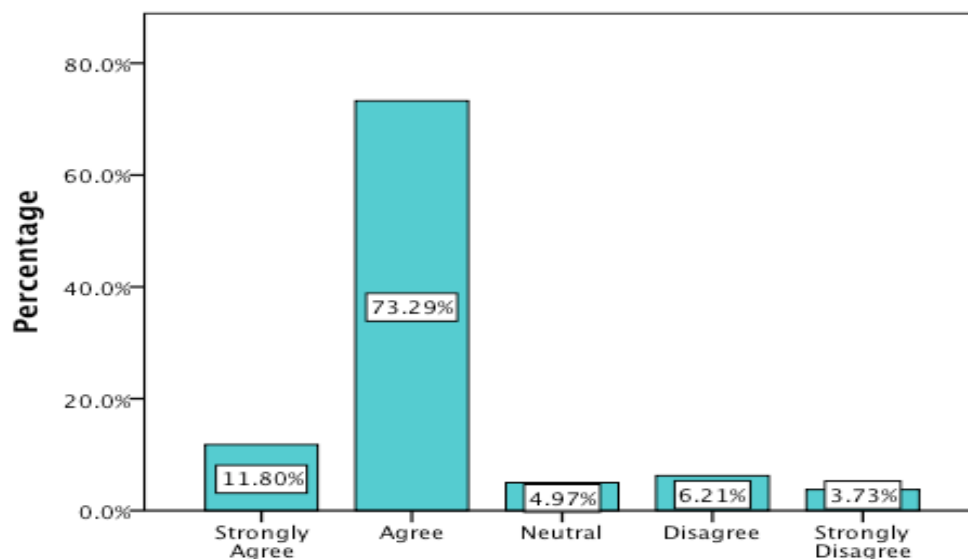


Figure 4.10: Reflection of WPL experience

4.10.7 Tourism graduate difficulties during WPL placement

Figure 4.11 illustrates that 56.52% of graduates did not experience difficulties in transitioning into the workplace. Only 29.19% of graduates indicated that they experienced difficulties in learning the skills taught by workplace supervisors and 14.2% of graduates remained neutral.

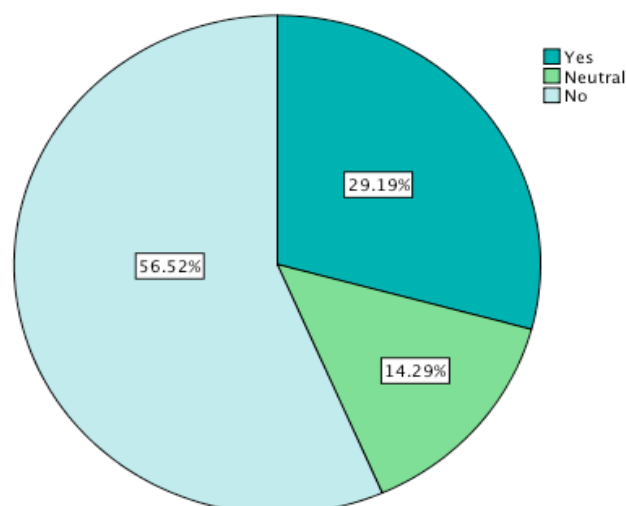


Figure 4.11: Tourism graduate responses to the ease of developing skills in the workplace⁸⁷

Figure 4.26 reports graduate suggestions to improve the transfer of skills from the educational institution to advance smoother transitioning into the workplace. The popular suggestions were the use of technology (3%) and practical classroom learning exercises (3%) such as role-playing.

4.11 Employers' perceptions of WPL employability

The previous section highlighted perceptions of students on the WPL module. This section will present the workplace supervisors' perspective on the variables of interest in respect of the association between the WPL module and graduate employability.

4.11.1 Employability of a tourism graduate undertaking WPL

As shown in Table 4.12 the majority of workplace supervisors believed that students (59.4%) undertaking WPL met the requirements for obtaining employment after graduation. However, 31.3% of workplace supervisors disagree and a small percentage are neutral (9.4%). The results displayed in Appendix P provide reasons why graduates are not employable after completing WPL.

Table 4.12 Tourism graduates with WPL meet competence for employment

Educational Institution	Yes	Neutral	No
1	37.5%	6.3%	28.1%
2	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%
3	12.5%	0.0%	0.0%
4	3.1%	3.1%	3.1%
Total %	59.4%	9.4%	31.3%

Among reasons for graduate unemployment are explained by workplace supervisors as the lack of jobs in tourism available to graduates (68.8%) and, because 21.9 % of students lacked skills as well as content knowledge for employment. For example, certain sectors that expressed a dearth of available vacancies were tourism services (15.6%), travel trade (21.9%) and transportation (12.5%).

4.11.2 Aspects hindering graduate employability

An open-ended question was asked of workplace supervisors on hindrances to graduate employability in the tourism industry. The researcher has identified 16 themes, which are provided in Appendix Q. The three most recurring themes for unemployable graduates came from 23% of workplace supervisors who indicated that students lacked time management skills associated with transport issues and punctuality. Ten percent of workplace supervisors were also concerned about graduates lacking passion for the job and a further 10 % of workplace supervisors found that graduates lacked basic knowledge of the tourism industry.

4.12 Duration of WPL

The duration of the WPL module was explored to determine the association between the duration of WPL on the employability of graduates. The duration of WPL is an important factor in determining the success of the WPL module in graduate employability (Fidgeon 2010: 713). As seen previously in Table 4.1, the primary results indicate that graduates from educational institution 2, 3 and 4 completed 150 hours of WPL within their own time in their third year of study compared with graduates from educational institution 1 who completed 6 months of WPL in their final year.

4.12.1 Curriculum provision in respect of the duration of WPL

The interview with academic supervisors indicated mixed views of the optimal duration of the WPL module depicted in Figure 4.12. Academic supervisor A submitted that 6 months is adequate exposure to the industry whereas, academic supervisors from educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 suggested a period longer than 150 hours. Notwithstanding, in interviews these academic supervisors indicated that finding placement for students remains a difficulty for an extended duration of WPL.

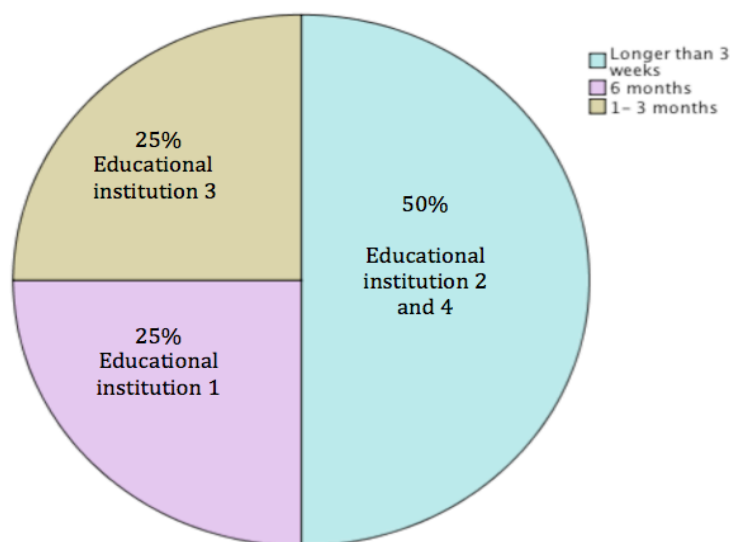


Figure 4.12: Duration of WPL by academic supervisors

4.12.2 Tourism graduates' preparedness for employment

As indicated by the significance levels of Chi-square results in Appendix J, the test statistics for the two variables presented in Table 4.13 have a p-value of 0.002, meaning that they are deemed very significant. Table 4.13 indicates that 74.5% (strongly agree plus agree) of graduates that completed WPL were better prepared for employment. However, a small percentage of graduates disagreed (16.8%) and strongly disagreed (3.7%) that WPL prepared them for employment.

Table 4.13 Tourism graduates' view on the duration of WPL for employment

Duration of WPL	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
6 months	11.8%	34.8%	3.1%	3.7%	3.1%	56.5%
150 hours	6.8%	21.1%	1.9%	13.0%	0.6%	43.5%
Total %	18.6%	55.9%	5.0%	16.8%	3.7 %	100.0%

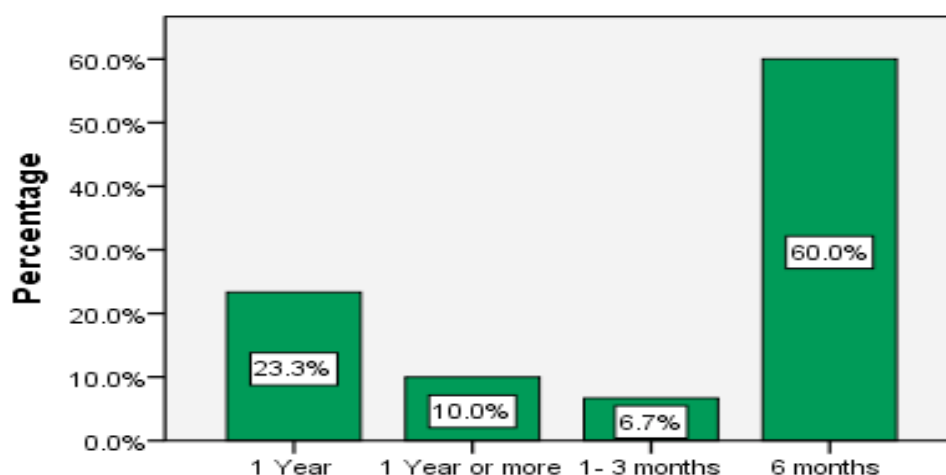
Table 4.14: Adequacy of the duration of WPL

Educational Institution	No	Yes	Total n=161
1 (6 months)	30.4%	27.3%	57.8%
2 (150 hours)	5.0%	3.7%	8.7%
3 (150 hours)	6.2%	6.8%	13.0%
4 (150 hours)	8.7%	11.8%	20.5%
Total %	50.3%	49.7%	100.0%

However, in viewing the cross tabulation of results for each educational institution, there were mixed responses from graduates on the duration of WPL (Table 4.14). Graduates expressed concern about the limited duration of WPL. The results in Table 4.14 indicate that the majority of students (30.4%) who undertook WPL for 6 months from educational institution 1 and 150 hours from educational institution 2 believed that the duration of WPL was insufficient. Nonetheless, a limitation to this study was that the researcher's questionnaire did not ask how much longer WPL should be. However, 10.5% of graduates from educational institution 1 stated in the open-ended questions that WPL should be at least one year.

4.12.3 Workplace supervisors' views on the appropriate duration of WPL

Workplace supervisors are considered to be a significant respondent of the ideal duration of WPL, as they are arguably closer to graduate competency needs. Figure 4.13 indicates that 60% of workplace supervisors suggest that six months of WPL is an appropriate learning period. The second duration most supported is one year (23.33%).

**Figure 4.13: Workplace supervisors' perception of WPL duration**

4.13 Supervision of WPL

Martin and Hughes (2009:24) assert that appropriate supervision of WPL develops students' competencies for employment and reflection. The supervision of WPL is the responsibility of both the academic supervisor and the workplace supervisor.

4.13.1 Supervision of WPL by supervisors

Although academic supervisors do not directly supervise workplace tasks of student during WPL, their supervision arises from the support and assistance they provide students. Bar graphs will represent both academic and workplace supervisors' responses in this section.

4.13.1.1 Support by supervisors

Graduates were asked about the support received from their academic supervisor. It can be seen in Figure 4.14 that the majority of graduates, 61.49 %, stated that they had received adequate support during WPL. A cross-tabulation in Appendix R shows the originating educational institutions of graduates who reported that they lacked support. Graduates from educational institution 4 (9.3%) perceived that they did not receive support from their academic supervisor.

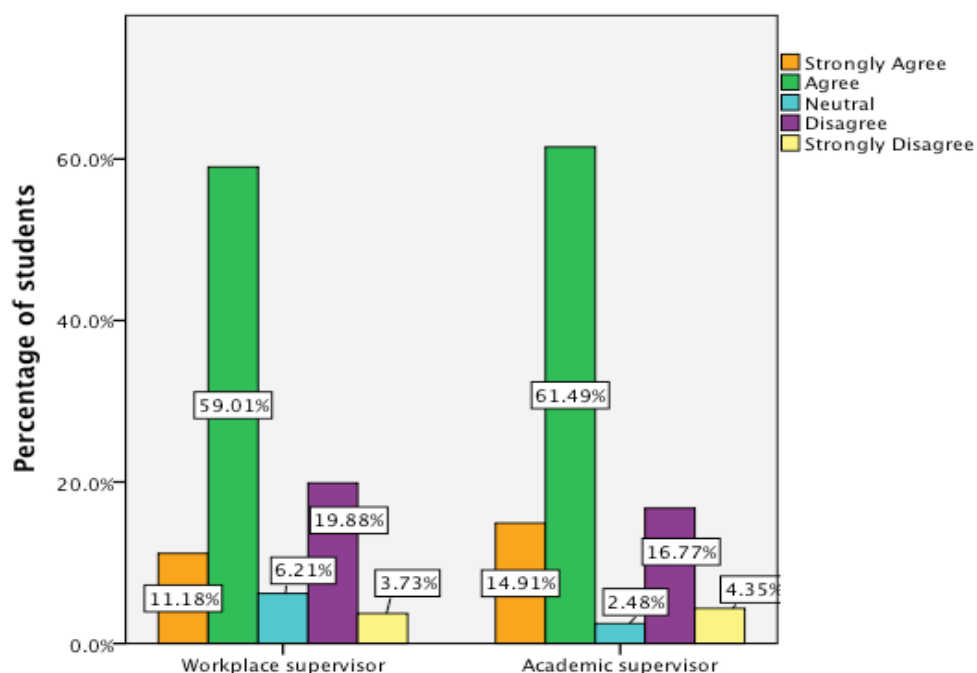


Figure 4.14: Graduate responses to a supervisor support received during WPL

Figure 4.14 shows that the support received during WPL, reported by graduates is just over half of the graduates' respondents (59.01%) who agreed that they received adequate support from workplace supervisors. On the other hand, 19.88% of graduates stated they did not receive support from their workplace supervisor. To better understand the support received, a cross-tabulation in Appendix S is provided. It was found that graduates who lacked support were mainly from educational institution 1 (11.2%), followed by educational institution 4 (5%), educational institution 2 (3.1%) and educational institution 3 (0.6%).

4.13.1.2 Issues during WPL attended to by academic supervisors

Figure 4.15 shows that more than half the graduates' dissatisfactions regarding WPL were dealt with efficiently by the academic supervisor. Only 21.7 % disagreed about the support received. A cross-tabulation in Appendix T reveals that these graduates were mainly from educational institution 1 (9.3%) and educational institution 4 (7.5%). Graduates who disagreed were from educational institution 2 (3.1%) and 3 (1.9%).

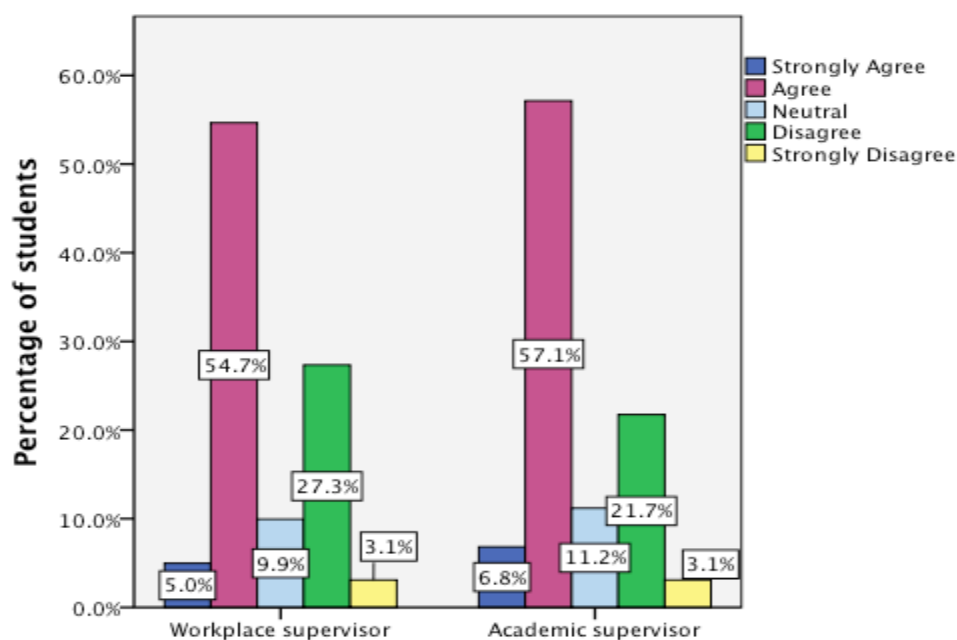


Figure 4.15: Tourism graduate dissatisfactions attended to efficiently

Overall, results indicate that workplace supervisors attended to more than half the graduates' dissatisfactions. However, a noteworthy finding is that 27.3% of the students were dismayed that their dissatisfactions were not attended to. To gain

greater information about each of the educational institution's workplace supervisors, the cross-tabulation in the Appendix U indicates that the highest number of students who disagreed were from educational institution 1 (13.7%) followed by educational institution 4 (8.1%), educational institution 2 (3.7%) and educational institution 3 (9.9 %).

4.13.2. Strategies used by workplace supervisors

In responding to study objective two, workplace supervision strategies were examined to identify the effectiveness of the multiple strategies used by the workplace supervisors to transfer skills during WPL. The most effective strategy during WPL, presented in Table 4.15, was student orientation preceding tasks performed (37.5 %). These were mainly effective all of the time for workplace supervisors.

Table 4.15: Effectiveness of teaching strategies

Teaching strategies	Some of the time	Yes, all the time	Total % n=32
Orientation to tasks	3.1%	0.0%	3.1%
Orientation then task performed under supervisor	21.9%	37.5%	59.4%
Problem solving	6.3%	6.3%	12.5%
Assigned tasks	18.8%	6.3%	25.0%
Total %	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

The least effective strategy was orientation of the tasks (3.1%). This is where the workplace supervisor explained to the students what should be done and that the onus was on the students to complete the task. Problem-solving tasks during WPL were both some/all of time effective (6.3%). However, it should be noted that none of these strategies were rated 'not at all' effective.

4.13.2.1 Student opportunities to showcase skills to workplace supervisors during WPL

The results illustrated earlier in Figure 4.13 resonate with graduates' and workplace supervisors' responses of opportunities given to students to display their skills to workplace supervisors during WPL. As shown in Figure 4.16, 44.10 % of students

always had the opportunity to display their skills to workplace supervisors during WPL

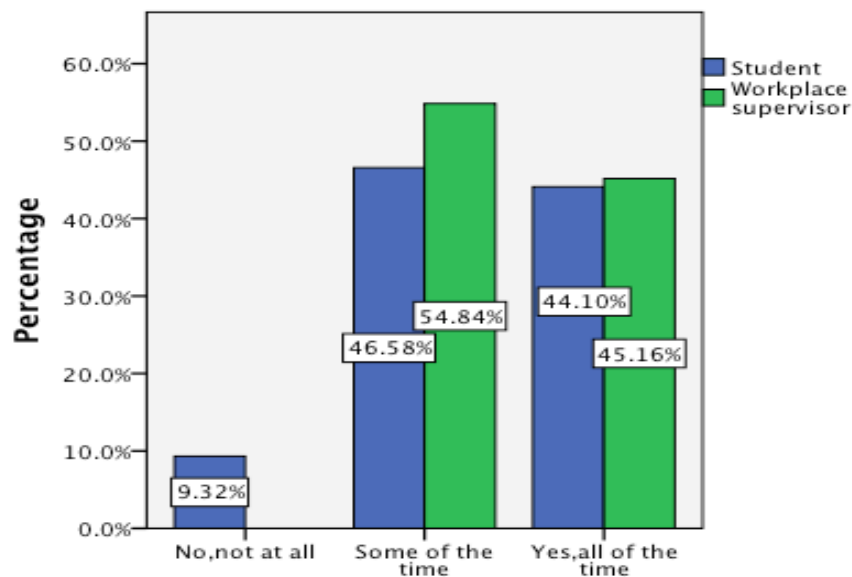


Figure 4.16: Student ability to display skills during WPL

The results also show that 45.16 % of workplace supervisors allowed students the opportunity to display their skills during WPL. However, another important finding is that 9.32% of students were unable to display their skills to the workplace supervisor during WPL.

4.14 Feedback on WPL to stakeholders

Feedback during WPL to stakeholders is a fundamental necessity to advance the success of the WPL module especially for its value in improved performance, sustained motivation and continued learning (Jackson 2015: 350, Robertson 2008: 6). Therefore, feedback has been explored to assist in evaluating the success of the WPL module to fulfil objective four of this study. Identification of how feedback is passed to stakeholders will inform important factors on graduates' employability resulting from WPL.

4.14.1 Feedback from academic supervisors

This section will present the existing format and arrangement for the feedback from the academic supervisor to the workplace supervisors and students during WPL.

4.14.1.1 Academic supervisors' feedback to graduates

The interview responses for feedback provided in Table 4.16 indicated that academic supervisors have various ways of receiving and issuing feedback to students during WPL. Academic supervisor A, from educational institution 1, communicated via e-mail and visitation at the student's workplace. Academic supervisor C appointed a lecturer at the educational institution 3 to receive students' areas of concern and provide feedback orally and to address these through the use of students' logbooks. Academic supervisor D used students' logbooks to provide necessary feedback in writing during the WPL process. Academic supervisor B from educational institution 2 provided oral feedback to students during their visitation or at the educational institution.

Table 4.16: Academic supervisor responses on the feedback channels from WPL to students during WPL

Educational institution	Feedback mechanisms
1	Communicating via e-mail and visitation
2	A lecturer appointed at educational institution addresses concerns and visitation.
3	Face-to face-feedback and through students' logbooks.
4	Through students' logbooks.

4.14.1.2 Academic supervisor feedback to workplace supervisors

Similar to the findings discussed above, as can be seen in Appendix V, academic supervisor A from educational Institution 1, provided feedback via e-mail and face to face meetings during visitation. Academic supervisor C from educational institution 3 used the students' logbooks to provide feedback to workplace supervisors. The results obtained during the interviews indicate that academic supervisors provide feedback only if necessary to the workplace supervisor. An interesting finding from academic supervisors' B and D shows that they do not communicate to workplace supervisors.

4.14.2 Workplace supervisor feedback to students on work performance during WPL

In Figure 4.17 a noteworthy finding is that workplace supervisors who participated in WPL at educational institution 2 give feedback to students during WPL. On the other hand, a lesser number of workplace supervisors linked to educational institution 1 (69.6%) and 3 (50%) indicated that they provided feedback to students during WPL. Thus, a minimum percentage of workplace supervisors stated that they did not provide feedback to students. The responding workplace supervisors were mainly associated with educational institution 4 (66.7%), 3 (50%) and 8.7% hosting graduates from educational institution 1.

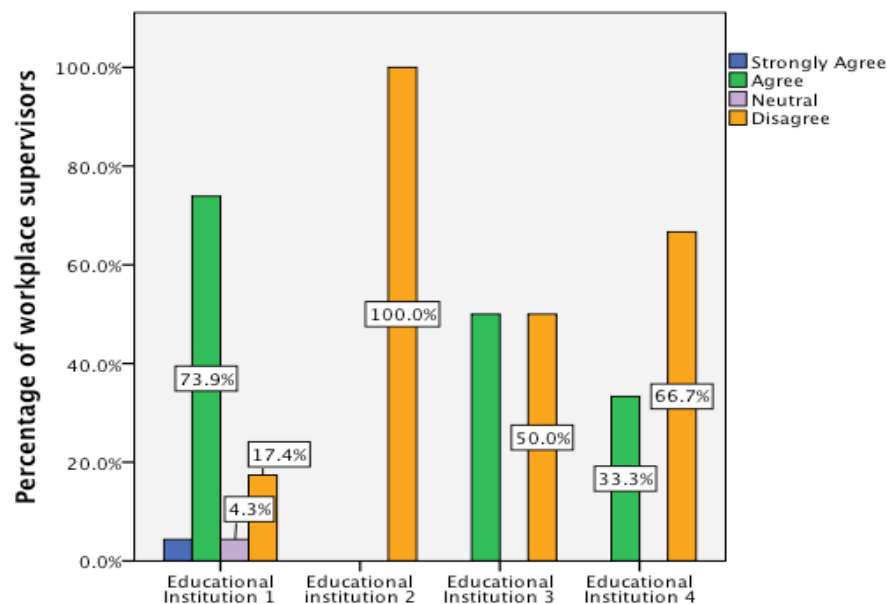


Figure 4.17: Performance feedback provided from workplace supervisors to students during WPL

4.14.2.1 Feedback between workplace and academic supervisors

The findings in Figure 4.18 are compatible with the results identified in Appendix W where the majority of academic supervisors were not provided with feedback by workplace supervisors on students' performance. All workplace supervisors hosting WPL students from educational institution 2 stated that they did not provide feedback to the academic supervisors. Of the workplace supervisors, those servicing WPL of

educational institution 1 provided the most feedback (73.9%) to academic supervisors.

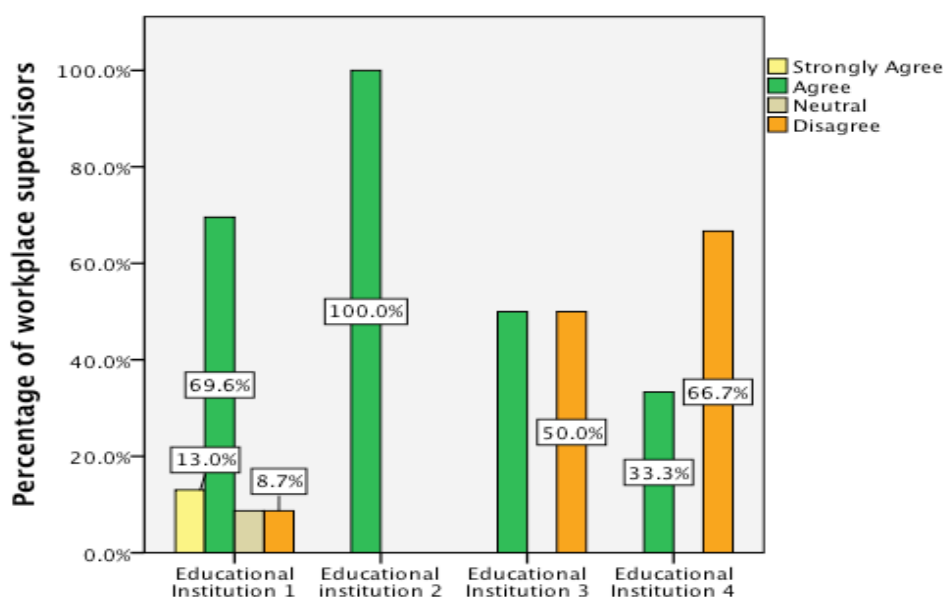


Figure 4.18: Feedback between workplace and academic supervisors

Academic supervisor A provided a substantial amount of feedback because the results in Table 4.16 indicated that the academic supervisor visited tourism organisations and communicated via e-mail to allow and encourage feedback. Only half of the workplace supervisors provided feedback to academic supervisors at educational institution 3 and 33.3% at educational institution 4.

4.14.3 Tourism graduates' feedback from their WPL

To verify the responses on feedback given to graduates from workplace and academic supervisors, graduates were asked to rate their responses on the five-point Likert scale. These responses are represented graphically on a bar graph for both the academic and workplace supervisors.

4.14.3.1 Tourism graduates' feedback from academic supervisors concerning WPL

In Figure 4.19 it shows that the majority of students (47.8%) stated that they received feedback from their academic supervisor of their WPL performance. Thirty-one percent of graduates did not receive feedback. In cross-examining the results presented in Appendix W, 15.5% of graduates from educational institution 1

disagreed that they receive feedback on their WPL. Students from educational 4 expressed the second highest concern (8.7%) in this regard, followed by educational institution 2 (3.7%) and 4 (3.1%).

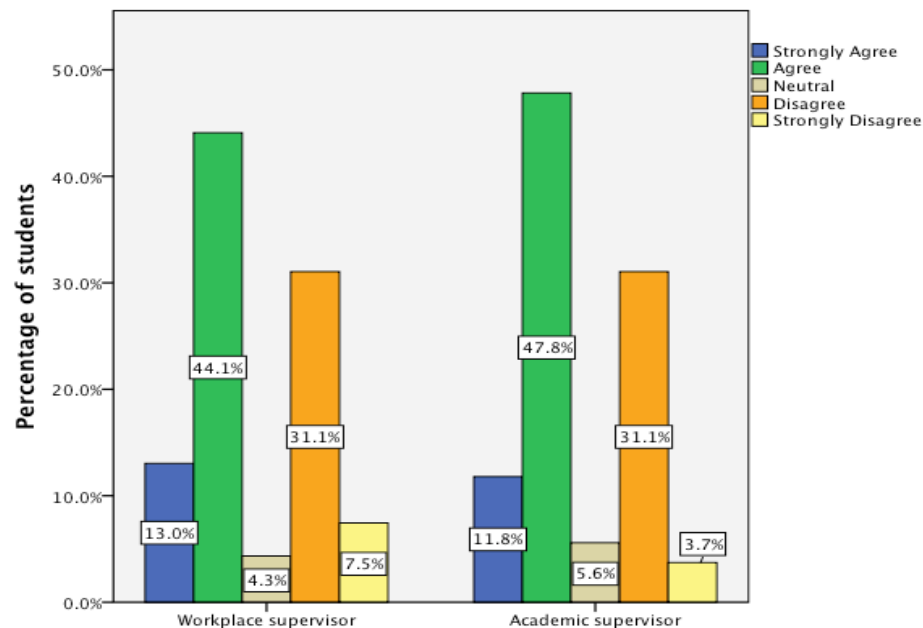


Figure 4.19: Communication feedback from workplace and academic supervisors to students during WPL

4.14.3.2 Tourism graduate feedback from workplace supervisors on WPL

As follows from Figure 4.19, over half of the graduates agreed (44.1%) to strongly agree (13%) on receiving feedback from their workplace supervisors. Conversely, as depicted in Appendix W, 31% of graduates did not receive feedback during WPL. These were from educational institutions: 1 (15.5%), 4 (8.1%), 2 (3.7%) and 3 (3.7%).

4.15 Assessment of WPL

Kundasami (2007: 38) explains that the major drawbacks of WPL assessment is that it limits students' opinion on assessments and, that there are differences in the preferred type of assessment for students among the workplace and academic supervisors. To account for criticisms around WPL assessment the researcher investigated stakeholders' responses to WPL assessment. The section that follows will show the basis of assessments, types of assessments preferred by stakeholders and the evaluation of WPL.

4.15.1 Preferred bases of assessment for WPL

In order to indicate their preferred basis for WPL assessments, respondents could select multiple answers from the list provided and add their preferences not on the list. In Figure 4.20, both workplace supervisors (52.9%) and students agree (49.6%) that the WPL module should be based on the work experience gained by graduates. The second preferred basis of WPL assessment was student's behaviour and professional conduct reported by 23.5% of workplace supervisors and 18% of students during WPL.

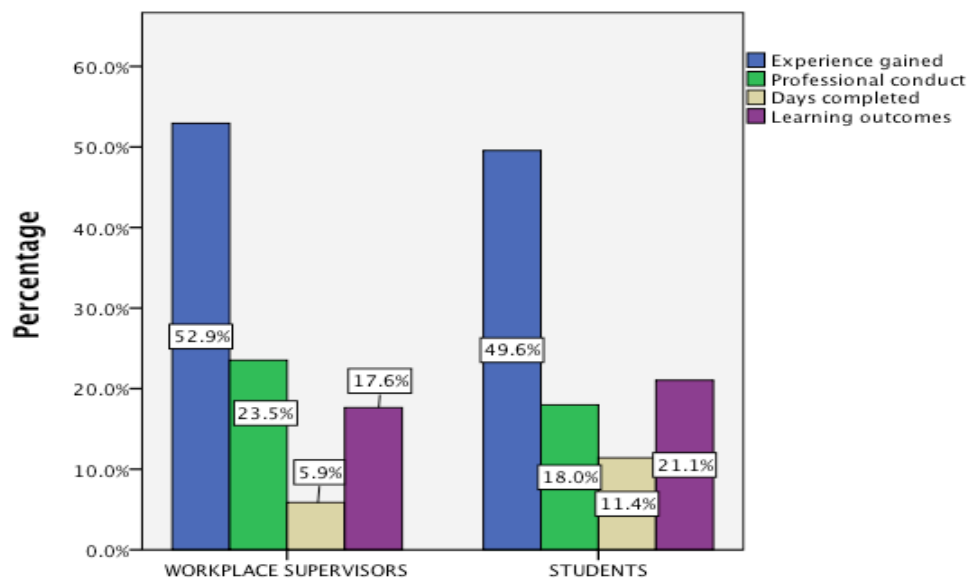


Figure 4.20: Workplace supervisors and students preferred basis of assessments

Both, workplace supervisors (59.5%) and graduates (11.4%) perceived the duration of work hours/days for assessment as being the least important basis of assessment. Appendix X indicates that 75% of academic supervisors' base assessment on learning outcomes of WPL, supported by 21.1% of graduates and 17.6 % of workplace supervisors.

4.15.2 Perceptions of WPL assessment instruments

Educational institution 2, 3 and 4 use logbooks as an assessment instrument of student performance of WPL. Educational institution 1 adopts student monthly reports. In addition, a set of defined assessment criteria for students learning in the workplace is provided to workplace supervisors to complete. Figure 4.21 reveals that

cohorts workplace supervisors (32.2%) and graduates (26.6%) prefer assessment by way of an oral presentation of students' skills and knowledge gained during WPL.

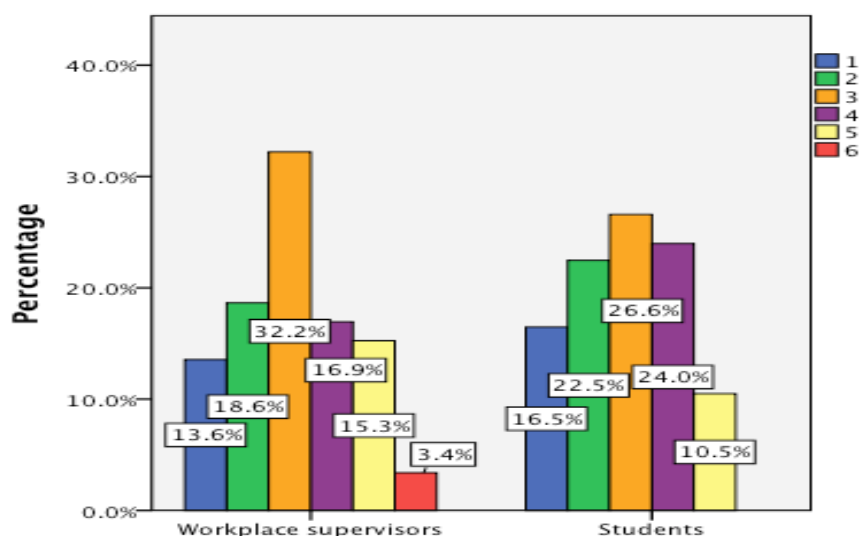


Figure 4.21: Preferred type of assessment instrument

Key	
1	Interview between academic supervisor, student and supervisor
2	Monthly written report covering work experience
3	Presentation covering skills/knowledge gained
4	Reference letter from the workplace supervisor
5	Work experience diary
6	Written reports every 2 months

Monthly reports by both students (22. 5%) and workplace supervisors (18. 6%) were also recommended for assessment. Three point four percent of the workplace supervisors of students from educational institution 1 suggested that report frequency should be every second month rather than six months. On the other hand, assessment by way of a work experience diary and interviews between the stakeholders were least preferred.

4.15.3 Factors determined for assessment of WPL

The fourth objective of this study set out to measure the success of WPL module on tourism employability. Two variables of interest that are linked to the verification of assessment emerged and which were considered significant for WPL assessments surveyed during the study. These are around the validity of an assessment

instrument being used at the educational institution and workplace supervisors' competence in assessment for employability.

4.15.4 Verification of assessment instrument

This section will indicate the availability of assessment instruments and assessment criteria and conclude with the verification from the WPL employer organisations. The qualitative results have been summarised in Figure 4.22 that academic supervisors B, C and D (75%) guarantee that the students' learning is administratively validated by the inclusion of the tourism organisation's stamp on students' logbooks. This is reported to confirm that the student has learned a specific skill during WPL. Only academic supervisor A visits workplace supervisors during WPL. However, from the qualitative data academic supervisor A, cannot verify if students are actually learning during WPL.

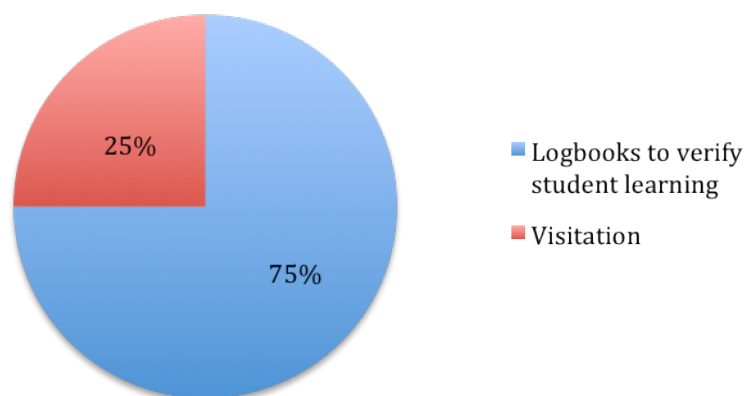


Figure 4.22: Academic supervisors' responses to ensuring appropriate assessment of WPL

The qualitative responses summarised in Appendix Y show that the primary reasons for students failing WPL is the non-completion of hours or failing to hand in their reports or logbooks on time. Other reasons identified were disciplinary issues, and not achieving the outcomes of WPL. An unintended consequence may be that although students have gained knowledge and experience accumulated during WPL, these do not assure a WPL pass by academic supervisors. As the attainment of learning outcomes is not based on time, the reliance on time spent impacts

negatively on reliability associated with assessing of students on the learning outcome of WPL

4.15.5 Competence of workplace supervisors for the assessment of WPL

A key aspect of WPL and of a workplace supervisor is student assessment. The empirical results in Table 4.17 indicate that all workplace supervisors had to ability to assess student learning during WPL. Workplace supervisors' (84.4%) agreed and strongly agreed (15.6%) to being confident and understand how they are to evaluate students during WPL.

Table 4.17: Ability to assess students during WPL

Educational institution	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total % of workplace supervisors
1	62.5%	9.4%	71.9%
2	9.4%	3.1%	12.5%
3	6.3%	3.1%	9.4%
4	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%
Total %	84.4%	15.6%	100.0%

4.16 Evaluating the success of WPL modules

Many benefits of WPL are accrued to educational institutions, to students and to tourism organisations; making WPL beneficial for educational institutions to implement. Stakeholders were asked to determine the success of the WPL module based on the study variables of interest.

4.16.1 Perceptions of tourism graduates of WPL success for their employability

The overall success of the WPL module as perceived by graduates is reflected in Table 4.18 and recognises WPL as a significant contributor to a graduates' tourism programme. The majority of graduates agreed (52.2%) and 15.5% strongly agreed that WPL was a success. However, 17.4% of graduates felt that WPL was not successful and 4.3% strongly disagreed.

Table 4.18: Cross-tabulation of tourism graduate success from WPL

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Total % n= 161
1	14.9%	34.2%	2.5%	4.3%	1.9%	57.8%
2	0.0%	1.9%	3.7%	1.9%	1.2%	8.7%
3	0.6%	9.3%	1.2%	1.9%	0.0%	13.0%
4	0.0%	6.8%	9.9%	2.5%	1.2%	20.5%
Total %	15.5%	52.2%	17.4%	10.6%	4.3%	100.0%

In comparing the success for each educational institution, Table 4.18 reveals that the WPL module was deemed unsuccessful for graduates from educational institution 2 (3.7%) and educational institution 4 (9.9%). Graduates (34.2%) from educational institution 1 and 9.3% from educational institution 3 found it successful.

4.16.2 Workplace supervisor perceptions of the success of the WPL modules for the tourism organisations

The results in Figure 4.23 shows that the majority of workplace supervisors found WPL beneficial to the tourism organisation. All workplace supervisors associated with WPL at educational institution 2 and 3 agreed that WPL contributed to their tourism organisation.

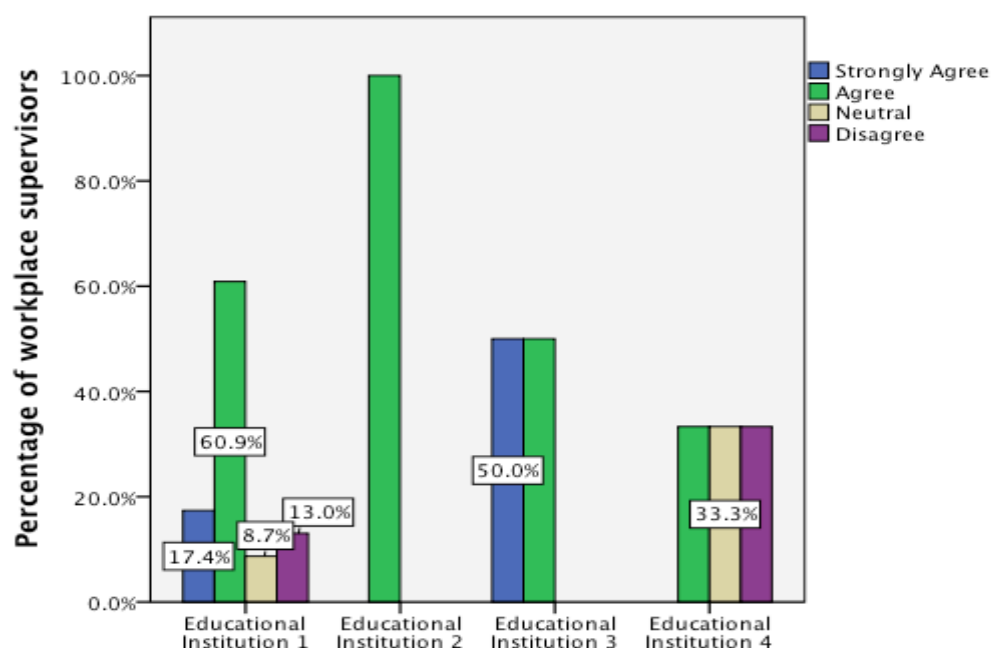


Figure 4.23: Workplace supervisors' responses to the success of WPL for tourism organisations

On the other hand, mixed responses by workplace supervisors servicing educational institution 1, 60.9% stated they aspect that was a success to their tourism organisation. In addition, 33.3% of workplace supervisors at educational institution 4 agreed that WPL was a success to their tourism organisation. The other workplace supervisors were neutral (33.3%) or disagreed (33.3%) on the success of WPL to the tourism organisation.

4.16.3 Parameters for measures of WPL success adopted by workplace supervisors

The previous section displayed results on workplace supervisors' perceived success of the WPL module to their tourism organisation. To further understand the reasons for workplace supervisors' rating WPL unsuccessful, Figure 4.24 highlights factors on which workplace supervisors base their assessment of success of WPL. As can be seen, 49% of workplace supervisors' assessment of the students' ability to perform tasks most influenced their estimation of the success of the WPL module. This is followed by 15% of workplace supervisors affirming that graduates should be employed after WPL and that they have knowledge of the tourism industry.

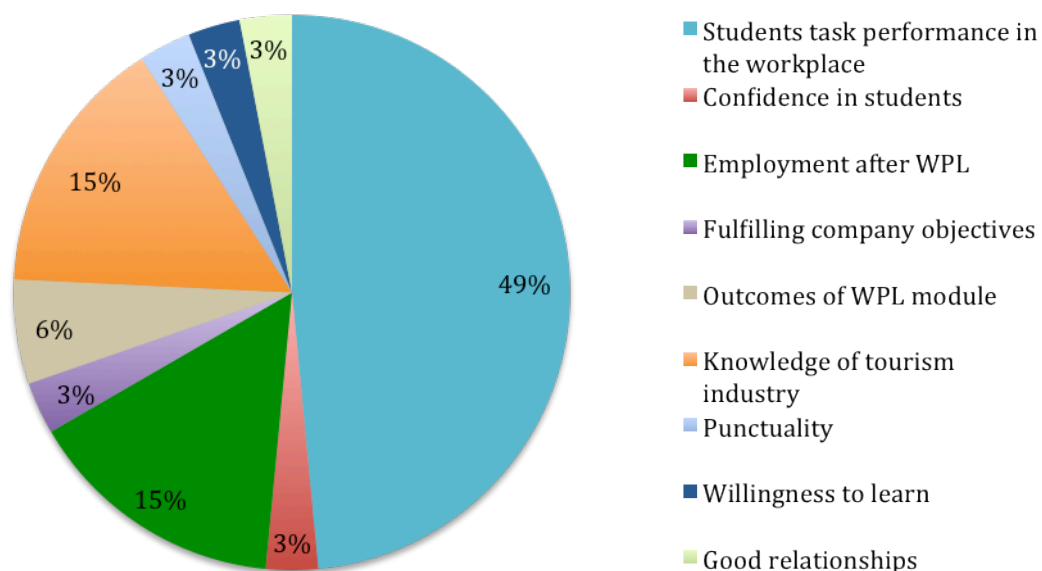


Figure 4.24: Workplace supervisors' indications of the success of WPL

4.16.4 Academic supervisors' measures of success for WPL modules

In evaluating educational institutions' inclusion of WPL in promoting tourism graduate employability, it is necessary to establish the determinants of success perceived by the academic supervisors at the educational institutions. Patrick *et al.* (2009: 38) found that resources such as the placement of students, transportation and funding determine the success of WPL. Academic supervisors' responses to determinants of WPL success will be presented in the sections that follow.

4.16.4.1 Resources required for successful implementation of WPL

The qualitative results from the interviews are summarised and tabulated in Table 4.19. Academic supervisors from educational institution 2, 3 and 4 have highlighted partnerships in the tourism industry as the greatest resource required for the successful implementation of WPL. In addition, academic supervisor A explained that the availability of vehicles to visit students during WPL would be useful. Another useful recommendation made by academic supervisor C is that more staff within the tourism programme should monitor WPL. Moreover, time by academic supervisor D was a major resource required in order to complete the necessary preparation for implementing WPL.

Table 4.19: Resources required by academic supervisors for WPL

Educational Institution	Contacts in industry	More lecturers	Transportation	Time
1 (Academic supervisor A)	0 %	0 %	25.0%	0 %
2 (Academic supervisor B)	25.0%	0 %	0 %	0 %
3 (Academic supervisor C)	25.0%	0 %	0 %	0 %
4 (Academic supervisor D)	25.0%	0 %	0 %	25.0%
Total %	100.0%	00.0%	25.0%	25.0%

4.16.4.2 Funding of the WPL modules

The subject fee for WPL is included in the students' tourism course fees of all four institutions. 50% of academic supervisors (C and D) from their interviews, declared that students should continue paying for the WPL module. However, academic supervisors A and B, illustrated in Appendix Z are of the view that WPL should be

funded; specifically, from the relevant Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

4.17 Submissions for improving the WPL modules

Stakeholders were asked to include their suggestions on improving the WPL module. The following recommendations have been themed and tabulated for each stakeholder.

4.17.1 Academic supervisor proposals to enrich WPL

Academic supervisors presented varied suggestions to augment WPL at the educational institutions in Table 4.20. An important finding from all academic supervisors indicates that there should be more involvement between the academic and workplace supervisors. Academic supervisor A mentioned that all tourism lecturers must visit the tourism organisations in order for them to understand the skills required for graduate employability. By doing so, this will enable academics to incorporate such skills in modules of the tourism course. The duration of the WPL module for graduates appears to be a common concern. Academic supervisors mentioned that increasing the duration of WPL will allow students to develop various employability skills needed for employment in tourism.

Table 4.20: Academic supervisor direct suggestions for WPL enhancement

Academic supervisors A	Academic supervisors B	Academic supervisors C	Academic supervisors D
Educational institution 1	Educational institution 2	Educational institution 3	Educational institution 4
Every tourism lecturer should have opportunity to visit industry during WPL	Increase the duration of WPL	Educational institution should be more involved in partnerships with tourism industry.	WPL committee at the educational institution should be more actively involved in WPL.
Implement aspects in tourism modules that are relevant to WPL	More supervision of students during the course of WPL (such as visits and communication with mentors)	Continue with the Diploma in Tourism Management and be more specific in their courses.	The duration of WPL lengthened.

4.17.2. Common themes amongst workplace supervisors for the improvement of WPL

The researcher identified six themes associated with the improvement of WPL at the educational institution highlighted in Figure 4.25. The main recommendation made by 29% of workplace supervisors was to enhance learning opportunities in the workplace. Workplace supervisors added that more should be done at the educational institutions to ensure students should receive good general knowledge of South Africa, GDS and better use of the English language.

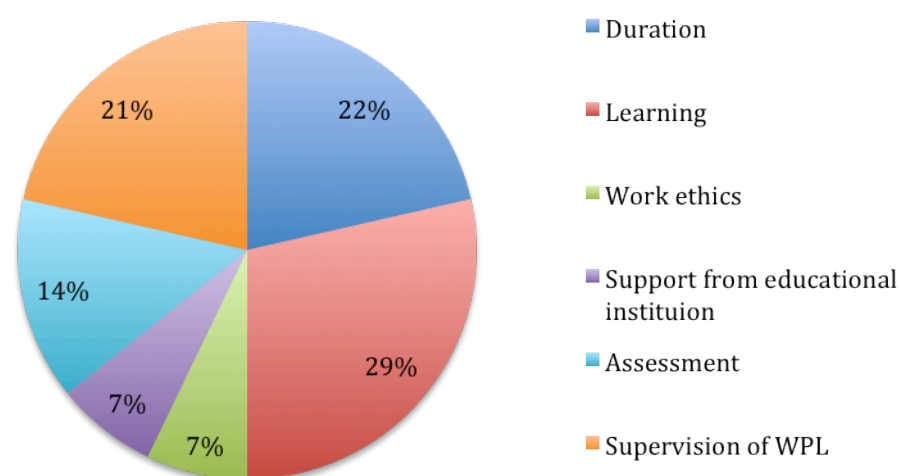
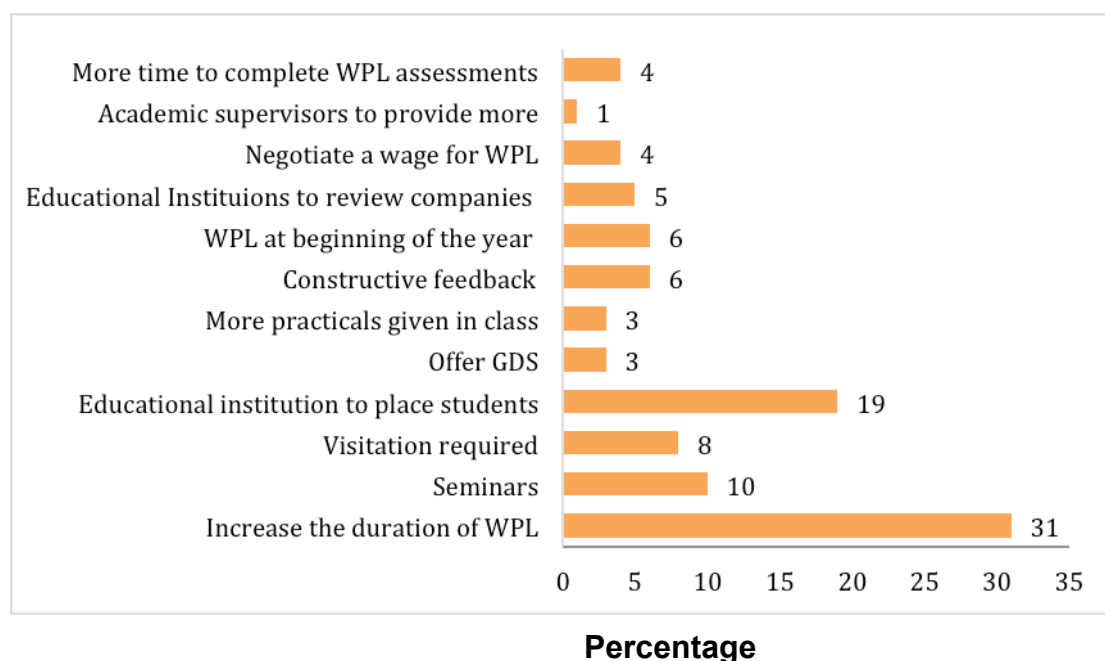


Figure 4.25: Workplace supervisor suggestions to improve WPL

Another suggestion from 22% of workplace supervisors is that the duration of WPL should be longer and more flexible to accommodate their working hours. Twenty-one percent of workplace supervisors indicated that under supervision, students should be given the opportunity to handle relevant tasks and have more than one supervisor during WPL. Other suggestions were that students should receive feedback on monthly reports from the academic supervisor (14%), improve students' understanding of work ethics (7%) and receive more support from the educational institution (7%),

4.17.3 Tourism graduate proposals for the improvement of WPL

The recommendations offered by graduates are summarised in Figure 4.26 into 12 themes. The recommendation offered by 31% of students is that the duration of WPL should be extended. Nineteen percent of graduates also suggested that academic supervisors should assist in placing students in better more relevant tourism organisations for WPL. Furthermore, the CHE (2004:11) advises the academic supervisors should provide that placement. Ten percent of graduates suggested that the educational institution should host seminars in preparation for WPL on the WPL module, thus exposing them to the WPL benefits and briefing them on tourism employers, earnings in the tourism industry and job opportunities. Other graduates' recommendations were that academic supervisors visit tourism organisations (8%) and provide constructive feedback on WPL reports (6%).



4.18 Conclusion

This empirical part of this study gathered data on the impact of the WPL module on skills and employability of students. The chapter began by describing the demographics of each stakeholder. More substantive data from stakeholders indicated that there were many benefits of WPL for graduate employability. Tourism graduates benefited through gaining exposure to the industry and enhancing their skills. Academic supervisors found WPL beneficial in strengthening partnerships in the tourism industry and for workplace supervisors engaging in CSR. Despite the

many benefits and relevance of WPL, this study found challenges associated with the implementation of WPL by both tourism graduates and academic supervisors. The major challenge of WPL is the location of and optimal work station placement of students.

Stakeholder perception has also been presented in this section. Mean scores represented stakeholders' results of the skills required for employment. There were variations in the preferred skills for employability from each stakeholder. Tourism graduates' discrepancies in their perception of employment pre-and post-WPL indicates a need for further discussion, which among other areas will be addressed in the next chapter.

The next section will provide an interpretation of the literature reviewed against the empirical results found in this study. The empirical findings will also be examined to explain the results presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the empirical results obtained from stakeholders in workplace learning (WPL) modules involving students, workplace and academic supervisors, were presented. While the discussion from the empirical study is mainly led by the quantitative results, appropriate qualitative responses will be offered to support the quantitative data. The conclusions derived from the literature review on the study variables are presented first, followed by a discussion of the empirical results, which are then interpreted with regard to each of the study's objectives and the literature. Thereafter, a discussion of practical and theoretical implications of each objective will follow. As mentioned in Chapter Three, this study is practical and descriptive in nature, and hence will discuss more practical rather than theoretical implications.

5.2 Workplace supervisor transfer of capabilities to tourism students

The mechanisms used by workplace supervisors for the transfer of skills to enhance tourism students' employability were the focus of objective one of this study. Many areas critical to student employability in the sector were found to be in the hands of workplace supervisors.

5.2.1 Critical areas raised in the literature

As expected, there is abundant literature that places workplace supervisors in pivotal positions to impart skills to students during the WPL experience (Meyer and Fourie 2004: 88; Martin and Hughes 2011: 19; Kim and Park 2013: 72; Ariffin *et al.* 2014: 93). Workplace supervisors contribute either to the success or failure of WPL (Tse 2010: 256). Keating (2012: 93), in support of Trigwell *et al.* (1999), clearly expresses that workplace supervisors need to support and inspire students towards their career development and positively shaping their perceptions of the tourism industry.

Consequently, Martin and Hughes (2011: 23) address the concern of the limited information available on how skills are applied during WPL. There is an apparent

dearth of literature on the activities employed by workplace supervisors in the transfer of skills during WPL. Beyond workplace supervision, there is limited information available on who students were learning from during WPL (Spowart 2011: 25). Although it is said that workplace supervisors are the drivers of students' learning; there is a lack assurance that students are actually acquiring knowledge in the workplace due to the limited feedback between academic supervisors and students.

Students believe WPL will enhance their employability (Brauns 2013: 1; Hughes *et al.* 2013:2 69), as it serves as a probationary period, where they can develop their skills for employability. Kim and Park (2013: 71) detect challenges in the domain of workplace supervisors that hamper student learning. Amongst the challenges are the negative attitudes of workplace supervisors that may be attributed to not being paid to supervise students; a lack of support from educational institutions; the pressures of meeting business objectives; and because workplace supervisors feel pressured in an already busy work environment.

All WPL strategies for tourism student employment are underpinned by feedback. Amongst other things, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 42) describe feedback as an important component in evaluating the transferability of skills. Robertson (2008: 6) further explains that feedback assists students to understand their strengths and weaknesses, thereby improving their skills for employment.

Tse (2010: 252) reveals that students learn through the observation and practice of skills in the workplace. Jackson (2015: 360), however, found that learning is hampered by the short durations of WPL, a lack of support for WPL, and a lack of resources for its development. The optimal duration of WPL remains an ongoing debate between researchers in the field, which focuses on producing employable graduates and measures for smoother transitioning into the workplace (Busby, Airey and Tribe 2005; Fidgeon 2010: 712; Smith-Ruig 2014: 77).

5.2.2 Discussion from the empirical study

The sections that follow provide an interpretation of the empirical study. The section will begin by discussing the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices for developing graduate employability skills. Thereafter, a discussion entailing the limited teaching and learning practices, challenges facing students in seeking to transition in the workplace, and challenges faced by workplace supervisors in the transferral of skills, is presented.

5.2.2.1 Effectiveness of teaching and learning practice

The researcher found that one effective technique used by workplace supervisors for the transferal of skills was to orientation of the task, followed by its demonstration (Table 4.15). However, the range of teaching strategies in enhancing students' skills for employment was found to be limited. Beyond the current results, the limited strategies were also observable from the theories studied in literature review (Section 2.12 of Chapter Two).

The current study is interrelated with the transferability mechanisms highlighted in the employability framework (Table 2.2), which aided in the data analysis. The findings given in Table 2.2 were useful in analysing the types of activities students should be provided with to develop skills for employability in the workplace. For example, self-confidence is rated in the top five by workplace supervisors as desirable attitude employers normally require students to possess. However, the empirical findings, depicted in in Figure 4.6 and Table 4.8, identified that learning aimed at developing skills in workplace activities, such as decision-making and contributing to the operations of the tourism organisations, are inadequately developed. Therefore, developing activities around these help build the requisite self-confidence in students to hone their skills.

In addition, workplace supervisors ranked teamwork and co-operation the most important abilities required for employment. In order to entrench teamwork and co-operation skills, the employability framework (Table 2.2) suggests group activities and brainstorming as being effective when activities that should be used to transfer such teamwork skills. To ensure these skills are appropriately embedded in the

students, the teaching mechanisms alluded to in Table 2.2 are valuable in contributing to the student WPL experience.

It is evident from the current investigation that learning strategies in Table 4.9 are effective for employment; this is an indication that graduates perceived that WPL contributed to their employability. In analysing the strategies used by the workplace supervisors to enhance student skills, the following points were identified and influenced the discussion on tourism graduate employability.

5.2.2.1.1 Orientation to tasks preceding their demonstration

Workplace supervisors found that task-performances under supervision, were most effective in student learning during WPL (Table 4.15). This teaching strategy supports students during work placement. It should, however, be noted that not all workplace supervisors found orientation, along with demonstration of the task, to always be effective for transferring skills in the workplace. This result could be attributed to two factors discovered from the empirical findings. Firstly, that the majority of workplace supervisors had supervised WPL for less than a year (Table 4.2) which could suggest that they have limited experience in teaching strategies to provide sufficient support to students during WPL. Secondly, workplace supervisors had too little time to teach or supervise students, due to existing work commitments.

5.2.2.1.2 Verbal orientation to tasks versus orientation using demonstration of tasks

A verbal orientation to the tasks alone was found to not always be an effective strategy during WPL (Table 4.15). This implied that student knowledge of the tasks was not always appropriate to their learning, and should be accompanied by actual task performance. This finding confirms that above and beyond classroom learning activities, WPL is beneficial with regard to future graduate employability (Cooper *et al.* 2010: 91).

By workplace supervisors integrating both orientation and demonstration during WPL, the quality of the learning experiences this provides is enhanced. Graduates are further enabled to reflect on their new experiences and develop a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of work practices, when workplace supervisors supply

an orientation to the tasks (Jackson 2015: 353). Orientation significantly impacts learning by reflection, as it allows students to integrate theory into practice and transitions students' skills successfully in the workplace.

The results indicated that it is not only the style of teaching and learning strategy that are important for the success of WPL, but also support of workplace supervisors that enhances graduates' learning. Additionally, students' observation of workplace operations further develops and enhances their employability skills. Academic and workplace supervisors were both found to be important for ongoing support and guidance in a graduate development. Unsupportive workplace supervisors make transitioning into the workplace difficult, as students are unable to develop their skills in environments where tension and conflict exists (Jackson 2015: 359). Orientation provided by the academic supervisors prior to WPL is also crucial for effective transitioning in the workplace (Cooper *et al.* 2010: 90).

5.2.2.1.3 Effectiveness of problem-solving strategies used by workplace supervisors

Although analytical thinking skills which encompass problem-solving skills, are appreciated by workplace supervisors for employability (Table 4.8), interestingly, workplace supervisors indicated that problem-solving strategies were less effective for students during WPL. This difference suggests that most students were not capable of performing problem-related tasks in the workplace, which might erode graduate work- readiness for future employability in tourism.

Another challenge in developing problem-solving skills is established from the findings presented in Figure 4.7. Workplace supervisors address concerns that student performing problem-related tasks, with their lack of guidance potentially impacts on the reputations of tourism organisations. Such lack of opportunities might have hindered the development of other qualities, such as self-confidence, which is essential for employment in the tourism industry.

5.2.2.1.4 Effectiveness of task assignment to WPL

The current study reveals (Table 4.15) that when workplace and academic supervisors simply assigned tasks to students during work placement, that this was only sometimes effective. Nonetheless, if student learning outcomes are achieved, they are more likely to perceive their workplace experiences as authentic, as they grow to be positive about the significance of work-placement. The empirical findings showed that tasks given to students were enjoyable, and that students were therefore in a better position to receive learning during WPL. The majority of students expressed their satisfaction with the tasks performed; and amongst the telling responses received were:

“Yes as I used to work with events and meet different people who are key role players within the tourism industry”

“Yes I did, it allowed me to grow with the company and develop my skills.”

On the other hand, task assignment may be attributed in part to sub-optimal workplace supervisors' skills expectation of students during WPL. The study identified that academic supervisors provide a logbook or a rubric of tasks to be completed, which is generated ahead of time, based on the skills the educational institution perceive important to learn during WPL. This indicates that there is a lack of employer involvement for development for smoother transitioning of students for employability. Furthermore, workplace supervisors did not understand their educational responsibilities in the WPL modules, and were therefore unable to develop the students' skills, as required by the educational institutions.

5.2.2.2 Challenges in transitioning students during WPL

A significant number of graduates' experienced knowledge gaps in tourism technology. In addition, students performed inappropriate tasks and found that the constrained duration of WPL challenged its effectiveness during WPL.

5.2.2.2.1 Technology

Despite graduates' enjoyment of the tasks performed, 29.19% of the respondents censure their classroom learning as not adequately preparing them to gain fully from placement in the tourism industry. Figure 4.26 reveals that graduates had expressed their concern about the limited learning and a lack of competence in Global Distribution Systems (GDS) for smoother transitioning in the workplace. More especially for students who were in work placement in the transportation sectors, as Table 4.2 reveals that 21.9% of workplace supervisors represent this sector for WPL at the educational institution.

Students who had studied GDS as part of their curricula advised that GDS should be in place before entering the industry. The general opinion of GDS competence can be summarised in these comments received from two students:

"The Galileo course could be done earlier in the year, so when we go into industry, we are aware."

"They should also include Galileo course"

A discrepancy appears to exist in the perception of the skills required for employment between students and workplace supervisors (Table 4.8). Such a discrepancy suggest that there was a lack of common understanding of what should be taught to students during WPL, which impacted on effective transitioning in the workplace for advancing graduate employability.

5.2.2.2.2 Incongruous tasks during WPL

Although WPL modules were systematically implemented and students supported in this learning by their workplace supervisors, there was no guarantee that the intended learning guidelines are being followed. Task-allocation also falls within the ambit of workplace supervisors (Table 4.10). Inappropriate task-allocation hinders effective learning in the workplace, since students perform tasks outside of their specified learning outcomes during WPL. Interestingly, some academic supervisors expressed an awareness of students performing non-aligned tasks during WPL. Although students were able to discuss a lack of learning with their academic

supervisors, it was found that due to a lack of available WPL placements, no remedial action was taken. As a result, students are sometimes exposed to idle time and tasks that were incongruous with WPL and often did not provide the opportunity to develop outcome based competencies. Moreover, unrealistic employer expectations of student roles in WPL, and other responsibilities in the workplace hinder students in developing their skills for employability.

Providing students with real-world opportunities during WPL was found to be essential career-wise, since it contributed toward graduate employability. Workplace supervisors (Table 4.8) rate customer service first and self-confidence seventh and assess students based on their ability to deal with customers (Figure 4.24). However, it was found that students were seldom given opportunities to present themselves (Figure 4.16), and were therefore not able to take the initiative and engage with customers in the workplace. These factors challenge the mandate of educational institutions, as they have to consider how to appropriately partner with workplace supervisors, in order to receive support for student learning.

5.2.2.2.3 The influence of duration on reflective WPL

Amongst the notable learning mechanisms used for WPL, the ability of students to reflect during WPL activities was significant in developing employability skills. The association between WPL and reflection (Figure 4.10) showed that activities, such as evaluating the completed tasks and the provision of workplace and academic supervisor feedback to students, were considered valuable for enhancing skills for graduate employability. These activities enabled students to reflect on their work-placement activities in advancing their skills for employability.

The duration of the WPL modules plays an integral aspect in the transfer of skills. More than half of the students responded (Table 4.14) that the durations of WPL were insufficient to effectively enhance student skills and employability. Graduates who completed WPL at educational institutions 2, 3 and 4, expressed disagreement with the 150-hour durations of WPL. Although there was insufficient data from the primary study to support any justification for a lack of reflection, Jackson (2015: 360)

does suggest that this short duration may be attributed to a lack of programme time to adequately develop skills during work placement.

5.2.2.2.4 Adequacy of information provision

Following the earlier discussion on the challenges for smoother transitioning, graduates lacked information about the tourism industry on vital matters, such as employment opportunities, their workplace supervisors' expectations and their expected stipend. Additionally, graduate respondents suggested that organising seminars at the educational institution, the inclusion of practical learning, such as roleplaying and excursions within the tourism courses (Figure 4.26). In doing so, this would further assist in developing student skills in the tourism industry, and bridge the gap of difficulties encountered in the workplace. This suggests that graduates expect that their educational institutions had a responsibility to provide assistance in their progression into the workplace during WPL.

5.2.2.3 The quality of placement for students

WPL placement was shown to be challenging for both students and academic supervisors, and hampered the transferability of skills. Graduates from educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 expressed the most dissatisfaction regarding their placements. They were required to locate their own placements, and completed WPL in their own time. The empirical findings also established that some students were not even placed in tourism organisations during WPL. This questions the value of the views of educational institutions concerning student placement, and the gaps in the quality promotion of WPL policies, as students were being assessed on learning for performing tasks unrelated to tourism. Additionally, this negatively affected a graduate's opportunity to develop relevant skills to advance their employability in tourism.

However, from the perspective of academic supervisors, learning strategies to enrich the value and quality of work placements require industry support, which was often resource-dependent. Academic supervisors claimed that resources to perform site visits were limited. Additionally, potential WPL tourism organisations with potential for enhancing WPL were already involved in arrangements with other educational

institutions. This was not surprising, as competition for placements worsened with rising student numbers (Martin *et al.* 2012: 27), and by WPL becoming more prevalent in the tourism curricula. Moreover, industry support is hampered by the lack of time and physical resources available for workplace supervisors to supervise students during WPL, thus holding back the development of graduates' skills for employability.

5.2.2.4 Feedback between workplace and academic supervisor

Feedback amongst WPL stakeholders constituted a central part of learning. Feedback from workplace supervisors assists in identifying areas of weaknesses in a student development. This study's findings (Figure 4.18) indicated that feedback from the workplace supervisors to the academic supervisors was inadequate. Lapses in feedback on a student progress between academic and workplace supervisors resulted in a lack of awareness of the challenges students encountered during WPL. This gap hindered the transferability of skills in the workplace. A parallel lack of regular communication further exacerbated the acquisition of student potential for tourism graduate employability.

The empirical results indicate a gap in teaching practice, as workplace supervisors were not invited to participate in the feedback on WPL teaching mechanisms at educational institutions. Such inadequate feedback could create potential mismatches in curricula alignments, as the academic supervisors do not acknowledge the workplace supervisor feedback on skills for employment. This type of information gap, between the academic and workplace supervisor, can well result in workplace supervisors not knowing how to mentor students during WPL.

The researcher found that students performed inadequate extra-curricular tasks during WPL. These negative responses regarding the sufficiency of tasks performed during WPL was attributed to a lack of communication between stakeholders which has been identified in both theory and practice.

Many graduates specifically pointed out the greater value of constructive and positive feedback during WPL for smoother transitioning of employability skills. The feedback

provided by workplace supervisors to students and academic supervisors was often limited, and this represented a significant gap to be considered for WPL quality enhancement. This point was emphasised by graduates' who suggested:

"That supervisors give feedback on the student with the student and lecturer present."

"More support from the lecturers and day visits to see how students are performing."

Ongoing, workplace supervisor recommendations for the inclusion of skills are vital for aligning curricula and enhancing student learning to ensure that graduates are employable.

5.2.3 Practical implications

Many of the findings present in this study are consistent with literature. To begin with, the empirical findings confirmed Keating's (2012: 97) observation that the role of workplace supervisors is an important component for facilitating WPL. Also evident in the research is Tse's (2010: 252), contention that students' learning is made effective through the teaching of practical skills. The present study confirms graduates' positive view on the large contribution of WPL on the development of skills for employment.

This present study found that orientation is an essential component of learning during WPL. The process involves beginning with support from the workplace supervisor and then inviting the student to assist in completing the task (Cooper *et al.* 2010: 85). The student then attempts the tasks alone, with support from the workplace supervisor gradually fading. Moreover, Cooper *et al.* (2010: 85) add that, through orientation, students can seek clarification, analyse the tasks and evaluate its activities for performance. Therefore, workplace supervisors can best prepare students for learning by orientation with the tasks required for developing their employability skills.

Keating's (2012: 95) study supports Trigwell *et al.* (1999: 67), who suggest that in developing students for employment, workplace supervisors should not only focus on

the mechanisms for transferring capabilities but also provide a working environment that develops students' personalities, and gives them competencies to cope within the industry. The results of the current study reveals that opportunities for students to showcase their skills during WPL were often limited. This shortcoming is attributed to the prioritisation in the workplace of meeting business objectives (Keating 2012: 35). There is a need for workplaces to accept that they are a partner in the learning project and provide a stable, important learning venue. A need to ensure that the WPL periods are convenient to workplaces for effective transitioning of student skills was also established.

The empirical findings reveal the importance of fully understanding the dimensions for the placement of students during WPL, and its impact on positive student views on the contribution of WPL in the development of their skills for employment. The limited placements for students to participate in WPL, negatively impacts the effectiveness of developing skills for tourism graduate employability. It is therefore fundamental that academic and workplace supervisors also provide access to quality placements for students, in order to make their transition in the workplace more seamless.

This recurring pattern in the study indicated that interaction on the WPL learning outcome, and the WPL timing are important for graduate employability. Kim and Park (2013: 75) found that the short duration of WPL resulted in less interaction between workplace supervisors and students. It is fundamental to successful WPL that educational institutions and placement organisations open communications seeking consensus on these two imperatives. Workplace supervisors are an integral part of WPL, as they guide the professional development of students. Consequently, workplace supervisors need to be enthusiastic and wish to supervise students during WPL.

The challenges experienced during WPL are consistent with studies by Kim and Park (2013: 76) and Bamford (2012: 35) particularly on the feedback provided between workplace and academic supervisors at educational institutions. The empirical findings also showed that time constraints impact on delivering feedback and must

be addressed in enhancing the student learning process, in order to identify graduate's strengths and weaknesses of developing employability skills. As suggested by Richardson *et al.* (2013: 282), this implies that there is a need for academic and workplace supervisors to prioritise their shared goals, thus raising the relevance of feedback. Therefore, it is suggested that providing workplace supervisors with meaningful modes to deliver feedback, will advance richer feedback to the student during WPL.

Moreover, the data obtained on students performing inadequate tasks during WPL is largely consistent with the trends of prior studies (Sattler 2011: 81; Bamford 2012: 38; Osuwu-Mintah and Kissi 2012: 523; Wang *et al.* 2014: 87). WPL needs transparency regarding issues challenging students to develop skills for employability. This reinforces the need for academic supervisors to ensure placement is compulsory for students, provided by the educational institution, and better managed by the workplace supervisor. Understanding roles and responsibilities, and providing solutions, will assist workplace supervisors in achieving learning outcomes for graduate careers.

This study indicated severe shortcomings in assurances of learning during accumulated work placement. There is insufficient workplace accreditation implemented by educational institutions to ensure that students are provided with quality learning experiences during WPL. Greater accountability by academic supervisors to advance higher levels of self-regulation for WPL is important. WPL should be an integral part of the tourism qualification. Limited accountability will often result in students feeling exploited, and difficulty in transitioning themselves for skills required for employment in tourism.

A student lacking skills during WPL makes their transitioning into the workplace difficult; a student's failure to perform a task impacts on the supervisor's assessment of the student, and demotivates them for employment (Cooper *et al.* 2010: 89). Furthermore, the authors identify that facilitating learning in the workplace may not always be effective, since students are guided by educational institutions' guidelines

for WPL. Students therefore, require sophisticated enabling skills, which are difficult to accomplish because of the learning guides.

5.2.4 Theoretical implications

This study reveals multiple teaching strategies within tourism organisations. The transfer of skills to students during WPL is not only a problem to students but to researchers and practitioners as well. Therefore, it is important to evaluate learning and development activities and its effects on a graduate's employability.

There is indeed limited empirical research on students actually learning in the workplace and from whom they are learning (Martin and Hughes 2011: 23). This suggests that there is scope for strategies where skills are utilised. Yet, there is still work to be done in raising awareness amongst theorists and practitioners as to whether students actually learn during WPL. The purpose of WPL is to ensure students are equipped with the necessary skills for employment. However, it was found in this study that WPL was often poorly designed and did not meet its objectives. This study resonates with a study conducted by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 30), who posit that academic supervisors of WPL often assume and rely specifically on workplace supervisors to transfer necessary skills to students. Thus, learning theory from both a andragogical and pedagogical view could be suitable to identify how each hinders or facilitates learning within the tourism organisation.

Feedback is an important component of WPL for the development of skills for graduates' employability. As discussed in the previous section, delivery of feedback was inadequate to stakeholders for the development of skills for employability. A research gap identified from the empirical findings includes the need to identify successful feedback models required for the different types of WPL practices at educational institutions.

5.3 Recognising skills for graduate employability

The study's second objective was to better understand the relationships between the perceptions of academic and workplace supervisors regarding the skillsets required for graduate employability. This is crucial as adequately preparing students with

career-specific skills is an on-going need for both the tourism industry and educational institutions.

5.3.1 Contextual issues of skills for employment

The notion of vocational employability in tourism challenges concepts of Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and raises the question of what the role of HEIs is in this sector. Some tourism employers blame HEIs for a lack of alignment and integration in curricula. On the other hand, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 28) argue that education should not be driven by industry.

With the distressing increase in youth unemployment in South Africa, it is important to determine whether or not the WPL modules benefits students and contribute to their skills development (Writer 2015). This is even more worrisome when considering the views offered by students and employees. For example, as a result of the high, qualified youth unemployment rates, many students contend that there is a lack of jobs within the tourism industry post-graduation, while employers feel that graduates are insufficiently skilled to complete these tasks (Roney and Oztin 2007: 5; Bamford 2012: 16).

A significant issue regarding the employability of graduates in tourism is the multi-sectorial nature of the industry, which results in a variation of skillsets required from sector to sector. In addition, Strietska and Tessaring (2005: 9) highlight that the tourism industry requires both basic and specific skills knowledge, such as foreign languages. Consequently, the question arises as to how educational institutions adequately prepare graduates to obtain the skills required for general and sectorial employment during WPL.

5.3.2 Discussion from the empirical findings

WPL has contributed positively to the skill development of graduates. The findings presented in Table 4.11 indicated that the vast majority of student respondents were able to adapt skills learnt in the classroom to the workplace, which also enhanced their employability.

A graduate emphasised that: *“I got to experience and partake in the practical aspect of the academic course.”*

This statement reflects a fundamental expectation of the graduates. Although students learn these skills in the classroom settings, engaging in those activities deepens experience and thus skills for employability. Graduates confirmed the importance of WPL in assisting to effectively translate the theories they had learned into practice:

“It is all linked. The work environment helps put what we learned in the class into practice.”

“We learn how to apply the modules to real situations.”

5.3.2.1. Appraisal of skills for employability

This section includes a discussion of the empirical findings with regard to the importance of skills ratings for employment, skill mismatches, and the lack of skills required for tourism graduate employability. The three stakeholders targeted for the study demonstrated a considerable range of views on the skills that are important and desired for employability. The discussion that follows is based on the top five important skills rated highly by students.

5.3.2.2 Technological expertise

Technological skills accessed by graduates during WPL were considered particularly beneficial for employment in the tourism industry. During WPL, students observed and evaluated the use of technology at their workstations. The results allude in particular to the use of GDS in the travel sector. Such shortcomings impacted on a student's confidence to perform and learn during WPL. Several graduates criticised their educational institution for not adequately preparing them to use technology in the workplace. This sentiment is borne out by graduates who expressed that:

“The learning institutes could provide some pre-hand training on some of the systems used within the tourism industry. For example, Galileo or Amadeus training to acquire certification, to make it easier for students to work on the

systems, as they would have a bit of knowledge and experience of working on the system.”

“...the only thing that should be enhanced is receiving access to learn in-depth, different systems, such as Galileo or Amadeus, especially if placed in the transport and accommodation sector.”

“I learned about the working environment, how they do certain things. Our college did not have the necessary equipment, so WPL helped apply our knowledge to what we were taught at college.”

The conflict of opinions evident between graduates ranking technological skills first for employment and academic supervisors ranking this skill tenth, points to the need to address the obvious gap. This discrepancy in the results implies that workplace supervisors require students to independently develop skills or expect them to already possess them, prior to work placement.

Workplace supervisors however assess students based on their abilities to display their technological skills in the workplace. WPL contributes to developing technological skills, which in turn contributed towards graduate employability. A workplace supervisor stated that:

“The success will be determined on the student’s performance ...for example how well they made a booking through Galileo.”

5.3.2.3 Customer service

An underlying skillset, perceived across all stakeholders for employment in tourism, was customer care. This is not surprising, since customer service is considered the most valuable and necessary skill because of the service nature of the tourism industry (Spowart 2011: 176). More importantly, the qualitative findings indicated that graduates saw the acquisition of customer service skills as being directly aligned with their curricula during WPL. This fosters the ability of students to work effectively and further refine the skills required for employability.

“Customer service is the big one and comes into play on a day-to-day basis, the knowledge of recognising the different type of customers comes in very handy...”

Customer service skills are delivered to students during WPL for example, in contact with customers including completing bookings for customers. One graduate stated that they gained a variety of skills, amongst which telephone skills was specifically raised.

“Experience in the following... answering telephone in a professional way.”

Further to working on the switchboard, students in placements at the airports assisted in airline reservations or with help desks. In such positions, they are the first people customers interact with when visiting tourism organisations. Students are therefore trained to assist with the handling of customer complaints during WPL, by keeping them informed on the progress of their enquiries. The honing of customer service skills is seen as important for graduate employability in tourism. Customer service however, rests on a variety of other skills that employees should have, such as effective communication skills, self-confidence and the ability to use technology are required in the workplace.

5.3.2.4 Relationship building

Graduates regarded relationship building as one of the top three skills required for success in the field. Relationship building is a skill that has attracted much attention. This is a valuable skill for students to develop, since the tourism industry is multi-sectorial and relationships between employers, employees and customers are an important component for success in the tourism industry (Sanda 2015: 464).

Developing and maintaining relationships is perceived by the respondents as important for their future career endeavours. Two graduates noted that:

“WPL helped me to build my character and a network of people and employers.”

“It gave me experience and helped build relationships for employment.”

Students in WPL are constantly developing and maintaining work conducive relationships, which are important in transitioning them into the workplace. Building and maintaining of workplace relationships form an integral component of other skills, such as customer service, previously discussed. The following comments from the respondents clearly illustrate why relationship building is regarded as one of the top three skills for success in the tourism field:

“It really helped a lot because I was given the opportunity to be employed after WPL.”

“WPL was very instrumental in my work placement as I am now employed at the company that took me in for my WPL and I continue to learn and develop relationships with others every day.”

5.3.2.5 Self-confidence

Self-confidence is where individuals accept responsibility, are independent and have the abilities to make positive choices and think before acting (Tozer 2012: 194). Workplace supervisors assessed students on the abilities to confidently perform tasks at the end of their work placements. However, there are discrepancies between graduates ranking of self-confidence as fourth most important towards employability, compared with workplace supervisors who ranked this ability seventh (Table 4.8). The importance of self-confidence can nevertheless be observed through this workplace supervisor’s statement:

“More confident, well qualified young people coming into the travel trade”

An ability to work independently is strongly associated with self-confidence. However, during WPL students had limited opportunities to perform tasks, due to unwillingness of tourism organisations to embrace risks that may affect their reputations (Figure 4.7). This emphasises the significance of the roles of workplace supervisors in developing student self-confidence to encourage high levels of performance during WPL. Although this skill was sufficiently developed during WPL, following its completion student confidence may decrease (Zagonari 2009: 3), as graduates still struggle to obtain employment, despite having WPL (Table 4.18).

5.3.2.6 Teamwork and co-operation

The qualitative findings emphasised that certain skills, such as teamwork and co-operation, could not be better learned in venues other than classrooms. However, graduates reported that during their classroom activities, the development of their social skills, particularly in working with others, was not always treated as seriously in the classroom, compared to when learning in the workplace.

“WPL provided me with the necessary skills to progress in industry ...such as teamwork in the tourism industry.”

“WPL will prepare me for the real working environment, how to work in a team or to work as an individual.”

Teamwork was rated fifth for tourism graduate employability by graduates suggesting its importance to them for employment in the tourism industry. On the other hand, teamwork skills were ranked in the bottom half of the skills subset by academics (7th) and (8th) by workplace supervisors. This does not imply that teamwork skills were not valued, because amongst the other skills reported on, these were still considered important for tourism graduate employability.

The literature explains that teamwork skills are not always regarded as effective by academic supervisors due to the difficulties experienced when teaching them in the classroom (Shankar and Seow 2010). These authors explain that impediments that inhibits effective teamwork exercises in the classroom situation are students that work individually fearing that their grades may be affected should other students perform poorly, while others may lack interpersonal skills to work in a team, such as self-confidence and communication skills. Consequently, WPL contributes in developing interpersonal skills for students to work productively in teams and regarded as positively for employment.

5.3.2.7 Flexibility and initiative

Flexibility and initiative are in the domain of attitude. They are very important, especially in the tourism industry, since employees are required to work long hours, shifts and over holidays (Wang *et al.* 2014: 87). Although initiative, in second place,

and flexibility, in fourth place, were rated in the top five by workplace supervisors as important for student employability in the tourism industry, these skills were viewed entirely differently by students, who ranked initiative sixth, and flexibility ninth. Graduates believed that they were limited during WPL in obtaining these skills. This alludes to a mismatch between workplace supervisors' expectations for graduate employability and the skills students had actually learned.

One possible explanation that supports graduates' lack of initiative and flexibility can be derived from workplace supervisors' difficulty in deepening student task exposure whilst providing value to their business (Figure 4.7). This influenced the graduates' ability to be flexible in tourism occupations, as they are only observing and could not perform tasks involving these competencies.

5.3.2.8 Ability and willingness to learn

Graduates that have the ability and willingness to learn have a self-driven passion for what they are doing and can reduce the cost, time and effort dedicated to performing work tasks (Jackson 2015: 362). Willingness and ability was ranked fifth by workplace supervisors and first for employment by academic supervisors. The willingness of students to learn makes them employable. Qualitative responses, reveals that graduates believe that they effectively learn and adapt during workplace learning, for example:

"I am a fast learning person and as soon as get used to something and was very easy to adapt in the workplace"

"Chances of being employed will be high because of background experience that you have and the willingness to learn."

Graduates indicated, however, that a willingness to learn is of average importance during WPL, as it ranked eighth for graduate employability. This is likely to have risen because workplace protocols limited student initiative, as tourism employers were more concerned with meeting business objectives (Figure 4.7). Resultant routine could have constrained the need for initiative and student enthusiasm.

5.3.2.9 Self-control

The empirical findings suggested that the skill of self-control was important for tourism graduate employability, with workplace supervisors ranking it third (Table 4.8). Self-control is the ability to control stress, one's words and actions, and making positive choices (Brier 2014: 7). This is especially essential in tourism, where employees are instantly placed in situations requiring self-control to manage their outcomes and personal feelings.

Although ranked seventh by graduates, the responses indicated that self-control was indeed implemented in the workplace. The qualitative responses suggest that students had the abilities and opportunities to understand how their decisions and actions impacted others, which encourages them to think critically and reflect on self as follows:

"I learned how to deal with customers and work under pressure."

"...it teaches you of attitude and what our employees are looking for in industry."

"In the tourism industry you have to be patient all the time and show good customer care."

By graduates engaging in WPL, self-control skills were developed, as they either knowingly or unknowingly exercised their abilities to cope with these challenges. A further aspect of self-control was exhibited during the development of personal student grooming. During WPL, students wore their uniforms and ensured that they were professionally groomed, which contributed indirectly to the development of their self-control skills. A student expressed that:

"I gained experience in the following: self-grooming..."

Furthermore, one graduate noted that, working in the airline sector developed this skill, since grooming was considered an important aspect of customer service.

“When working in the airport, I interacted with a lot of international clients and I had to portray a positive image and behave and dress appropriately.”

5.3.2.10 Written communication and languages

Graduates did not find written communication to be a very important skill obtained during WPL and ranked this tenth in importance for their employability. However, communication skills are embedded into students’ tourism programme. For example, in order to build work placement possibilities, the compilation of a curricula vitae (CV) and interviewing prior to WPL emulated what is expected in real working environments. Therefore, this enhanced written and verbal student communication skills.

Additionally, the type of self-assessment used at educational institution 1 was found to contribute better towards the development of students’ written skills. Students narrated their experiences in monthly reports, which compared favourably against those who used logbooks and ticked off relevant skills as they were acquired.

Communication in English was, however, found to be particularly to be important for employability by workplace supervisors. The English language is taught at school and shortfalls in communication should be addressed in secondary school before students enter HEIs. Amongst the telling responses from workplace supervisors are:

“They should complete an enhanced programme in the English language, both written and oral. Many students find it difficult to communicate properly in English and often abbreviate as per text messaging. Their grammar and punctuation is frequently poor. If the students are to succeed in the workplace beyond being a tourism clerk, they have to be competent with their ability to write effective reports in any medium.”

This response was considered accurate where students are expected to liaise with clients and employers in the tourism industry. Communication in tourism is conducted via e-mails or social media platforms, which makes the development of precise writing skills important. Additionally, the empirical results also indicated that a major factor hindering graduate employability was their inability to speak foreign languages (Appendix Q). It was evident from workplace supervisor responses that designers of

curricula did not address this need for foreign languages in their planning (Strietska and Tessaring 2005: 9).

5.3.2.11 Time-management skills and concerns for order, quality and accuracy

For tourism organisations to remain competitive within the tourism industry they need to ensure that the highest quality service is being delivered to customers (Sanda 2015: 464). Time-management skills and concerns for order, quality and accuracy were integrated. All stakeholders ranked time management skills in the bottom half of the 14 skills. This does not, however, indicate that this skill was not considered valuable, as it still fell within the standard mean range, between very important (1) and important (2), and should therefore be practiced by all tourism employees.

Three WPL practices contributed to time management skills for tourism graduate employability. These are the students' timely submission of monthly reports, submission of logbooks and workplace supervisors' time to complete tasks whilst teaching students during WPL. A qualitative response from a graduate expressed that *"...it is time consuming for students to do reports every month"*; this activity contributed to graduates learning time-management skills by teaching them to balance work with the timeous completion of monthly reports.

Graduates from educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 had logbooks for WPL, which suggests that they recognised the need to complete allocated tasks within the 150 hours allowed for WPL. Both students and workplace supervisors had to prepare themselves personally for the WPL allocated tasks. In doing so, they would require a range of skills, including self-control and time management, in order to avoid stress and complete the tasks timeously (MacManmon 2016: 177).

5.3.2.12 Organisational awareness

As the term indicates the focus of organisational awareness is on knowledge of the workplace. There was undeniable some organisational awareness imparted to students during WPL, particularly where students were required to find work placement for themselves. Such practices assisted graduates in gaining awareness of company operations and understanding company protocols, which indeed

contributed towards their future employability. However, this emerged as the least important skill for employment. In part, there are two possible reasons for this result.

Firstly, the empirical findings (Figure 4.1) indicated that the vast majority of students understood their rights and responsibilities in work placements. Additionally, students were briefed by their academic supervisors before WPL on their roles and responsibilities during this process. Jackson (2015: 357) therefore suggests that there should be adequate information available from both the academic and workplace supervisors on organisational cultures, although students consider this skill least importantly to their employability when obtained during WPL.

Secondly, it is possible that graduates did not value the acquisition of organisational awareness during their WPL because they expected to encounter low entry barriers in the workplace. Graduates' revealed this when they stated:

"If I am employed in the game reserve I will be able to know the rules and regulations of working at a game reserve and the standards required."

"It helped gain a better understanding of the policies involved in the workplace. I had various skills that could only be learned during WPL and I had better future opportunities because of WPL."

Employers do not expect students in WPL to possess organisational awareness. This ability is expected instead from the more experienced employees in middle management for the success of the tourism organisation (Chong 2013: 349; Mbokazi, Visser and Fourie 2004: 7). This may therefore not be essential for employability in the early stages of graduate careers.

5.3.2.13 Analytical thinking

Analytical thinking requires problem-solving and numeracy abilities. It challenges employees to be creative in the workplace and solve problems on a daily basis to advance efficient business operations. The empirical findings indicated that both the graduate and the academic supervisor groups ranked analytical thinking in thirteenth place, thereby making it the least important skill considered to be required for graduate employability. On the other hand, this capability was ranked third by

workplace supervisors. The low rating of this capability is expected, since, problem-solving skills is one of those that was seen as poorly developed by educational institutions and in the tourism industry, as identified from the discussion in section 5.2.

The observable empirical findings (Table 4.15) indicated that during WPL some workplace supervisors provided students with opportunities to participate in problem-solving activities; however, this was ineffective during WPL. The results indicated that problem-solving competencies were lacking in graduates, and that this was perhaps one of the factors that hindered tourism graduate employability. Moreover, workplace supervisors were unsupportive of problem-solving activities because they could not compromise their business objectives by risking their reputations (Figure 4.7). Hence, the question of how employers expected students to develop this skill without providing problem-solving tasks remains an issue.

5.3.2.14 Inconsistencies in the nature of skills required for employability

Consensus was found to exist amongst workplace and academic supervisors on only one important skill. There are significant mismatches between the views of academic and workplace supervisors, on required skills for employability. Ability and willingness to learn is the only skill that both the workplace and academic supervisor stakeholders agree is essential.

Academic supervisors rated flexibility eleventh for tourism graduate employability, while this was rated fourth by workplace supervisors (Table 4.8). In addition, academic supervisors prioritised concerns for order, quality and accuracy as the second most important skill required for employability, in contrast to workplace supervisors who rated this ninth. The methodology used, however, did not examine the reasons for these variations, and should be addressed in future studies. This impacted on the skills required by students for employability.

Although the analysis indicated that a gap existed between employers' and academic supervisors' ratings for the importance of skills, learning outcomes of educational institutions and the expectations of employers were not completely different; and a

partial overlap was observed in terms of the identified skills. It is therefore suggested that all needed skills should be aligned, to reduce the expectations and eradicate gaps in the relationships between educational institutions and tourism organisations.

The skillsets that workplace supervisors perceived as important were mainly personal skills that could not be taught, but should instead form part of tourism graduates' personal characteristics. Likewise, although students participated in WPL to develop their practical skillsets, from the perspective of employers, "self-savvy" had high importance of graduate employability as compared to other types of skills, such as technological and organisational skills.

5.3.2.15 Skills lacking in the tourism industry for employability

Workplace supervisors' responses confirmed that students did not possess expected skills and content knowledge to make them employable in their tourism career (Appendix P). However, resultant competition arising from a lack of jobs within the tourism industry (Appendix P) raises the need for more and greater competitive graduate skills. It is suggested that employers are always in the market to employ those with the right skillsets. To ensure that the tourism enterprise prospers, it is important, on the one hand, that skilled employees are being recruited.

On the other hand, there is limited time and opportunities to develop skills (Koc *et al.* 2014: 141). For instance, essential but time consuming problem-solving skills, are poorly developed during WPL. The earlier discussion on the appraisal of skills identified that employability skills, such as self-control and ability to be flexible, were also lacking. The lack of the time and opportunities to develop skills during WPL was advanced by stakeholders as problems; thus constraining outcomes for the acquisition of generic and career-specific skills.

5.3.3 Practical implications

The results described in studies of Beggs *et al.* (2008: 35); Tse (2010: 257); and Spowart (2011: 174), in respect of customer service, teamwork, communication and technological skills as core components for graduates' employability in tourism, are consistent with this study. In addition, workplace supervisors, concur with Spowart

(2011: 177), on the importance of problem-solving, initiative and self-control skills. It is evident that graduates therefore, develop and enhance those skills for employability during WPL. Workplace and academic supervisors are required to embed these skills into their WPL design by way of teaching and learning mechanisms.

Students also identified commonalties between their classroom learning and skills learnt at the workplace. More importantly, the purpose of work placement is to ensure confident graduates who are ready to perform within the tourism industry (Aggett and Busby 2011: 106). There is a need for practitioners to hold an orientation for WPL practices to ensure students reflect on how learning theory relates to work situations during WPL.

5.3.4 Theoretical implication

This research and other studies on WPL all point to improvement in enhancing skills for tourism graduate employability. Tourism curricula were found not to be effective for employability if they provided only limited understandings of the skills. More so, when tourism studies were too strongly vocational on the one hand, and diluted by many other disciplines in its origins, it is consequently important to gain continuous research of stakeholders' perspectives on the skills required for employability from all stakeholders for future theory.

Graduates require knowledge, skills and attitudes that allows them to cope with changing needs. Awareness of the changing nature of skills in the tourism industry is crucial (Zainal, Radzi, Hashim, Chik and Abu 2012: 16), in order to judiciously implement teaching and learning methodologies and content to employability skills during WPL. Future theory of skills is required for each sector of the tourism industry. By informed theory on specialisation of skills required for tourism, this is likely to increase the quality levels of job performance.

5.4 Tourism graduates' perceptions on WPL

The concept of graduates' perceptions of and attitudes towards, the impact of WPL on graduate employability in tourism was examined to address the third objective of this study. This section will begin with specific interpretation of the relevant literature and thereafter discuss the empirical findings related to this objective.

5.4.1 Changing graduate perceptions and attitudes towards WPL

Beggs *et al.* (2008: 37) assert that student experiences during WPL programmes should be taken into cognisance when measuring the quality of WPL. As anticipated, graduates undergoing WPL had high expectations of employment afterwards, as they believed WPL would provide them with the skills and knowledge required to make them employable (Beggs *et al.* 2008: 35; Aggett and Busby 2011: 107; Brauns 2013: 1). Therefore, understanding of graduates' perceptions on WPL for employment in the tourism industry is imperative to improve HE practices and theory for employability (Hsu 2011: 5; Robinson *et al.* 2015: 10).

There are many reported benefits obtained from WPL, which give students who participate in these programmes leverage over those who do not (Kim and Park 2013: 70; Bamford 2012: 37). The influence of WPL on graduate career choices, according to Hughes *et al.* (2013: 269), rests on their learning experiences during WPL, such as the development of skills that enhance their employability. Similarly, Ferns and Zegwaard (2014: 5) identify that the application of theory in practice in the workplace is beneficial to students. Thus, Spowart (2011: 176), Owusu-Minthah and Kissi (2012: 523), and Hughes *et al.* (2013: 272) observe that such applications develop critical thinking in students, which lends impetus to the enhancement of their skills.

Nonetheless, when student expectations are not met, adverse perceptions of the tourism industry are found to arise. During WPL, students' attitude is a major mediating variable for learning, as noted in studies conducted by Bamford (2012: 38), Lexmond and Bradley (2010: 9), and Kim and Park (2013: 75). Bamford (2012: 39) further explains that due to these negative perceptions of WPL, graduates become

reluctant to enter the tourism industry and employers experience difficulties in retaining staff.

The literature in summary demonstrates that negative graduate attitudes towards WPL develop when:

- Graduates feel that they are not actively learning in the workplace;
- There is a lack of supervisory support during WPL; and where
- Students are not placed in companies that actively sought to expand the development of relevant skills during WPL.

5.4.2 Discussion from the empirical findings

The empirical findings presented in Chapter Four established graduate attitudes and perceptions both pre- and post-WPL, and also its contribution to graduate careers in tourism. Trends which affect perceptions and attitudes to change amongst students undertaking WPL were also identified.

5.4.2.1 Relevance of the WPL modules for tourism graduate employability

The findings from Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.5 confirmed that WPL is undeniably relevant to the tourism course and is valuable for tourism graduate employability. Amongst the telling positive responses obtained concerning the contributions made by WPL to graduate employability was this clear indication of its observed benefits:

“WPL will contribute immensely in the tourism industry if the student is placed in the field he/she desires. In this way, the student will work hard and most likely become permanent in the organisation he or she is placed in.”

Undeniably, WPL is relevant to students only if the placements they found were those of their choice. Graduates consequently delivered passion in pursuing their career endeavours and developed their skills for their employability more enthusiastically, which resulted in benefits such as:

“Student of WPL can put it on their Curriculum Vitae as work experience for a prospective job”

“Expected quick entry into the work place. Employment was quick and easy.”

WPL contributes to the experience in the field, which also supplements their qualifications and employers are more likely to employ graduates who worked in a real-world environment during WPL within their organisation. As can be seen in this study and that of Beggs *et al.* (2008: 35); Aggett and Busby (2011: 107); Chen *et al.* (2011: 64); Keating (2012: 94) and Wang *et al.* (2014: 87) experience is of vital importance to tourism graduates in obtaining permanent employment within the tourism industry.

5.4.2.2 Contributions of WPL to student learning during WPL

Among the identified themes that contributed to students' experiences during WPL is that students are provided with opportunities to put theory into practise. WPL tasks provided them with interesting learning experiences that could theoretically relate to their tourism programme. A student's comments aptly summarise the learning experience during WPL:

“It is all linked. The work environment helps put what we learnt in the class into practice.”

Evidently, the value of the first-hand experiences available in the workplace added to the quality of graduates' learning. During WPL students learned from integrating the theoretical aspects acquired at the educational institution, into the workplace. There is some indication that WPL is aligned with the classroom learning for tourism employability.

“The theoretical knowledge gained in the academic tourism course is brought to life when doing WPL. They work hand-in-hand to improve the outcomes and better employability after the course is done.”

“My expectation was to learn to do or apply practical knowledge through theoretical experience that we had and these expectations were met.”

It is also evident that students are able to reflect on theory and practice during WPL, in order to better understand these concepts and the relevance of WPL. The ability of

students to reflect during WPL is important and it is aligned with the principle of best practice for the WPL design. Reflection on the learning during WPL (Figure 4.10) advances the scope and depth of student learning workplace skills. However, misaligned classroom and workplace learning threatens the relevance of learning. Graduates lament that:

“The skills learned during WPL are different from the knowledge attained academically. Academic knowledge assists to some extent however; the need for practical work is essential in tourism.”

“No. Some of them where not related to tourism at all.”

“My feelings are neutral, as there were a few tasks that were assigned to us on different days ... and some tasks were of no value to my field of study.”

Accordingly, graduates were in a position to discern the type of WPL that will advance their employability. On the other hand, graduates noted that they did not enjoy tasks during WPL (Figure 4.11), found them not challenging, failed to understand tasks and were thus unable to relate to the tasks. Curriculum alignment, appropriateness of teaching and learning styles, support and assessment methods, are collectively and individually key contributors to all WPL experiences.

5.4.2.3 Changing expectations of graduates before and after WPL

There was a shift in graduate perceptions and attitudes prior to and after WPL, concerning their expectations of employment (Table 4.9). Prior to their WPL placements, students generally believed that engaging in WPL would make them more employable in the tourism industry. In this vein, a graduate remarked that:

“I expected exposure to work situation”

There is an underlying suggestion that when graduates' expectations are met during WPL, they were more likely to have positive attitudes towards the tourism industry which advanced their enthusiasm in developing employability skills. Such instances are reported by graduates:

"I expected to get a basic knowledge of the practices in the events and tourism industry. These expectations were met and surpassed as the student was trained and placed in a consulting position."

"I expected to have a broader knowledge of what tourism and travel entailed the pressure and the rewards I have to say all of these were met and I am happy within my chosen field."

Work placements are a key predictor of perceptions and attitudes of graduates. Meeting expectations as perceived by the graduates is valuable for personal fulfilment and achieving career goals. A small percentage of graduates from educational institution 1, pre- WPL, did not however, have high expectations of employment, despite six months of WPL in the formal curriculum. This unexpected mismatch may be explained in the qualitative response signifying graduates doubt and fear of working in tourism. This finding is also supported by Wang *et al.* (2014: 91). Nonetheless, such perceptions can be overcome on engaging in WPL, as found in the following response that eliminated anxieties concerning the tourism industry:

"I expected to work with mean team members however, the team was very accepting and helpful..."

Appendix K indicated reasons for graduates' expectations not being met, because graduates expected to be employed in the tourism industry, and work in a more challenging environment during WPL. Again, the study cannot explain this finding, as the variable was a quantitative measure. The issue of diminished expectation of employability after the WPL experience is partially explained in the qualitative responses from graduates:

"My expectations were not met, since my choices given to the academic supervisor were overlooked completely. I expected the WPL programme to be a stepping stone in my career, to gain experience in the field in which I prefer to work in."

Expected to be paid during WPL but salary was too low for transportation needs."

“I was expecting more interaction with guests (tourists). The only thing we did the most was to put up décor... the student was not given a chance to use his ideas and creativity in making the events better. The only thing the student was needed the most on was to set up and break up the event.”

These responses also suggest that in addition to eroding graduate employability, the intended learning outcomes of WPL are diminished. Graduates may not have demonstrated the achieved learning outcomes set by educational institution because of incongruous activities during WPL.

5.4.2.4 Factors contributing to the changing attitudes and perceptions of tourism graduates regarding their employability

Graduates' attitudes at the educational institution on WPL at educational institution 1 and 3 were largely positive compared to graduates at educational institution 2 and 4, where almost half the graduates thought that WPL had not assisted or insufficiently contributed to employment in the industry. There are many explanations derived from this result, to be discussed in the next section. This will include the limited duration of WPL, lack of quality learning, which can affect students' inability to develop skills for employability and financial constraints during WPL affecting a student's opportunity to get to their work placement.

5.4.2.4.1 Limited duration of WPL

The limited contribution of WPL to graduates' employment may lie in their short durations, with inadequate time to develop their skills for employment in tourism. (Table 4.13). Graduates' concerns were expressed in the following statements:

“The employment in the tourism industry looks for people with work experience two years and above and the WPL is just a six-month course so no it does not contribute to a student being employed afterwards. Maybe if the WPL was a year it would make some difference” (Educational institution 1).

“I expected to be employed in the tourism industry sadly it has not been met because it is very difficult to get into despite having six months' experience.” (Educational institution 1).

It was expected that graduates who underwent six months of WPL, compared to those graduates with only 3 weeks of WPL, would consider WPL beneficial to their employability. This study however, found, that this was often only an assumption, as only half of the students interviewed indicated that 150 hours was too short a period for skills development. The graduates who were dissatisfied with the duration remarked thus:

*“No, in my opinion the programme is too short and there is so much to learn”
(Educational institution 2)*

“No. As mentioned above the time is too short, if it was a year it would make a difference in future employment.” (Educational institution 3)

Finding the optimal duration for WPL will contribute towards forming and positively changing graduates' perception of employability in tourism. When graduates feel they have limited time to enhance or develop employability skills, their negative attitudes on the relevance of the WPL programme hamper tourism career aspirations.

5.4.2.4.2 Contribution of learning tasks to the development of employability skills

The study results found that placement of students during WPL advances employability skills and shapes perceptions and attitudes of graduates. Mixed responses of students were recorded on active learning during WPL (Table 4.10). Graduates believed that they were not actively learning and were expected to perform activities outside their specified WPL learning outcomes. This confirmed that graduates were not given real-life situations at work, which disadvantaged their learning. Not only did inappropriate task assignment hinder the effectiveness of WPL placements, but also shaped negative images concerning employment in the minds of graduates. Moreover, during WPL, students were often afraid to confront these situations, as they felt that this could have affected their assessment results following WPL:

“We are sometimes asked to do personal tasks for the employees, if we complain, this could affect our results and we often are very scared to complain to the lecturer as it may seem like it's our fault. I think we should propose an

online system where we can anonymously discuss WPL and share our experiences.”

“We must be treated equally to all company employees and make sure that the student is not taken for granted. Example, sending the student to buy lunch for other colleagues at work.”

The study also observed that there were no clear guidelines on how to manage workplace conflicts, especially when students were not treated equally during WPL. The study found that academic supervisors were virtually helpless in managing conflict involving students in the workplace. One telling response was that academic supervisor *“cannot remove students from the tourism organisation because they need their partnership to take on students during WPL”*.

Misalignments in learning tasks could be explained by workplace supervisor in a statement (Figure 4.7) that there is *“no suitable work for students to do”*; and students were therefore allocated tasks outside specifications during WPL. Such seriously inappropriate work placements affect both student perceptions of the tourism industry and their skills development for employment (Wang *et al.* 2014: 87).

5.4.2.5 Appropriate WPL placements

Graduates’ learning in appropriate work situations advance the effectiveness of their learning experiences by allowing them to learn from relevant tasks during WPL. Selection of a tourism placement should, accordingly, be based on a candidate’s career aspiration, thus providing value for all stakeholders in WPL (Beggs *et al.* 2008: 37). Moreover, arranging placements for students during WPL is the responsibility of academic supervisors as it is stipulated by the Council of Higher Education (2004: 21).

Although academic supervisors assist in placing students during WPL, a high number of graduates found difficulty in finding placements (Figure 4.2). Graduates’ responses suggested that there should be greater collaboration by educational institutions in deliberately arranging appropriate workstations with tourism employers.

“The college must help with finding placement for students. The college should have contract with at least two organisations for students to get places in, that way it would be easier and convenient for students instead of having to go “door to door” and be rejected by companies.

“Students should be placed at companies based on their passion and dedication. This way students’ and companies benefit and this could lead to student employment.”

“Students must be placed in relevant departments in the tourism industry not just placed at any department where the HR team sees a vacancy....”

Educational institution 1 had a strong partnership with tourism organisations, which assisted in accepting students for WPL. On the other hand, educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 displayed limited support for placements (Appendix R) and poor partnerships with tourism organisations (Table 4.19). Additionally, the empirical findings indicated that graduates at educational institution 4 were dissatisfied at not being placed in a tourism organisation during WPL. This experience could be the primary reason for them not finding WPL beneficial towards their career in tourism. As one of the graduates remarked:

“Our college should give us better placements in places which are relevant”

Gaps were identified in the structure for delivery of the WPL at educational institution 4. Students were placed where they could not meet the learning objective of the tourism modules and therefore did not advance their skills for employment in tourism vocations. Such poor practice fuels graduates’ negative expectations of WPL and the tourism industry.

5.4.2.5.1 Negative perceptions of employment in the tourism industry

The negative perception graduates hold of employability in tourism is justified by workplace supervisors’ responses that students undertaking WPL did not meet the requirements for obtaining employment after graduation (Table 4.12). The empirical findings (Appendix P) highlighted that the tourism industry did not always create jobs, due to external factors, such as economic recessions. This implies that competition

amongst graduates exists for employment in tourism despite graduates having WPL and being qualified.

5.4.2.5.2 Financial implications on WPL

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 27) argues that financial pressures may have an adverse effect on the students' performance during WPL, especially where tourism organisations do not provide a stipend. A significantly high number of students (Figure 4.6) experienced financial constraints while undertaking WPL.

"...the institution must help the student because WPL stipend can't maintain the will of life during training."

"...more work hours with pay."

Therefore, it is important that educators are aware of these challenges, as the vast majority of graduates indicated that although WPL is enhancing employability skills, it creates challenges in their personal life. Consequently, these students may display negative attitudes towards the WPL module.

5.4.3 Practical implications

Findings in this research are similar to previous studies where students have high expectations of employment that gradually change, after undertaking WPL (Begg's *et al.* 2008: 35; Chen *et al.* 2011: 64; Aggett and Busby 2011: 107; Keating 2012: 94; Brauns 2013: 1; Wang *et al.* 2014: 87). It is imperative that stakeholders are aware of the influence the WPL experience has on expectancy changes in student expectations and that it contributes to the shift in their attitudes.

Similarly, Rajab (2013: 3) found that students did not have the necessary skills for employment, despite undertaking WPL. While the findings from the present study are consistent with Rajab's findings, further examination of the empirical findings identified that there was a lack of jobs in the tourism industry. Fidgeon (2010: 723) points out that workplace supervisors are looking for a more skilled labour-market forces to fill positions, rather than unskilled graduates. Not being aware of potential difficulties not only hampers students' learning experience, but also forms negative perceptions of the tourism industry. More importantly, it emphasises the need to

prepare students for industry's expectations and help them understand their rights and responsibilities prior to WPL, eliminating any negative perception they may have of the tourism industry.

Additionally, Chen and Shen (2012: 32) and Robinson *et al.* (2015: 1) caution that these negative perceptions may result in graduates changing their career direction to a field other than tourism. It is important that graduates are fully prepared by the educational institution for work placement. More importantly, academic supervisors' understanding of how students engage in work activities and access support and guidance is likely to understand the expectations of the workplace supervisor.

Sattler (2011: 78) further affirms that the academic supervisors are unable to place students because there is no physical space at tourism organisations which have already accepted placements from other educational institutions. This is one of the study's key findings, and clearly shows that academic supervisors should be more supportive in providing quality work placements, which is considered crucial for alleviating stress and enhancing learning (Wang *et al.* 2014: 91). Thus, WPL should be driven by the policies educational institutions' policy and should be adequately resourced to maximise the benefits of WPL for all stakeholders involved.

Additionally, the empirical results supported the work of Patrick *et al.* (2008: 32), who affirm that one of the challenges of participating in WPL was found to be the financial constraint for students, which altered their perceptions of the tourism industry. As established by the empirical results, WPL was included as a module in the tourism courses and expenses, such as uniforms and transport, were the responsibility of the students. It is of vital importance that students be briefed on these challenges, so that they can amply prepare for them.

The findings of the study also point to a need for academic supervisors to ensure students are being treated fairly in the workplace. It is evident that this is an ongoing concern, arising from both past studies by Roney and Oztin (2007) and present studies (Sattler 2011: 81; Wang *et al.* 2014: 87). Both academic and workplace

supervisors should be prepared on conflict management and should have implications on policy and employers that engage in WPL.

5.4.4 Theoretical implications

Future theory is required to re-evaluate the ways in which researchers think about work and learning during WPL, as there are limitations and benefits of workplaces as a learning venue. As a result, there are shifts of thinking occurred in students pre- and post WPL.

Importantly, it was found that a significant number of students (73.29%) had the ability to reflect on their experiences during WPL. Similar studies conducted by Martin and Hughes (2011: 31); Spowart (2011: 176); Owusu-Mintah and Kissi (2012: 529), and Hughes *et al.* (2013: 272) indicate that students were able to reflect critically on the relevance of theory and practice. This is an important aspect of the WPL module, since reflection assists students to become critical thinkers (Martin and Hughes 2011: 24). Thus, future theory addressing epistemology for critical thinking will deepen understanding of learning and thinking in the tourism discipline.

Reflection is also important from an educational and teaching learning perspectives, as it implies that academic supervisors are supportive of WPL practices, which will align industry and educational needs with the aim of for tourism graduate employability. The empirical findings point to further research and theory that should encompass cognitive theory components of how learning occurs during WPL. This will promote further understanding on the changing nature of graduates' attitudes and perceptions as it has implications for behaviour towards tourism graduates' employability.

5.5 Success factors of WPL for tourism graduate employability

The fourth objective of this study set was to evaluate the successes of WPL, under the watch of educational institutions, for tourism graduate employability. This is pertinent, considering that literature abounds with perspectives on the importance of WPL across educational institutions (Aggett and Busby 2011: 108; Spowart 2011: 11; Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 186). The successes of the WPL programme are: curriculum

design and alignment, assessment methods and evaluation, and quality of WPL (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 37). Despite the same measures being used to evaluate WPL success by Smith and Betts (2000: 600) and Chen *et al.* (2011: 64), there remains no consensus on the indices for measuring the success of WPL (Martin 1997: 78; Knight and Yorke 2006: 14).

A well-co-ordinated, clear, structured policy of WPL, benefitting all stakeholders is what will drive WPL (CHE 2004: 21). It is important that stakeholders of WPL implement these policies. A shared understanding of the benefits and challenges of WPL among stakeholders, foster effective management of the module (Bamford 2012: 37; Wardle 2012: 2; Ruhanen *et al.* 2013: 61). Patrick *et al.* (2008: 37) propose four measures to benchmark the success of WPL. The research under study uses this model, as it is similar to models developed by other researchers (Gibson *et al.* 2002: 5; Chen *et al.* 2011: 64) and relevant to the South African context (CHE 2011: 7).

5.5.1 Discussion from the empirical findings

Patrick *et al.* (2008:37) designed a model which assisted in determining the critical success factors for WPL. The discourse on the empirical findings that follows focuses on four areas: WPL policies and approaches, stakeholder approaches to WPL, WPL pedagogy and curricula, and WPL evaluation and quality.

5.5.1.1 Policies and approaches of WPL

One specific success factor used to determine the success of WPL modules is the existence and implementation of appropriate policies and approaches. Following Nixon *et al.* (2006: 47), the sampled educational institutions have either a narrow or a broad perspective of WPL. The empirical findings exemplify policies for WPL that reflect the narrow-based needs of the educational institution, rather than the tripartite stakeholder roles of WPL. Additionally, policies were sometimes not followed, as evidenced by the practice of students being placed within non-tourism organisations. This narrow approach sought the achievement of both WPL outcomes and employer needs, as can be observed from the following academic responses:

Academic supervisor A (educational institution 1): "...the information is given to the co-op department and they will do an analysis and ensure the educational institutions policy is adhered to."

The qualitative finding suggested that academic supervisor A, at educational institution 1, conducted a formal appraisal of the WPL module through the educational institution's co-operative department. WPL is thus part of a wider constitutional body and valued at the educational institutions for student development and the cultivation of skills needed for employment. On the other hand, academic supervisors B, C and D ensured that WPL was only followed-up on using WPL outcomes. This implies that academic supervisors are uncertain of whether the students are actually learning in the workplace, as they use logbooks to determine if the outcomes of WPL are achieved.

Policy vacuums have been found to lead to insufficient support for developing partnerships in the tourism industry, insufficient time to appropriately manage WPL, weak funding to support physical resources, such as vehicles to visit the tourism organisation and to evaluate the impact of the WPL module for tourism graduate employability. Academic supervisor C commented that:

"We have to stick to the outcomes of WPL that are specified on the WPL manual by basically following through the supervisor or mentor at the workplace. Being in touch with them and phoning them and getting feedback from that person, but it's not always possible and previously what we have done is to complete a monthly log of what the WPL students have been doing and submit that but the college has stopped that now so we look at what has been done on their portfolio and if it's been signed off and there is a company stamp on it." (Educational institution 3)

The comment questioned the value of WPL policy manuals as these differed between educational institutions. Additionally, academic supervisors B, C and D discussed how they had monitored WPL policies through feedback and visitations. The findings in Appendix R provides evidence that there is limited feedback between the workplace and academic supervisors. The provision of clear guidance on two-way communications is important, as it limits any misunderstandings of the

established, realistic outcomes for tourism graduate employability (Baker *et al.* 2013: 260).

5.5.2 Stakeholder approaches to WPL

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38) identify four areas concerned with engaging effectively with stakeholders, namely: partnerships within the tourism industry, the relevance of WPL modules, and recognising the benefits and challenges for both students and supervisors in implementing WPL successfully. These are discussed in more detail in the sections which follow.

5.5.2.1 Building and maintaining partnerships for WPL

The empirical findings (Figure 4.2 and Table 4.6) showed that suitable placement was one of the greatest challenges facing both students and academic supervisors. As established by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38) placement by academic supervisors necessitated that students required that these supervisors had healthy working relationships with their workplace supervisors. Poor relationships can result from and contribute to inadequate communication between stakeholders, required to develop WPL. Academic supervisor A, was found to have forged stronger partnership using electronic communication and regular visitation. On the contrary, academic supervisor C pointed out that:

“...those that wouldn’t want to participate because they work with another educational institution.”

The empirical findings suggest that academic supervisors competed for WPL placements, and partnerships, between the academic supervisor and employers are important. The lack of placements for students from educational institution 4 was found attributable, to academic supervisors allowing students to complete WPL at organisations outside the tourism industry. Further reasons for tourism organisations not participating in WPL as found in this study (Figure 4.7), may negatively affect student development when learning employability skills (Martin *et al.* 2012: 34).

Positive relationships from the academic supervisors’ perspective sometimes further mediate support in the placement of students’ race and gender (Table 4.4). This

position was reinforced by the response obtained from one academic supervisor, who stated that:

“Yes some companies specifically asked for female students. I think the perception is that females have a better work ethic, work harder and provide better customer service.”

5.5.2.2 The contribution of WPL to stakeholders

Effective WPL partnerships are advanced through clear articulation of the benefits of WPL to stakeholders (Ruhanen *et al.* 2012: 192). The benefits of WPL are discussed in this section to determine the reasons for stakeholders’ participation in the WPL module.

5.5.2.2.1 Benefits to graduates

Graduates are the major beneficiaries in WPL. Amongst the number of benefits obtained through WPL, a quarter (25 percent) of the respondents (Figure 4.5) stated that they had the ability and advantage to develop and improve their skills for employability during WPL. This is further affirmed by Spowart (2011: 176), Bamford (2012: 37) and Osuwu-Mintah and Kissi (2012: 523). This excerpt from a student response to the open-ended question regarding the benefits of WPL further corroborated this:

“WPL was very instrumental in my work placement as I am now employed at the company that took me in for my WPL and I continue to learn every day.”

“WPL is contributing with or by preparing students to what to expect in the outside life and of being in the tourism sector, with regards to one’s personality, delivering excellent service and also to be a peoples’ person because of good service delivered to them.”

5.5.2.2.2 Benefits to academic supervisors

Academic supervisors have also benefitted from WPL, as they were given the opportunities to align curricula with industry requirements, and test relevance with students in the workplace (Figure 4.5). This alignment bridges expectations by workplace supervisors for students’ employability. Moreover, this suggests that when educational institutions seek to engage with their tourism industry partners, that this,

increases available placement opportunities for students, and ensures sustainability of the WPL module.

5.5.2.2.3 Benefits to tourism organisations and workplace supervisors

Apart from the benefits of WPL for tourism organisations engaged in WPL for reasons of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) (Table 4.5). CSR has become important to tourism organisations, especially in sectors such as tourism services, events, transportation and travel trade. Further to providing a pools for employee recruitment and the development of supervision skills for supervisors (Table 4.5), Sattler and Peters (2012: 16) claim that there are reduced costs associated in training new employees. In addition to training costs, tourism organisations are also realising the benefits of WPL for their reputation and demonstration of their commitment to tourism. Consequently, tourism employers invest in WPL to attract and develop skills to graduates, and address shortages of skills in the industry.

5.5.2.3 Challenges of WPL to stakeholders

While educational institutions engaged in WPL, it was important for this study to identify challenges that affected its success in order to increase demands for higher-level skills from HEIs. The dominant challenge to students during WPL is overcoming financial constraints. This may have affected a student's performance during WPL, as it was found by workplace supervisors that transport and commuting issues affected future student employment opportunities. One graduate noted that:

"If ever students are sent outside their province maybe 50% can be contributed by the institution to help the student because WPL salary can't maintain the will of life during training."

The relevance that a student found in WPL, was an indication of the success of the educational institutions. A plausible explanation for the perceived irrelevance of WPL amongst students was contributed by one academic supervisor, who stated that:

"Some of them find it extremely irrelevant, it's been a complete waste of time for them because they had to sort out information on the brochure stands where the offices have been too busy to give people um something to sit and mentor and supervise that person. Well umm they just get left and must go and sit on

the reception so that's where I find it difficult because students don't know how or don't have the learning skills to go and say please can you give me more work."

This finding implied that the workplace supervisors do not appropriately prioritise WPL. Students are being provided with insufficient learning experiences are to the workplace supervisors having insufficient time to supervise them. This finding is further supported by the workplace supervisors' challenges in Figure 4.7. Such situations can only fail to produce employable graduates as it affects the development and transferability of skills of students during WPL.

5.5.3 WPL curriculum and pedagogy

The third measure of success for WPL, proposed by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 39), was the implementation of effective curricula for tourism courses and their WPL outcomes. The WPL pedagogy was measured on three principles, namely: the alignment of curricula, the assessment methods used, and an evaluation of the quality of WPL. These are further discussed in the following sections.

5.5.3.1 Curriculum design and alignment

The findings in this study indicated that educational institutions have developed pedagogical approaches to WPL. The curriculums at the four educational institutions are derived from context of the application of learning in the workplace and on current student knowledge and experience. This pedagogy was found to be experiential in nature, since it included evidence-based assessments of student progress through the use of logbooks and reflective journals. Graduates' suggestions to deepen the curriculum illustrate the need for stronger vocational focus at HEIs.

"More hands-on projects at university amalgamated with people from the industry."

"Curricula need to focus more on the skills required in the industry. Practical application/ training is essential in qualification. This will allow the skills and knowledge obtained during undertaking the qualification being transferred to the working environment."

When curricula were seen to be aligned, they met the needs of all stakeholders and effectively contributed to a greater understanding of the expectations of WPL between the tourism industry and HEIs. Graduates mentioned that the benefit of having an aligned curricula enhanced their employability skills as follows:

“The academic course included the importance of professionalism, punctuality, ethical behaviour and the importance of delivering excellent service which is of high importance in the tourism industry. These factors related to the WPL module since the workplace supervisors search for these qualities in a WPL student to determine if he/she has positive potential towards their organisation.”

“The theoretical knowledge gained in the academic tourism course is brought to life when doing WPL. They work hand-in-hand to improve the outcomes and better employability after the course is done.”

Responses from the academic supervisors indicated that they sought greater alignment of the tourism curricula for the achievement of student employability. One academic supervisor stated that: *“Every lecturer should implement things that are relevant to the industry in their tourism modules.”* Furthermore, one educational institution was found to have conducted surveys on the tourism industry in order to identify those skills required for employment, which then also advised the development of their curricula.

Nonetheless, some graduates' indicated that the contexts of the tourism development module they were taught did not relate to their workplace experiences. A possible explanation for this disconnection, was drawn from empirical findings (Table 4.2) that indicate that workplace supervisors for WPL were mainly in the tourism services sector. This is an indication that students mainly completed WPL in the tourism services sector, and therefore, students find tourism development to be unrelated to their WPL experiences.

Another reasoning could be that a minority of graduates' were unable to reflect during WPL (Figure 4.10) resulting in their inability to determine whether the curriculum was aligned with work experiences, life skills or values. Additionally, Table 4.10 expresses graduates' dissatisfaction in performing inappropriate functions during WPL. This

may have altered students' perceptions of WPL resulting in students regarding WPL as unaligned.

5.5.3.2 Assessment methods for WPL by stakeholders

Three educational institutions for this study adopted logbooks which included activities to be completed during WPL, and students were overseen in these activities by workplace supervisors. One educational institution used monthly reports of the tasks they had completed during WPL. Yorke and Knight (2006: 21) and McNamara (2013: 188) debate the types of assessment that are best suited for WPL, and on whether assessments are required at all. Assessment remains, the yardstick for attainment of learning outcomes.

5.5.3.2.1 The perceived types of assessment

A significant number of students preferred WPL assessments by individual presentation of their skills and the knowledge they had gained (Figure 4.20). Interestingly, the students' results regarding their preferred types of assessments appeared to be similar to those of workplace supervisors, who also found this to be a better form of assessment. This preferred type of assessment differed from the existing assessment methods in use at the educational institutions.

Both students (Figure 4.26) and workplace supervisors (Figure 4.25) reported existing assessment methods as challenging, because they indicated that they did not have sufficient time to complete assessments on a monthly basis. When WPL curriculum planners design the assessment methods, they should establish their impact in being challenging to students, since this can negatively affect students' learning experiences (Ferns and Zegwaard 2014: 186). The current study affirmed that workplace supervisor involvement in WPL assessment should be underpinned by a good understanding of placing themselves in a position where they can effectively assess students (Ferns and Zegwaard 2014: 180).

However, for some workplace supervisors, workload issues remained a barrier, regarding the limited time available to mark monthly reports. Accordingly, a minority of workplace supervisors (Figure 4.21) expressed a preference for monthly reports for use in student assessments. The majority of the interviewees stated that oral

presentations and the compiling of journals could assist in advancing reflective competencies. They could, moreover, assist in identifying the progress of student learning during WPL. Interestingly, the second most preferred type of assessment was for students to receive letters of reference. These letters of reference were required to positively boost their curricula vitae and employment prospects (Riggio 2015: 100).

In contrast to current assessment method practices at educational institutions, the study findings indicated that students who completed logbooks, were limited in making connections with their learning experiences. Consequently, this hampered students learning in the workplace. Additionally, logbooks did not build a deeper understanding of the task, and the majority of students therefore, preferred journals or monthly reports (Figure 4.21).

5.5.3.2.2 The bases of assessment

The alignment of WPL learning outcomes with employability skills and the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes, were found to be pivotal in the transfer of employability skills to students. The assessments for WPL identified in Figure 4.20 for both students and workplace supervisors is based on experiences gained. Empirical findings showed that the WPL assessments were conducted on those tasks associated with learning outcomes. In this way, Jackson (2015: 352) asserts that student strengths and weaknesses in the skills learnt during WPL, their progress, and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching strategies for WPL, are revealed.

Consistent with Harvey *et al.* (2010: 145), the present study also revealed that academic supervisors based WPL assessments on the learning outcomes of WPL, and meeting its duration requirements. However, it was found that learning outcomes were perceived to be significantly less important by students and workplace supervisors (Figure 4.20). On the other hand, a part of the academic supervisor evaluation of student progress in meeting learning outcomes, is by way of interview and observation during personal visits. However, Reddan (2012: 237) and McNamara (2013: 286) express their concern that academic supervisors did not visit student placements regularly, thus compromising the validity and reliability of assessments.

A visit by academic supervisors did not affect the assessments of students performed by workplace supervisors during WPL. The empirical findings affirmed that workplace supervisors understand and were confident in assessing students (Table 4.17). This raises the significance of the orientation and provision of proper guidelines to workplace supervisors to assess WPL.

5.5.4 Evaluation and quality

To evaluate and ensure the quality of WPL, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 39) assert that the duration of these modules should be long enough to enhance skills, that there should be adequate feedback from stakeholders; and that all factors for success should be examined. In doing so, a system of WPL quality assurance is advanced.

5.5.4.1 Duration of WPL modules

The duration of WPL is an important success factor in the attainment of learning outcomes and to complement the successful transfer of work skills. Responses from three educational institutions indicated a minimum of 150 hours of WPL. They found with the one educational institution reporting that they required six months of student WPL.

The study results showed mixed responses from graduates concerning the duration of WPL required for tourism graduate employability. Respondents indicated the lengths of WPL modules were sufficient, which is summed up by graduates stating that:

“Yes - as the six-month period allows the student to gain relevant experience as well as gain personal knowledge of the working environment.” (Educational institution 1)

“Yes, it is sufficient but should be spread out in first and second year.” (Educational institution 1)

Although the responses indicated that participating in WPL provides benefits to students, a longer duration would prove sufficient to advance employability skills. This is supported by more than half of the respondents (Table 4.14), specifically,

graduates who completed 150 hours of WPL found this duration inadequate for employability, the development of their skills and applied knowledge.

“No, WPL should be longer and not done in our own time.” (Educational institution 3)

“No, the module should be at least a year long as most entry level jobs require people to have one-year experience.” (Educational institution 2)

This indicates that students require an engagement of activities with a longer duration in order to gain work experience, rather than just once-off knowledge of task. In support of these findings, the Chi-square analysis (Appendix J) affirmed that these durations did indeed impact on the employability of students through the embedding of their skills. Additionally, the duration of WPL modules impacts on the teaching and learning during WPL. For example, if the length of the WPL module is 150 hours, workplace supervisors are likely to use verbal orientation of the task due to the limited time they have to allow students to engage in workplace activities. Moreover, the present findings show that a verbal orientation to the tasks alone was found to not always be an effective strategy during WPL (Table 4.15).

The majority of academic supervisors also agreed that 150 hours was insufficient for tourism WPL, with the following being stated:

“No, it should be at least three months. Three months is adequate exposure but three months and they must have had their Galileo and finding companies that will take them on for that amount of time. It is just unfeasible for companies to take students on for that amount of time. So that is the difficulty that comes in where the educational institutions have gone into industry how many hours it should be. It used to be longer, 250 hours.”

Additionally, academic supervisor C identified the need for a longer duration of WPL for better learning experiences, resulting in increased tourism graduate employability. However, academic C also acknowledged the difficulties in balancing classroom learning time and the location of placements for students for a longer period of time. Thus, limited placement for WPL modules affects participatory practices at the learning venue.

5.5.4.2 Feedback between WPL stakeholders

Feedback is a systemic consideration that impacts on the success of WPL. Additionally, feedback is important for a student's professional development during WPL. This following section focuses on the feedback on WPL modules provided between academic supervisors and students, and between workplace and academic supervisors.

The strategies deployed by academic supervisors in providing WPL feedback with the students have been outlined in Table 4.16. Graduates' responses highlighted that the most effective methods for feedback as being the use of e-mails, and supervisor WPL visitations (Figure 4.17). The provision of face-to-face feedback during WPL was also found to be adopted by one educational institution. WPL feedback was, however, lacking in two of the educational institutions.

The qualitative results explain that a lack of feedback to the graduate may be due to the WPL being poorly co-ordinated by academic supervisors. Research (Cooper *et al.* 2010: 53; Choy and Delahaye 2011: 171; Ferns and Zegwaard 2014: 183) attests that in order for WPL to deliver on its purpose, a properly managed system must ensure that students' are provided with support. This assists students to better manage issues that are challenging to them and for workplace supervisors to mentor students during WPL.

Moreover, academic supervisors are not always aware of whether their feedback is constructive and effective to the students or not (Richardson *et al.* 2013: 9). Academic supervisors have a role to play in providing advice on WPL to students (Baharun *et al.* 2012: 8790). As found in this study, there was no academic supervisor follow-up provided on monthly student reports and logbooks. Furthermore, WPL is at the end of the students third year, there was no communication on the learning experiences between the students and academic supervisors on improvements that might be needed to WPL modules.

Another interesting finding in Figure 4.19, was that feedback between academic and workplace supervisors was limited. Feedback between workplace supervisors and academic supervisors was found to be inconsistent, with no feedback in 50 percent

of the cases. This shortcoming particularly explained the lack of support for student placement provided between industry and HEIs, in developing opportunities for improved tourism graduate employability.

Inadequate feedback between academic and workplace supervisors is symptomatic of a lack of communication between these two stakeholders. Sattler (2011: 72) explains that inadequate feedback often leads to concerns over the teaching mechanisms used during WPL. As explained in the discussion of objective one for this study, a lack of communication between the academic and workplace supervisors can give rise to misunderstandings in the skills expectations for employment between the tourism employers and educators.

On the other hand, feedback during WPL between the student and workplace supervisor in this study was found to be sufficient and considered invaluable for enhancing performance across all the skills for required graduate employability. The lack of feedback may be attributed to the limited time workplace supervisors have with students, since they have other duties in their workload (Figure 4.6). Poor feedback makes interaction between stakeholders difficult, contributing to negative knock-on effects for effective WPL and graduate employability.

As an important component of the WPL module, feedback is used to address the strengths and weaknesses of, not only the students, but of the WPL module itself (Vaughan 2014: 3). It was, however, discovered that workplace supervisors did not provide improvements for student performance following WPL. Moreover, this study affirmed that feedback from the academic supervisor was not always reviewed by the workplace supervisor (Sattler 2011: 60).

5.5.4.3 Perceived limitations to success by graduates

The success of WPL was generally agreed on by students, despite the many gaps in delivery of WPL (Table 4.18). However, WPL was not entirely successful, for the following reasons:

- A lack of appropriate placements for students to be provided with quality learning experiences (Figure 4.3);
- The exploitation of students during WPL, which hampered learning in the workplace (Table 4.10);
- Negative expectations of WPL, which were influenced by the aforementioned factors and negative experiences (Table 4.9); and
- The short duration of WPL modules (Table 4.13 and Table 4.14), which affected student abilities to develop skills.

5.5.4.4 Limitation to success by workplace supervisors

The majority of workplace supervisors attested to the fact that WPL was successful. The stratified analyses for the study indicated that some workplace supervisors disagreed on WPL being successful (Figure 4.23). The comparisons and analyses of the data (Figure 4.7), on the challenges of WPL, provided reasons for WPL appearing unsuccessful for the tourism organisation, which included:

- Limited staff time due to workloads, which limits time for workplace supervisors in providing the support and guidance needed for growth and development of skills in the workplace;
- The supervising of students without compromising business objectives, which can impact negatively on their learning of employability skills; and
- The lack of existing graduate skills leads them to consider WPL being superfluous to them, and hampering advancement of workplace skills.

Another contributing factor for workplace supervisors finding WPL unsuccessful is explained from the empirical findings in Figure 4.24. The elements of graduates' success in WPL are based on student abilities to handle tasks, the promotion of greater confidence in students, graduate employment after WPL, the fulfilling of company objectives, meeting the outcomes of the WPL programmes, knowledge of the tourism industry and punctuality. Therefore, when students did not meet the criteria, workplace supervisors deemed that the WPL module was consequently unsuccessful for them.

5.5.5 Resources for WPL

Patrick *et al.* (2008: 50) emphasise that the adequate resourcing of WPL is a vital measure required for the achievement of its goals. The study results suggested that academic supervisors require sufficient resources to implement WPL, in order to ensure its success towards increasing tourism graduate employability (Figure 4.23). Whilst some academic supervisors are faced with constraints of financial resources for WPL, one academic supervisor stated that: *“There is no problem in finance, it is only the time and contacts in the industry.”* Other academic supervisors suggested that the Sector Education Training Authority (SETA) should provide funding for WPL at educational institutions. This study has found that the main resource was the need for influential contacts in the tourism industry. Better partnerships within the tourism industry could ensure placements for students, which enhance and in developing skills for employability, and thereby ensure that graduates become employable in the future.

Graduates experienced financial constraints in undertaking WPL that restrict potential tourism graduate employability (Figure 4.6). Despite the cost of WPL module being included in tourism student course fees, WPL expenses, such as transport and accommodation were paid for by students. This ought to be better recognised and addressed by the educational institutions, leading to involvement and support in funding from the SETA, which would greatly benefit students performing WPL.

5.6 Practical implications

This study supports the results of Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38), in that academic supervisors were seen as being unable to effectively follow WPL educational institutions policies. This suggests that their WPL policies were inadequately structured and in need of constant analysis by HEIs. Self-regulation of WPL policies is essential in assuring that learning is tailored towards the development of employability skills. Academic supervisors rely heavily on the WPL policies of educational institutions, and this should be adopted and facilitated for the achievement of best WPL practices.

The inclusion of WPL and its benefits means that educational institutions will be approaching tourism employers to provide placements. Although seen as challenging in this study, Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38) advance this as being significant for WPL, as there is a need to strengthen partnerships for the future of WPL. The involvement of tourism employers in WPL helps to promote and develop tourism graduates' employability skills and is likely to benefit other programmes or events at the educational institutions, such as Career Day. Academic supervisors are, by implication, required to collaborate with tourism employers for vocational knowledge during WPL. Thus, involvement in WPL requires improved, sustainable relationships for educational institutions.

Another challenge was the financial constraints that affect a student's performance during the WPL modules (Patrick *et al.* 2008: 27). Both tourism professionals and educational institutions should ensure that they understand how this particular challenge impacts on the quality of student workplace learning experiences. Furthermore, given the findings of the study, determining the means to better resource WPL, and developing better partnerships, should be the priorities of the government. Government should be a key driver in policies and funding; HEIs should address these issues with the government to support the growth of WPL.

One of the recognised benefits of WPL found in this study and in that of Ruhanen *et al.* (2012: 186) is the fulfilment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) for tourism organisations. It is therefore suggested that government and HEIs should recognise this benefit towards encouraging tourism organisations to engage in WPL.

Kim and Park (2013: 72) indicate that successful tourism courses are those that produce high quality graduates, with knowledge and skills. Tourism employers should therefore ensure that WPL prepares the students for future employment. In respect of WPL, workplace supervisors base the success of WPL on the ability of students to handle tasks by using their knowledge and skills learned during WPL within tourism workplaces.

Stakeholders also hold different perspectives on the bases of assessment for the WPL module. Ruhanen *et al.* (2013: 64) discussed that the reason students undertake WPL is to complete WPL outcomes, and academic supervisors should also consider the fulfilment of these outcomes. This study showed that students and workplace supervisors believe WPL assessments should be based on experience gained, rather than fulfilling the learning outcomes of WPL. This finding supported the view of Yorke and Knight (2006: 18) and Groenewald (2009: 96), who argue that concentrating only on learning outcomes limits students' abilities to gain skills during WPL, since workplace supervisors follow the required outcomes designed by the educational institutions. Educational institution and curriculum designer engagement with workplace supervisors is essential for the assimilation of experiences with learning outcomes and vice versa. Then the outcomes may be accurately formulated.

5.7 Theoretical implications

Reddan (2012: 240) argues that a presentation of students WPL experiences is the least preferred form of assessment by students. Consequently, this study found the presentations of skills learned during WPL an appropriate form of assessment for both workplace supervisors and students. The implications for the difference in opinion is perhaps attributable to the context for Reddan's study. Reddan's (2012: 240) study analysed the responses from students involved in science, while the current study's sample was comprised of tourism students. Although students participating in WPL are evaluated and students have the ability to reflect, the current study reveals that evaluation of the WPL module was limited. Nonetheless, there is a need to understand how to best value WPL assessments, to ensure reflective practices, as well as obtaining additional feedback.

Future theory should consider graduate skills required for WPL and it should be incorporated in the WPL outcomes. HEIs need to ensure that WPL is achieving and contributing towards skills development, as it is regarded as invaluable towards tourism graduate employability.

5.8 Conclusion

Chapter Five provided an in-depth discussion of the results presented in Chapter Four. The results were interpreted against the objectives for the study and conclusions were drawn, showing links with the literature in Chapter Two. The findings indicated that both the academic and workplace supervisor are pivotal to the success of the WPL modules for tourism graduate employability.

The study raised a number of issues associated with the administration of WPL, including supervisor workloads, the time required to supervise students, and organisational partnerships. These influenced student perceptions of the tourism industry, which were seen to change following WPL completion. These issues not only altered student perceptions, but also impacted on their transfer of capabilities, and limited opportunities.

The key objective of this research was to identify whether the skills students accessed during classes aligned with their workplace experiences. Graduates were able to apply their classroom skills in the workplace. However, the discussion presented in this Chapter clearly indicated that a lack of symmetry existed between the skills required by workplace and academic supervisors, which is likely to influence the outcomes of the WPL module.

Practical and theoretical implications centred around the factors that fuel misalignment of skills by the educational institutions. The discussion of the related empirical findings will assist in answering the objectives of this study, to be presented in the next chapter. Recommendations for future or similar studies and for improvements to WPL module at the educational institutions will also be offered.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research results were discussed and interpreted against the objectives for the study. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perceptions of stakeholders involved in workplace learning (WPL), namely, graduates, and academic and workplace supervisors. This was done to determine the influence that WPL modules had on a tourism graduate's employability. Chapter Six will conclude this research by addressing the research questions. The conclusions derived from this study attempt to provide valid recommendations for future research, and to stakeholders involved in the WPL modules.

6.2 Objective One

This objective set out to investigate the mechanisms used by workplace supervisors for the transfer of capabilities to enhance tourism graduates' employability. The literature regarding this objective was inconclusive, as borne out by Martin and Hughes (2011: 23), who suggest that more research is required on how competencies are imparted during WPL. This study therefore sought to answer four of the research questions developed in section 1.4.2 of Chapter one. The conclusions from the empirical study with regard to answering these questions are discussed below.

6.2.1 What strategies are used by workplace supervisors to impart skills to students during WPL?

Providing students with an orientation and demonstrating their tasks were found to be the most appropriate strategy to facilitate student learning during WPL. Alternate strategies were not consistently effective for all students of WPL. This was attributable to different learning styles for students in each setting and the contexts of student work stations. Moreover, effective strategies for teaching and learning requires workplace supervisors to be committed and supportive of students during WPL. Workplace supervisors were afraid to take risks that might threaten their

organisational images in the tourism industry. These challenges limited the development of student skills.

6.2.2 Are these strategies used by workplace supervisors to impart skills to students during WPL effective for their employability?

The WPL module had a positive effect on student learning in the workplace. The teaching strategies used by the workplace supervisor and the form of assessment (monthly reports and logbooks) contributed to students being able to strategically evaluate their learning experiences during WPL. Additionally, this study concludes that inadequate preparation and orientation WPL for tourism students, hampered learning at tourism workstations. Multiple teaching strategies and promoting feedback between stakeholders will contribute to the skill development of graduates.

Effective strategies may be thwarted by WPL compromising workplace business objectives, with workplace pressures on supervisors to handle their own workloads with limited time. Workplace supervisors could not always be criticised for being unable to transfer the skills required for student employment, since educational institutions had set WPL outcomes that they were required to follow. Practices by workplace supervisors are therefore limited.

6.2.3 What assurance do academic supervisors have that students learn in the workplace?

Undeniably, there is a role to play by academic supervisors for addressing issues and to ensure that students received valuable learning experiences within workplaces. The success of supervisors in WPL depended profoundly on the learning outcomes, workplace settings and the relationship between students and workplace supervisors. In order to ensure students are learning during WPL, workplace supervisors should require support from the educational institutions on supervision and evaluation. This study found that a lack of communication between workplace supervisors and students added to a weak understanding on students performing tasks during WPL.

6.2.4 How do the various educational institutions' WPL durations affect the transferability of skills?

The durations of WPL were found to be an ongoing concern arising from the literature reviewed, and this was also found to be true in the empirical results. There seemed to be no consensus on the agreed durations for WPL. The durations of WPL were discovered to be a major factor affecting the transferability of skills. Although a shorter duration eliminates the challenges of placements for students in tourism organisations during WPL; the development of skills was found inadequate towards a tourism graduate's employability. The benefit of a longer duration with quality learning experiences of WPL is positively associated with transferability of skills to the workplace.

6.2.5 Recommendations for future studies

Future research would facilitate in understanding ways of developing skills during WPL. It is recommended that future studies on the transfer of vocational skills during WPL should focus on:

- Deeper analyses of the learning strategies used by workplace supervisors to impart skills to students.
- Student suggestions on WPL could be changed by the teaching and instructions of supervisors in the workplace.
- An observational study should be conducted that draws comparisons between the effectiveness of activities designed by both academic and workplace supervisors for students during WPL.

6.2.6 Recommendations for academic supervisors

The following recommendations are presented for improvement by academic supervisors as WPL partners, to ensure its success:

- Constructive feedback: The main purpose of this objective of the study was to identify transferability mechanisms during WPL. Based on the following findings, there are challenges exist which can detract from the effective learning of skills by students for employability. These include: poor technological skills, a lack of

support, feedback and information given to students. It was therefore seen as imperative that constructive feedback was obtained from all the stakeholders to address areas of concern, and that tourism employers should also specify the job roles of students during WPL. Academic supervisors should be responsible for encouraging constructive feedback, not only to the students but also to the workplace supervisors. Improved and consistent feedback to students by workplace supervisors could assist greatly in the transferability of skills and the inclusion of activities for the tourism courses.

- The formulation and contribution of clear, structured guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of workplace supervisors.
- The improvement of preparations for practical work, such as role-playing, GDS and field trips, should be undertaken throughout the durations of tourism courses.
- Furthermore, the timing of GDS at educational institutions 2, 3 and 4 should be revised and completed before students engage in WPL. This will ensure that students are aware of the systems used in the workplace and can then make bookings during their WPL experience.
- Workplace supervisors should consider granting permission to students in administering student activities during WPL.
- The revision of the durations of WPL to allow students sufficient time to develop and maximise on their learning of employability skills.
- The placement of relevant candidates in tourism organisations that can meet WPL outcomes. Conduct an appraisal of the tourism organisation before students undertake WPL. This may provide assurance of students learning in the workplace.
- The practice of deeper and broader support from the academic supervisors, which is of utmost importance to students, as it assists in a smoother student transitioning which prepares them for positions within the tourism industry.
- Although the framework for employability skills (Table 2.2) is for classroom learning, the researcher suggests that there is scope for collaboration within this framework during implementation of WPL at educational institutions. This could be included by using WPL criteria, or in logbooks submitted to workplace supervisors, in order to teach various competencies. For example, an important skill for employment required by workplace supervisors of students is analytical

thinking. Strategies in the workplace, such as teamwork, could support this, or it could even be accomplished by involving the student in decision-making at meetings, where they can be given opportunities to work with management in addressing solutions to problems.

6.2.7 Recommendations for workplace supervisors

For workplace supervisors, the following points should be taken into consideration in achieving the enhancement of student skills in the workplace:

- Tourism organisations should train WPL students as if they are prospective employees of the tourism organisation.
- Tourism organisations should encourage employees to collectively teach students during WPL. This will allow for greater learning in the workplace and reduce workload of one workplace supervisor teaching the student.
- Workplace supervisors should insist that academic supervisors and students provide constant WPL feedback.

6.2.8 Recommendations for students of WPL

The following recommendations are suggested for consideration by students:

- Students must take the initiative to learn during WPL, which goes beyond minimum compliance by the completion of logbooks.
- While students may lack the knowledge or skills to perform certain tasks, their attitudes towards performing these tasks can determine the value of WPL has for them in gaining employability skills.

6.3 Objective Two

This objective was set to appraise skills accessed by tourism graduates during their WPL that enhance their employability.

6.3.1 What skills accessed during WPL assisted students in being employed in the tourism industry?

The results obtained from the study indicated positive responses to the skills students perceived they accessed during WPL. Although students participated in the WPL module to develop their practical skills, it was found that personal qualities, such as time-management and initiative, were also developed. The study found that these skills obtained during WPL contributed to tourism graduate development and employability.

WPL is not restricted to learning outcomes designed by the educational institutions. By exposing graduates to tourism-related work, WPL increased other workplace skills that cannot be accessed at the educational institutions. Hence, the majority of students undertaking WPL were better prepared and equipped with appropriate skills for employment.

6.3.2 What skills are perceived as important for employment by academic and workplace supervisors?

Significant differences in the importance of skills between stakeholders were found (Table 4.8). These incongruences in stakeholder communication impacted negatively on the alignment of skills for tourism employability.

The lack of stakeholder agreement on the other necessary WPL skills raised questions regarding the differences between what was taught at educational institutions, and what workplace supervisors expected to teach during WPL. The researcher proposes that this disparity in the results was due to the fact that academic supervisors perceived important skills from a theoretical perspective which included concerns for quality, accuracy and the building of relationships, whereas workplace supervisors perceived skills from a practical, experiential perspective and held self-control and flexibility to be important for employment. This is the issue of theory versus practise, which can evidently be seen as a gap in the alignment of skills for graduate employment. However, in a positive light, WPL students were provided with opportunities to develop more rounded and complete skillsets, both in the workplace and at educational institutions.

A major concern nonetheless remains that some workplace supervisors argued that students were unemployable, even after WPL. Student employability was also, in some cases, hindered by students lack of proficiencies in foreign languages and English. These conclusions provide practical guidance for strengthening education and WPL to maximise employment opportunities for graduates.

6.3.3 Are skills accessed by graduates during WPL aligned with curriculum for tourism graduate employability?

Workplace supervisors evidently appreciate the application of product knowledge by students to their work during WPL, especially in modules such as tourism practice at the educational institution. Product knowledge was seen as crucial to employers and for graduates' employability. Graduates were provided with clear outcomes in order to achieve the skillsets required. It can be concluded that WPL provided opportunities for applying theoretical knowledge and learning as reflection on their learning was seen as an effective indicator of skills alignment during WPL.

Workplace supervisors were identified as key in improving WPL learning objectives. The availability of the learning outcomes to workplace supervisors was seen as one of the strengths of WPL. There was also sufficient ability to handle learning outcomes on the wider level of educational institutions, but measures for student learning could be broadened to encompass a wider variety of skills.

A challenge remained in the lack of WPL input provided by tourism employers. Workplace supervisors expected students to possess certain skills prior to providing work placements. The critical skills required by the student during WPL are teamwork and problem-solving. Contribution of skill development from workplace supervisors were much needed in the tourism curricula and WPL to facilitate the transition of students into the workplace.

6.3.4 Recommendations for future studies

The theoretical studies must be ongoing, in order to understand the changing dynamics of skills required for graduate employment in tourism. There is a perceived need for future studies to address the gaps in WPL raised by this objective. The researcher gives the following study recommendations:

- Adoption of surveys to students in each tourism sector would assist in further cross-examining results for explanations of the empirical findings. For example, to determine the skills required per tourism sector for graduate employability.
- The types of skills covered by Fleming's *et al.* (2009: 200) questionnaire were limited for the discussion of skills required for employment. Yorke and Knight (2006: 8) suggest that skills should be categorised into personal skills, core skills and process skills (Table 6.1). This will offer clearer data on what category of skills tourism employers require.

Table 6.1 Examples of the types of skills for inclusion in questionnaire (by researcher)

Personal skills	Process skills	Core skills
Self-confidence, willingness to learn, self-control, effort and flexibility.	Computer literacy, ethical sensitivity, planning, problem-solving.	Include skills such as reading effectiveness, numeracy, language skills and self-management.

6.3.5 Recommendations for academic supervisors

This study raised concerns over the shared understanding of the purpose of the tourism WPL module. The following recommendations are considered imperative for enhancing skills within the tourism WPL modules:

- A mismatch in skills between the academic and workplace supervisor results from and contributes to unemployment of graduates. To assist in closing immediate gaps, and those that arise later in the development of skills educational institutions should consider conducting an appraisal of skills accessed during WPL by the tourism students. Furthermore, educational institutions should adjust

the curriculum to future and current skills needed to ensure graduates are in a better position to gain employment.

- Academic supervisors should build mechanisms that stress the importance of perceived skills for employment to students during their tourism courses. This should enable students to critically reflect on the work they produce both in classes and during WPL.
- The inclusion of foreign and indigenous languages will also enhance employability. In addition, greater emphasis on English language usage should be included in the curricula and in the tourism course admission criteria.

6.3.6 Recommendations for workplace supervisors

Workplace supervisors are pivotal in the development of student skills during WPL. The following are recommendations for workplace supervisors:

- Prior to the commencement of WPL module, workplace supervisors should screen students to understand their strengths and weaknesses. The results will be beneficial to workplace supervisors as they can advise students on enhancing their skills and to develop skills they lack during WPL.
- Workplace supervisors should engage in consistent WPL feedback by participating and cooperating with educational institutions on WPL curriculum matters. This could promote a positive lifelong learning and skills enhancement through a strong and consistent policy framework for WPL.
- Encourage students to critically reflect on skills and challenge each other's' thinking about work related problems. Allowing creativity in workplace strategies such as brainstorming and problem solving games could do this.
- Workplace supervisors should be members of the advisory committee at the educational institutions, so as to exchange information for aligning and enhancing employability skills.
- Workplace supervisors should contribute to and consistently use the learning outcomes of WPL as guidelines for developing student skills.

6.3.7 Recommendations for students of WPL

The recommendations for students are as follows:

- Students should be aware of their workplace language usage and improve on their writing skills. For example, this could be developed through the use of writing centres established at the educational institutions.
- Students should reflect critically on the WPL tasks they are given to understand the purpose of these skills, and their utilisation for successful employment.

6.4 Objective Three

This objective focused on comparing graduates' perceptions and attitude on the impact of WPL on tourism employability. The study sought to identify the impact WPL had on students from the four educational institutions studied between 2011 and 2014. The conclusions, based on the results obtained from the research questions developed for this objective, are synthesised as follows:

6.4.1 What are tourism graduates' perceptions and attitudes to WPL for their employability?

The empirical findings conclude that there are perceptions and attitudes both positive and negative that are important to understand in order to improve WPL practices and enhance tourism graduates' employability. Graduates rely on WPL to identify the tourism sector they want to pursue. Therefore, it is important that the educational institution create meaningful experiences. One way in which to do this, is to provide students with quality work placements which is an important component to develop student perceptions and attitudes of WPL for employability.

The shift in some graduates' perceptions and attitudes changed from their expectations prior to commencing WPL due to their negative experiences encountered. These graduates firstly expect to be employed in the tourism industry after WPL and secondly, required more tasks that are challenging during WPL. It is important to understand graduates' expectations so that these can be met in reality. Thus, communication is key in managing graduates' expectations and attitudes.

6.4.2 How can the various perceptions of tourism students for employability be explained?

This study has flagged some of the complexities that existed in the various perceptions of tourism students. The negative perceptions of graduates derived from WPL are attributed to the following factors, established from the empirical findings:

- A lack of support and guidance for students from academic and workplace supervisors' limits WPL. Academic supervisors did not provide enough support, because of the limited time available to supervise students and attend to their discontent. Relevant shortcomings in the student learning experienced in the workplace further hampered WPL outcomes and negatively affected attitudes towards their future careers in tourism.
- The relevance of student work stations in WPL significantly impacted the perceptions of the tourism industry that students formed, especially where they had already experienced difficulty in obtaining WPL placements.
- Students raised concerns of incongruous activities that they were required to perform in the workplace. They were afraid to complain about it as they thought this might affect WPL assessment.
- The limited durations of WPL influenced the development of student skills in the workplace. Thus, graduates shared a perception that experiencing WPL was insufficient to allow them entry to positions in the tourism industry.
- Graduates are not able to develop certain skills, such as problem-solving and GDS because workplace supervisors are unable to provide support, and share their knowledge and experience due to having to meet business objectives. This leaves students with theoretical knowledge of tourism but unfortunately, less skilled.

6.4.3 Is the WPL experience rewarding to graduates and why?

Tourism graduates were generally found to be positive about their WPL experiences, especially those who learned a variety of skills that they considered relevant to their tourism courses. The most rewarding aspect of the WPL module for graduates was that they were better prepared them for the workplace by allowing them to gain insight into career prospects, and obtained tourism industry product knowledge. This ultimately led to graduates successfully finding employment in the industry.

Workplace supervisors were found to be at the forefront of the students' learning during WPL by shaping their perceptions and attitude towards work. While students felt that WPL benefitted by providing necessary skills, WPL may not automatically lead to employment unless there is a conducive economic and social environment to translate into employment. Essential factors that adversely affect a graduate's career are, financial constraints, weak partnerships, performing inadequate or inappropriate tasks.

6.4.4 Recommendations for future studies

The following are the researcher's recommendations for extending the research areas arising from the objectives for this study:

- A larger sample would increase the generalisation of perceptions and attitudes concerning the impact WPL has on tourism employability for educational institutions.
- A deeper investigation of the tourism sectors in which students trained during WPL would provide a better understanding of WPL within the context of the tourism industry.
- A longitudinal study, focusing on students' pre- and post- perceptions and attitudes of WPL. This would be valuable in understanding the changes in attitude brought about by their WPL experiences.
- There is a close association between WPL and the reasons for students wanting to enter the tourism industry. For example, some students may pursue a career in tourism for the benefits of travelling associated with the industry. Therefore, an investigation on the profile of students WPL attracts might serve to close the gaps in the student perception and attitudes and result in their improved employability.

6.4.5 Recommendations for academic supervisors

Although this objective primarily assessed student attitudes and perceptions, academic supervisors also played a role in inspiring students and changing their perceptions about the tourism industry. The following are the researcher's suggestions for academic supervisors involved in WPL modules:

- One of the factors that negatively affected students' views of WPL, was being delegated inappropriate tasks during WPL. It is therefore advised that academic supervisors should develop learning guidelines for the workplace supervisor, covering the rights and responsibilities of participating in WPL. More importantly, educational institutions should closely implement mechanisms to monitor this, since it will make academic supervisors more aware of the specific difficulties experienced by students during WPL.
- Academic supervisors should also play an integral role in shaping students training choices on realistic employment prospects. One way is through career counselling sessions.
- There is possibly an oversupply of tourism graduates, resulting in limited employment opportunities in the tourism industry, which leaves students having negative outlook towards employment in tourism. As a result, skilled graduates may emigrate if there is a lack of jobs in our country. The way forward is to encourage students to become entrepreneurs, to create tourism employment for themselves.

6.4.6. Recommendations for educational institutions

In order to shape positive perceptions of the WPL module and tourism industry, the following are recommended for educational institutions:

- Educational institutions should ensure that academics are qualified to provide WPL, and trained to offer advice to students. Moreover, academic supervisors should prepare students for the realities of WPL, by conducting “what if?” and “why?” scenarios on overcoming the challenges experienced in the workplace.
- The educational institution or its cooperative department needs to conduct cross-sectional studies of graduates' perceptions and attitudes of WPL for employability. This will provide useful data on understanding the impact WPL has had on graduates at one specific time thus validate empirical findings. Moreover, valuable research will assist in change or improvement of assessment criteria or systems of WPL for better alignment.

6.4.7 Recommendations for workplace supervisors

The researcher's study recommendations to workplace supervisors for the improvement of student attitudes towards WPL indicate that they should:

- Allow for interactive feedback between the student, academic and workplace supervisor to ensure the rights and responsibilities for WPL are discussed. This may alleviate negative perceptions and attitudes of graduates entering the tourism industry.
- Provide students with more opportunities to work in an environment that exercises their rights as prospective employees during WPL, so as to support and enhance student learning, as this impacts on their WPL experiences.

6.4.8 Recommendations for students of WPL

- Students should perform research on the work they would like to pursue so as to understanding their job roles and salary expectations, which will eliminate student negative perceptions and attitudes arising during WPL.
- Students should consult with their academic supervisor for advice on the challenges they encounter during WPL.
- The ability to see a negative situation in appropriate context is an invaluable trait to possess. This can turn problem situations into positive learning experiences in order to change their attitudes.

6.5 Objective Four

This objective set out to evaluate the inclusion of WPL amongst educational institutions, of promoting WPL to advance tourism graduate employability. Although there was no specific model for WPL, the model designed by Patrick *et al.* (2008: 38) assisted in understanding the gaps that existed in undertaking WPL. The following points were concluded from the questions raised:

6.5.1 What are the benefits of WPL for stakeholders?

WPL is fundamental to the development of graduates to transition into the workplace. The numerous benefits of WPL indicated that WPL fulfils its role in promoting graduate employability. The main benefits for students, identified by the findings,

were that WPL assisted in providing them with employment opportunities, and with gaining work experience. Beyond employability, skills are central to personal growth.

WPL did not only benefit graduates but also workplace and academic supervisors. The study found that WPL has proven to be beneficial to workplace employers, as it contributed to their CSR by enabling students they employed to develop their skills for employability. Academic supervisors benefited from being aware of what employers expect and align this valuable information with the tourism curricula.

6.5.2 What are the challenges of implementing WPL for stakeholders?

The empirical study established trends that influence the lack of success such as financial and time constraints and inadequate communication mechanisms for graduates. The lack of placements challenges the quality of students' learning during WPL and thwarted its successful implementation. A lack of placements is indicative of deeper educational institution problems. Partnerships and relationships between the academic and workplace supervisor are essential to form positive WPL. Workplace supervisors' competence is challenged by WPL, as they have to manage their workload and provide tasks to students without compromising business objectives. This threatens the graduates from developing their skills and is a serious concern for the success of WPL.

6.5.3 How do the stakeholders measure WPL success?

The empirical findings and discussion concludes that WPL should be accomplished as a complete system. This study concluded that there was no specific theoretical model that could be used to determine the success of WPL. Nonetheless, WPL is reliant on a framework to be developed to understand its feedback and evaluation, partnerships, and quality placements, to ensure positive learning experiences for WPL students.

Academic supervisors identified that WPL depended on learning outcomes and durations completed by students to be considered successful. In order to deliver on its outcomes, by developing student employability skills, academic supervisors

assessed WPL based on criteria developed by educational institutions, and on feedback from reflective student journals.

Graduates rated that their WPL experiences successfully contributed to their tourism programmes based on the perceived benefits these provided. Another indication of WPL success for students was seen from the opportunities it afforded them in aligning the theory they had learned with practice. On the other hand, for WPL to be considered successful by workplace supervisors, students had to display abilities to perform tasks and contribute to the daily operations of tourism organisations.

One key weakness in the measurements used for WPL was the lack of feedback between the academic and workplace supervisors, and the poor evaluation of the WPL modules. Quality and timing of the feedback delivered to the tripartite is important for WPL learning, which impacts on graduate employability. A balanced evaluation of these modules was seen to rely heavily on the involvement of all stakeholders in WPL assessments and feedback.

6.5.4 Is there a difference in success factors?

Stakeholders held different views regarding the success of WPL based on different opinions about the purpose of WPL. For instance, the academic supervisor found WPL successful if its outcomes were fulfilled, whilst workplace supervisors determined its success in terms of the recognition of skills and the value of WPL to the tourism organisation. However, this might not correspond to outcomes and the completion of WPL as mentioned by academic supervisors. On the other hand, graduates base the success on employment after graduation. The differences in success indicators are significant for sustaining of WPL practices as it fulfils the need of each stakeholder.

WPL is a tripartite effort and requires commonalities amongst success factors by all stakeholders to enhance student WPL experiences for graduate employability. By understanding the reasons for inclusion of WPL, graduate employability can be enhanced as stakeholders drive towards their common goal. It was found that

differences in perceived success factors between workplace and academic supervisors might be bridged by improved feedback between stakeholders.

6.5.5 Recommendation for future studies

The following are the researcher's recommendations for future research:

- Further research could closely examine diverse durations of WPL and its impact on student learning outcomes and employability.
- A comparative study between those educational institutions which offer WPL and those that do not, could determine the overall effectiveness of the WPL modules.
- A comparative study between UOT and private educational institutions that offer WPL in tourism to determine effectiveness of WPL modules on tourism graduate employability.
- A study that focuses on competency of graduates on the skills accessed during WPL, to determine whether WPL meets the learning outcomes of the module.

6.5.6 Recommendations for policy implication

The results indicate that closer collaboration is needed by the tourism industry. Partnerships in the tourism industry are required for success of a graduate's employability. The policies on WPL set by the CHE should encourage tourism organisations to place students during WPL. This can be fulfilled by:

- Tourism organisations should be offered a reward (certificates, incentives through skills levy) for their contributions in skills development. Awards and recognition would be beneficial to tourism organisations and encourage them to participate in WPL. Recognition can be achieved through media events at the Tourism Indaba, Meetings Africa, the World Association of Co-operative Education (WACE) and on websites or travel magazines.
- A database should be made available to education institutions that includes a list of tourism organisations willing to participate in WPL.
- Formal efforts should be made to sustain both SETA funding, and its support for WPL modules initiated at workplaces.

- The policies on WPL at educational institutional and departmental level should constantly be revised. This will ensure that the WPL module will continue to add value to tourism student learning by allowing integration of tourism with its practice.
- A youth unemployment subsidy should be implemented by the government for training and facilitating WPL. This will alleviate financial constraints affecting students during their tourism course.

6.5.8 Recommendations for academic supervisors

The following are the researcher's recommendations for academic supervisors:

- Placements for WPL should be the responsibility of the academic supervisor, instead of the student. Tourism organisations should be carefully screened before participating in the WPL module, to ensure that they offer the best value to students.
- Academic supervisors should formulate databases within their academic departments that follows the progress of graduate employment. This will assist in identifying whether the WPL module contributed successfully towards a graduate's employability.
- Academic supervisors must provide sustained, formal support and proper guidelines to all stakeholders, prior to WPL.
- Academic supervisors should provide WPL student preparation prior to WPL, and monitor student progress while undertaking WPL for students after WPL, by way using an online website. Such a portal could also be used to post jobs, success stories; interview preparations and so forth, to further motivate and prepare students for employment.

6.5.8 Recommendations for educational institutions

The following are the researcher's recommendations for educational institutions:

- There should be co-ordination between staff and the educational institutions concerning the availability of WPL resources.

- Staff who manage WPL at educational institutions require more support and resources, such as vehicles for visits. Other tourism academics could be seconded to provide such support to students.
- Educational institutions should develop policies that provide incentives to employers who participate in WPL. These may include recognition, status with the educational institution and invitations to social events, thus increasing partnerships for WPL.
- The assessment tools used for WPL require revision, since many workplace supervisors indicated that assessing work reports and logbooks was too time consuming.

6.5.9 Recommendations for workplace supervisors

The following is the researcher's recommendation for workplace supervisors:

- Workplace supervisors should constantly provide feedback to academic supervisors on progress of the student during WPL. Feedback can be promoted through the use of students' monthly reports and logbooks.

6.5.10 Recommendations for tourism employers

The following are the researcher's recommendations for tourism employers:

- Given the time and resources, tourism employers should be more actively involved in skills development by providing internship opportunities to graduates of participating WPL educational institutions. This can also be done in larger numbers, so the workplace can accommodate more students and also students from various educational institutions.
- Tourism organisations should ensure that students are provided with stipends to overcome the financial constraints experienced.
- Tourism organisations should create mechanisms for recognising the success of learning in the workplace to encourage students to build confidence.

6.6 Limitations

Although this research achieved its aims, some limitations were encountered, and some recommendations to overcome these in future studies are herein discussed.

6.6.1 Suggestions for limitations of the research instrument

The following questions could have been better categorised, to allow certain analyses to be performed, which may have proven significant for data analysis and interpretation during the study:

- Student questionnaire (Appendix B), Section B, questions 6 and 7, were adapted from the validated instruments of Kundasami (2007: 137). Kundasami's use of feedback was not defined by the adopted study. Only following the completion of the research, did the researcher find that stakeholders could have differently interpreted. Therefore, it is suggested that the feedback should have been more specific to work performances, rather than general for all varieties of feedback.
- The researcher could have obtained both workplace supervisor and student views concerning the effectiveness of the mentoring mechanisms used, as opposed to only those of workplace supervisors' perspectives. Had this been collected, then the researcher could have cross-examined and interpreted the study's empirical findings to provide a greater understanding of the results for objective one of this study.
- The study findings presented in Table 4.8 indicated that a gap existed between the academic and workplace supervisor ratings of concern for order, quality and accuracy as skills for student employability. The methodology employed did not examine the reasons for these variations, which should be addressed in future studies.
- The relevance of WPL to students was assessed using a Likert scale, and although this was valuable for the in-depth study of data, qualitative data could have been more useful. At minimum, the addition of an open-ended question could have provided reasons for student responses that WPL was irrelevant to employment in the tourism field.
- The research instrument should have included the tourism sectors in which students are employed during WPL. This would have been useful to the

researcher in cross-examining the study results, and achieving better analyses of them when determining tourism employability from the viewpoints of students. For example, by obtaining empirical results the researcher could have understood the views of graduates' whose tourism curricula did not relate to their WPL experience in particular sectors. This should be taken into consideration for future studies.

- Appraisals of skills should have been better adopted in the graduate questionnaire to better address objective two of this study.
- Further to student ratings of the success of WPL towards employability the addition of an open-ended question could have provided richer data for further examination across stakeholders.

6.6.2 Limitation of the sample

The following limitations were identified within the study sample selected:

- An English language deficiency was identified when the researcher herself, followed up on students telephonically. Some students did not understand what WPL was, since it takes various forms at educational institutions, while others experienced difficulties in answering the study questions. Although the researcher tried her best to assist, it is possible that most of the graduates were not English first-language speakers. As a result, graduates may have misunderstood the instructions or not read them carefully enough. It could therefore, not be assumed that all participants interpreted the questions equally well (Weber and He 2010: 40). However, it was assumed that all participants answered the questions honestly (Lilienfeld, Lynn, Namy, Woolf, Jamieson, Marks and Slaughter 2014: 68).
- The Principal as a gatekeeper of educational institution 3, passed on and the new incumbent did not have access to graduates' e-mail addresses. As a result of the time limit in which to complete the research, and a lack of access to other educational institutions' stakeholders, the researcher then included educational institution 4, into the sample frame. Snowball and purposive sampling techniques was therefore adopted. This drawback resulted in respondent bias towards the

educational institution and especially limited the researcher's ability to compare students' perceptions of WPL for objective three.

6.6.3 Lack of information available to the researcher

The following points describe the limitations on the availability of information for this research study

- Educational institution 3 did not provide access to graduates' contact details, and surveys were therefore e-mailed to them through the institution's website. The researcher perceived that the response rate could have increased with personal contact, since she would have had the opportunity to conduct further follow-up. The researcher was also unsure whether all graduates of educational institution 4 had received their questionnaires.
- Educational institution 4 did not provide the researcher with all tourism graduates e-mail addresses. The researcher obtained a list of graduates' contact details and accessed their email addresses telephonically. This impacted on the researcher's time frame and data collection process.

6.6.4 Limitations of the research design

Given the time frame and budget of this research, the researcher could not conduct a longitudinal study on graduates of WPL. Consequently, graduates from 2011-2014 were selected. The researcher is aware that policies and procedures of WPL may have changed that could influence graduates' responses. Unfortunately, policies of WPL were restricted by gatekeepers. However, the study's variables such as assessment, duration and placement procedures for WPL were accounted for and remained the same from 2011-2014.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter completed the research by drawing conclusions from inferences based on the study results and answering the research questions. The study achieved its aim of evaluating the perceptions of stakeholders of the WPL module. It can therefore be concluded that although there are benefits to stakeholders, there were limitations to WPL that negatively affected student performances. Academic

supervisors also emphasised the importance of partnerships in the tourism industry for the successful implementation of WPL.

These findings pointed to the potential benefits for educational institutions in providing increased support and collaborative systems for the improvement of WPL. Recommendations for each stakeholder were highlighted. It is hoped that these recommendations for improving the WPL modules for the stakeholders will contribute towards ensuring its success in achieving tourism graduate employability in the future.

Appendix A – Letter of information /consent form

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TOURISM GRADUATES THAT COMPLETED WORK PLACE LEARNING (WPL)

Dear Respondent,

You have received this questionnaire as part of a study (towards a Master's degree in Hospitality and Tourism) investigating the perceptions of workplace learning on tourism employability. This project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. K.M Naidoo (Director at Durban University of Technology, Telephone number: 031 3735503/6).

You would have completed WPL in your third years at the educational institution and is often referred to as work integrated learning (WIL) or in-service training. I would be very grateful if you could assist me in my research by taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will assist in identifying the gaps that currently exist in students' perceptions of WPL and to propose more valid and reliable ways to appraise WPL at Higher Education. It is hoped that the outcome of this research will not only be of benefit to the students and academics of the educational institutions involved but rather to the workplace supervisors participating in WPL.

The responses you provide will remain anonymous and confidential. Your responses will be utilised for this particular research only. If you have any questions about completing the questionnaire, please clarify with the researcher, Daphanie Naicker (a student at the Durban University of Technology). Please contact me on 072 933 7676 or e-mail: daphanien@gmail.com.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Kind regards,

Daphanie Naicker

Appendix B – Tourism graduates' questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TOURISM GRADUATES THAT COMPLETED WORKPLACE LEARNING

HOW TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Please answer ALL questions as best as you can.*
2. Please note that (WPL) is abbreviated from Workplace Learning.
3. Please click on one of the appropriate boxes.

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE
PRESS SEND, WHICH WILL AUTOMATICALLY RETURN IT TO THE
RESEARCHER.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Please indicate the educational institution that you graduated from:
 - Educational institution 1
 - Educational institution 2
 - Educational institution 3
 - Educational institution 4

(Omitted the educational institutions name due to confidentiality.)

2. In which year did you complete the WPL module?
 - 2011
 - 2012
 - 2013
 - 2014
3. Please indicate your gender:
 - Male
 - Female

4. Age:
- Under 20
 - 20-25
 - 25-30
 - 30-40
 - Older than 40

SECTION B: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT AND PERCEPTION OF WPL

1. Please, tick only one of the appropriate response range from *STRONGLY DISAGREE* to *STRONGLY AGREE*.
2. Please note that the **academic supervisor** is the person who is responsible for the WPL module at the educational institution and the **workplace supervisor** is the person who supervised the tasks at the workplace.

Questions	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. WPL is relevant in the tourism course.					
2. You know your rights and responsibilities as a student of WPL.					
3. Your academic supervisor assisted you in finding a placement for WPL.					
4. You received adequate support from the workplace supervisor.					
5. You received adequate support from academic supervisor during WPL.					
6. There is feedback on the entire WPL period from the workplace supervisor.					
7. There is feedback on the entire WPL period from the academic supervisor.					
8. The workplace supervisor is easily accessible at all times.					
9. You are actively learning					

throughout the entire WPL placement period.					
10. You were allocated inappropriate functions during WPL.					
11. The academic supervisor attended to dissatisfactions regarding your WPL.					
12. The workplace supervisor attended to dissatisfactions regarding your WPL.					
13. You had higher expectations of employment in the tourism industry because of undertaking WPL.					
14. The WPL placement has prepared the student for the world of work.					
15. You have access to the work site resources in order to complete projects on time at the tourism organisation (internet, computers, etc.)					
16. You were able to reflect on the experiences from WPL.					
17. The workplace supervisor's method of transferring skills and knowledge at the workplace was effective.					
18. The WPL module was a success for the tourism course.					

SECTION C: SKILLS ACQUIRED DURING WPL

1. Please rate the following competencies that you acquired during WPL in order of importance that will assist in gaining employment. Place a tick or cross to answer this question.

Skills	Very Important	Important	Moderately important	Not very important	Unimportant
Ability and willingness to learn					
Analytical thinking (thinking for self, reasoning, practical intelligence, planning skills, problem solving)					
Concern for order, quality and accuracy (asks when in doubt, keeping track of events and issues)					
Customer service					
Flexibility (being able to adapt to environment and changes within the organisation)					
Initiative (proactive, seizes opportunities, self-motivation and perseverance)					
Organisational awareness					

(understands organisation, knows rules and regulations, power, cultural knowledge)					
Relationship building (networking and building and maintaining relationships)					
Self-confidence (strong self-concept, internal locus of control, independence, decisive, accepts responsibility)					
Self-control (being able to control your emotions, resistance to stress, staying calm and can calm others)					
Teamwork and cooperation					
Technical expertise (job related technical knowledge and skills – computer literate, able to work with technology)					
Time management skills					

Written communication					
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2. Did you experience any difficulties in transferring the skills learnt at the educational institution to the work place?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ No

3. If stated yes for the above question, what do you think could be changed to enhance the transferal of skills learnt at the educational institution to the work place?

4. Did the skills and knowledge attained during WPL relate to the academic tourism course?

SECTION D: WPL AND EMPLOYABILITY

1. Explain what you expected from WPL. Were these expectations met?

Please explain your answer.

2. Did you enjoy the tasks you were involved in during the work placement? Please explain your answer.

3. Do you believe involvement in WPL enhances the employment prospects of an undergraduate student?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ No

4. Did you have the opportunity to show workplace supervisors your skills/knowledge, which you have acquired at your educational institution?

- ☐ Yes, all of the time
- ☐ Some of the time
- ☐ No, not at all

5. Explain how WPL will contribute to a job placement in the tourism industry?

SECTION E: BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES OF WPL

1. What are some of the benefits of participating in WPL?

- ☐ Financial benefits of WPL
- ☐ Employment opportunities
- ☐ Opportunity to develop skills
- ☐ Gained work experience
- ☐ Application of theory and practice
- ☐ Other: _____

2. What are some of the challenges of participating in WPL?

- ☐ No challenge
- ☐ Additional financial costs associated with WPL
- ☐ Negative expectations
- ☐ Other: _____

SECTION F: DURATION AND ASSESSMENT OF WPL

1. How long were you involved in the WPL module? Please specify in the most appropriate days, weeks or months.

2. Do you think the duration of WPL module is appropriate to enhance employment opportunities? Please explain.

3. How do you think the WPL module should be assessed?

- Monthly written report covering work experience
- Work experience diary
- A reference from the work place supervisor
- A presentation covering skills/knowledge gained
- Interview between academic supervisor, student and workplace supervisor
- Other...*please specify*

4. What do you think the WPL assessment should be based on?

- Experience gained
- Professional conduct
- Days completed
- Learning outcomes of WPL
- Other...*please specify*

5. What suggestions would you like to make to the WPL module?

Thank you for your cooperation and time in completing the survey!

Appendix C – Workplace supervisors' questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS OF WORK PLACE LEARNING

HOW TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. *Please answer ALL questions as best as you can.*
2. Please note that (WPL) is abbreviated to Workplace Learning and also may have been referred to as work integrated learning (WIL) at the respective educational institution.
3. Please click on one of the appropriate boxes.

ONCE YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE QUESTIONNAIRE, PLEASE PRESS SEND WHICH WILL AUTOMATICALLY RETURN IT TO THE RESEARCHER.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Please indicate your gender
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female
2. Please indicate the educational institution that your organisation participates in WPL.

3. Please indicate the province in South Africa you currently work in:
 - ☐ Western Cape
 - ☐ Eastern Cape
 - ☐ Northern Cape
 - ☐ North West
 - ☐ Free State
 - ☐ Kwa-Zulu Natal
 - ☐ Gauteng

- Limpopo
- Mpumalanga

4. Please select most appropriate description of the tourism organisation you belong to:

- Accommodation
- Adventure Tourism
- Recreation
- Attractions
- Events and Conferences
- Food and Beverage
- Tourism Services
- Transportation
- Travel Trade

5. How long have you been working in the tourism industry?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15 years and more

6. How long have you been supervising students from the educational institution for WPL?

- Less than a 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10-15 years
- 15 years and more

SECTION B: INVOLVEMENT OF WORKPLACE SUPERVISORS IN WPL

1. Please, tick only one of the appropriate responses which range from *STRONGLY DISAGREE* to *STRONGLY AGREE*.

2. Please note that the **academic supervisor** is the person who is responsible for the WPL module at the educational institution and the **workplace supervisor** is the person who supervised the tasks at the workplace.

Questionnaire items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. WPL is relevant for students					
2. The workplace supervisor knows their rights and responsibilities of participating in the WPL module.					
3. The academic supervisor informed you about the role of the students at your workplace.					
4. Workplace supervisors provide adequate support to students during WPL.					
5. Students are actively learning throughout the entire WPL placement period.					
6. There is feedback on the entire WPL period to the student.					
7. There is feedback on the entire WPL period to the academic supervisor.					
8. Dissatisfactions regarding WPL were attended by the academic supervisor efficiently.					
9. Students have access to the work site resources in order to					

complete projects on time at the tourism organisation site (internet, computers, etc.)					
10. The workplace supervisor was able to assess whether the student has met a particular assessment criterion or not.					
11. The WPL placement has adequately prepared the student for employment.					
12. The WPL module was a success for the tourism course.					

SECTION C – SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

1. Please, rate the competencies in order of importance that students should possess during WPL that will assist in employment.

Skills	Very Important	Important	Moderately Important	Not Very Important	Unimportant
Ability and willingness to learn					
Analytical thinking (thinking for self, reasoning, practical intelligence, planning skills, problem solving)					
Concern for order, quality and accuracy (asks when in doubt, keeping track of events and issues)					
Customer service					
Flexibility (being able to adapt to environment and changes within the organisation)					
Initiative (proactive, seizes opportunities, self-motivation and perseverance)					
Organisational awareness					

(understands organisation, knows rules and regulations, power, cultural knowledge)					
Relationship building (networking and building and maintaining relationships)					
Self-confidence (strong self-concept, internal locus of control, independence, decisive, accepts responsibility)					
Self-control (being able to control your emotions, resistance to stress, staying calm and can calm others)					
Teamwork and cooperation					
Technical expertise (job related technical knowledge and skills – computer literate, able to work with technology)					
Time management skills					
Written communication					

SECTION D: EMPLOYABILITY OF WPL:

1. Do students with WPL meet the requirements for job placement at the tourism organisation?
 - Yes
 - Neutral
 - No

2. If stated no, for the above question, please select a reason for not hiring students after WPL.
 - No job openings available
 - Students did not apply for the job
 - Recession or other economic pressures

- Students lacked skills/content knowledge
- Students salary expectations were to high
- Other: _____

3. What aspects do students have difficulties with, in the workplace?

4. Do you provide your undergraduate student with sufficient opportunities to further develop skills and abilities?

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time
- No, not at all

5. Do you believe involvement of WPL enhances the employment prospects' of students?

- Yes
- Neutral
- No

SECTION E: SUPERVISION OF WPL MODULE

1. How are the undergraduate students and the work undertaken by them supervised in your work place?

- Tasks
- Problem solving
- Orientation
- Orientation then task performed
- Other: _____

2. Were these supervision strategies (mentioned above) at the workplace effective in enhancing a student's capability in the workplace?

- Yes, all the time
- Some of the time
- No, not at all

3. What are some of challenges of participating in WPL?

- Difficulty in challenging the student whilst providing value to the firm
- Students did not have skills which were expected of them
- Too little staff time to supervise and train students
- Not enough support from the educational institution
- Other: _____

4. What are some of the benefits of participating in WPL?

- Fulfilling company objectives
- Recruiting staff
- Further develop staff supervision skills
- Other: _____

SECTION F: DURATION AND ASSESSMENT OF WPL

1. What would you say is good WPL duration for producing employable graduates?

- 1-3 months
- 6 months
- 1 Year
- 1 Year or more

2. Do you explain to students how you will assess them?

- Yes
- No

3. How do you think the WPL module should be assessed?

- Monthly written report covering work experience
 - Work experience diary
 - A reference from the work place supervisor
 - A presentation covering skills/knowledge gained
 - Interview between academic supervisor, student and workplace supervisor
 - Other...*please specify*
-

4. What do you think the WPL assessment should be based on?

- Experience gained
- Professional conduct
- Days completed
- Learning outcomes of WPL
- Other...*please specify*

5. How do you measure the success of the WPL module?

6. What suggestions would you like to be made to the WPL module?

Thank you for your time and cooperation in completing this survey!

APPENDIX D – Academic supervisor questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ACADEMIC SUPERVISORS OF WORKPLACE LEARNING

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Please indicate your gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2. How long have you been supervising Work-integrated learning?

- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-5 years
- ☐ 5-10 years
- ☐ 10 years and longer

SECTION B: SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY

1. Please, rate the important competencies in order of importance that students should demonstrate during WPL that will assist them in finding employment.

SKILLS	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Not very important	Unimportant
Ability and willingness to learn					
Analytical thinking (thinking for self, reasoning, practical intelligence, planning skills, problem solving)					
Concern for order, quality and accuracy (asks when in doubt, keeping track of					

events and issues)					
Customer service					
Flexibility (being able to adapt to environment and changes within the organisation)					
Initiative (proactive, seizes opportunities, self-motivation and perseverance)					
Organisational awareness (understands organisation, knows rules and regulations, power, cultural knowledge)					
Relationship building (networking and building and maintaining relationships)					
Self-confidence (strong self-concept, internal locus of control, independence, decisive, accepts responsibility)					
Self-control (being able to control your emotions, resistance to stress, staying calm and can calm others)					
Teamwork and cooperation					
Technical expertise (job related technical knowledge and skills – computer literate, able to work with technology)					
Time management					

skills					
Written communication					

2. What is the WPL assessment based on?

- ☐ Experience gained
- ☐ Professional conduct
- ☐ Days completed
- ☐ Learning outcomes of WPL
- ☐ Other...*please specify*

Thank you for your time and cooperation in completing this survey!

APPENDIX E – Academic supervisor interview questions

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A) BIOGRAPHICAL DATA OF WPL PLACEMENT

1. Does gender impact on placement during WPL?
2. Does a student's race influence placement during WPL?

B) PROCESS OF WPL

1. Please describe in detail, the process of WPL.
2. What is the policy on WPL for the tourism course and employability?
3. How do you ensure this policy is implemented?
4. How do you measure the outcome of the WPL module?

C) RELEVANCE OF WPL

1. How relevant do you think WPL is for tourism students? And why?
2. How relevant do you think WPL is relevant for the educational institutional?
How?
3. What are some of the challenges of participating in WPL?

D) SELECTING ORGANISATIONS:

1. How does your institution select tourism organizations for students?
2. Please provide some reasons for tourism organisations participation in WPL?
3. As there been a case, where a tourism organisation did not want to participate in WPL?
4. If yes, why not?

E) FEEDBACK

1. How do you provide feedback to students during WPL and when?
2. How do you provide feedback to workplace supervisors and when?
3. How often do you visit the organisation and student during their WPL training?
Please provide reasons for duration?
4. Have you received complaints about students are being misused by an organisation during WPL? How do you resolve these issues?

F) EMPLOYMENT

1. How do you ensure students are adequately prepared for WPL? What measures do the institution take?
2. Do you assist students with employment after WPL? Why/ why not?

G) SUPERVISION

1. How do you select supervisors for students at the workplace?
2. How do you ensure students are appropriately supervised in the workplace?

H) DURATION AND ASSESSMENT

1. Why does your university consider the duration of WPL appropriate for the tourism course?
2. How do you ensure students are appropriately assessed during WPL by the supervisor?
3. Do students fail the WPL module? And what are reasons for them failing?

I) RESOURCING OF WPL

1. What resources are needed to implement the WPL module?
2. How should the WPL component be funded? And why?
3. What possible suggestions could you make to improve the current WPL module?

Appendix F: Face validity of questionnaire for objectives

Dimension	Objective 1: To investigate mechanisms used by workplace supervisors for the transfer of capabilities to enhance tourism students employability			
Elements	Assessment Methodology	Supervision of WPL	Types of allocation of tasks in the workplace	
Factors	1. Types of assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monthly written report • work experience diary • a reference from your workplace supervisor • a presentation covering skills gained • Interview between 3 stakeholders. 	1. Perspective of both workplace supervisor and student 2. Challenges faced during supervision that hinders transfer of capabilities	1. Orientation 2. Tasks 3. Orientation then tasks performed 4. Problem solving	
Methodology	Workplace Supervisors Questionnaire Q4 Section E- Q3	Students Questionnaire Section B: Q4,8-10,13,16 Section C: Q2-4 Section F	Academic Supervisor questionnaire Section B: 2-7,9,11,12 Sections E, D and G	
Conclusive remarks	1. How does assessments influence the transfer of skills? 2. Why are these forms of assessments used for WPL? 3. Are students reflecting on WPL ? 4. Are these mechanisms effective to transfer skills?	1. What are the challenges that hinder supervision in the workplace?	1. What is the difference of allocation of tasks and how tasks impacted on transferring skills	

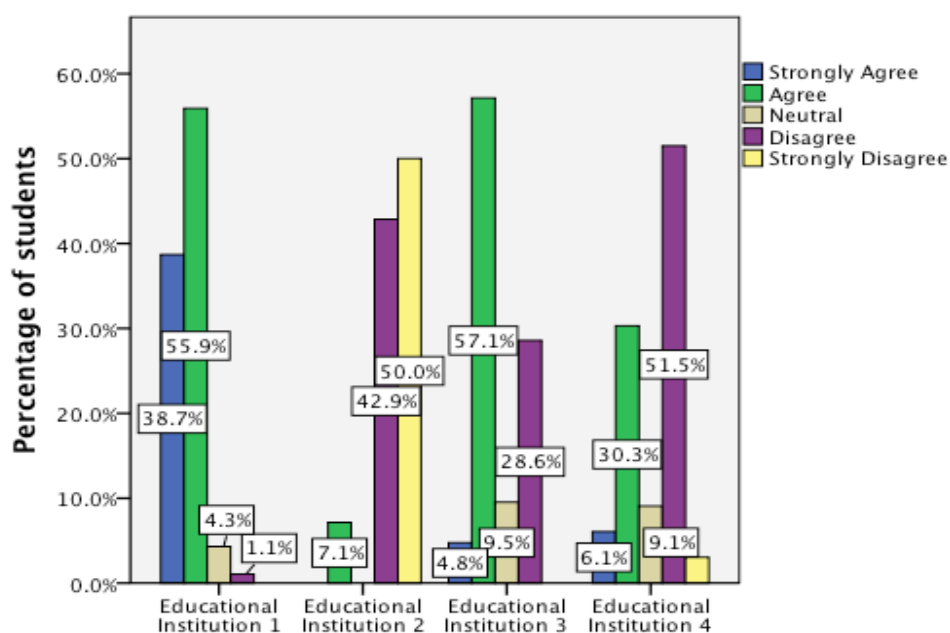
Dimension	Objective 2: To appraise skills accessed by tourism students during WPL that enhance tourism employability			
Elements	Types of skills needed in the tourism industry	Skills accessed by students during WPL		
Factors	1. Important skills required for employment by educational institutions. 2. Important skills required for employment by employers.	1. Types of skills – communication, personality etc...		
Methodology	Workplace supervisors Questionnaire Sect C- Skills for employability Sect D- Q3, Q7	Academic supervisors Questionnaire Sect B – Q1 Interview- Section F	Students Questionnaire Sect C-Skills for employability Sect D- Q2,Q3	
Conclusive remarks	1. What skills do stakeholders require for employability? 2. Why these skills are specific for the tourism industry? 3. How did WPL assist in gaining these skills? 4. Does duration impact on the skills gained?			

Dimension	Objective 3: Compare students perceptions and attitudes towards the impact of WPL on tourism employability					
Elements	Students perceptions	Students attitude	Impact on employability			
Factors	1. On employment – high/low	1. Feedback received during WPL. 2. Skills acquired during WPL. 3. Exposure of workplace 4. Experience over qualification 5. Understanding and commitment between student and w/supervisor	Positive / Negative			
Methodology	Students questionnaire Sect B: Q1,5,6,7,10,11,12,13,14,15 Sect D: Q1,2,4 Sect F: Q2		Academic supervisor: Sect D- Q1			
Conclusive remarks	1. Compare students' perceptions and attitudes from each educational institution. 2. Why are these perceptions and attitudes different? 3. Was the overall experience of WPL beneficial to students?					

Appendix G: Table indicating graduates' awareness of rights and responsibilities during WPL

Educational institution	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	31.1%	16.8%	6.2%	8.1%	5.6%	57.8%
2	4.3%	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%	1.9%	8.7%
3	10.6%	0.6%	1.2%	0.6%	00.0%	13.0%
4	14.3%	4.3%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%	20.5%
Total %	60.2%	13.0%	8.7%	10.6%	7.5%	100.0%

Appendix H: Graph illustrating graduates responses to academic supervisors assisting with placement during WPL



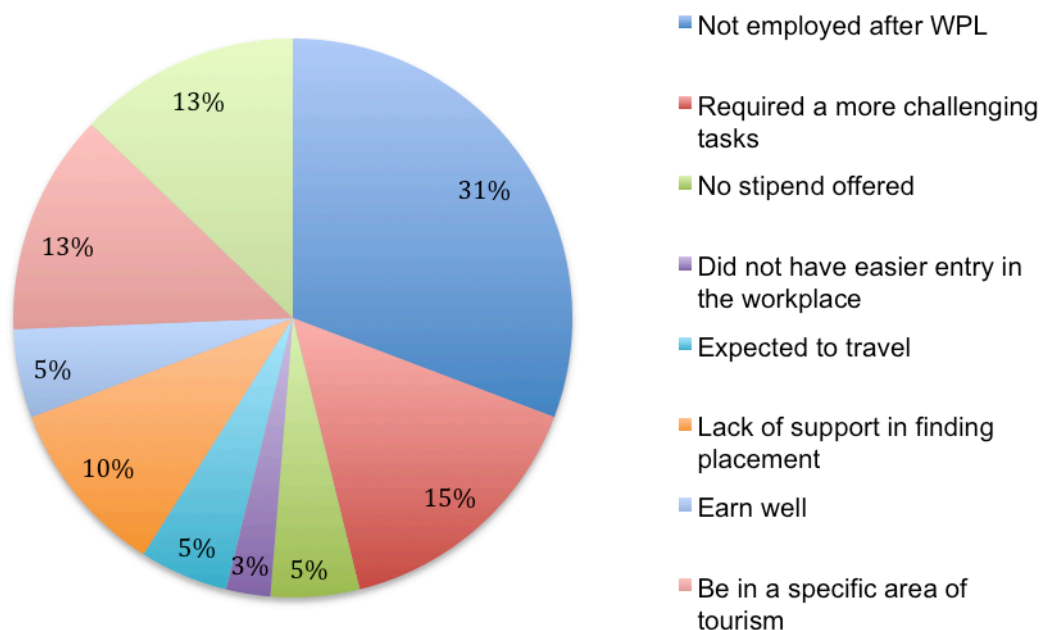
Appendix I: Table indicating graduates relevance of WPL to a tourism course

Educational institution	Workplace supervisors	Students		
	Neutral	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	6.3 %	2.5%	3.7%	1.9%
2	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%
4	0.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%
Total %	6.3%	2.5%	6.2%	1.9%

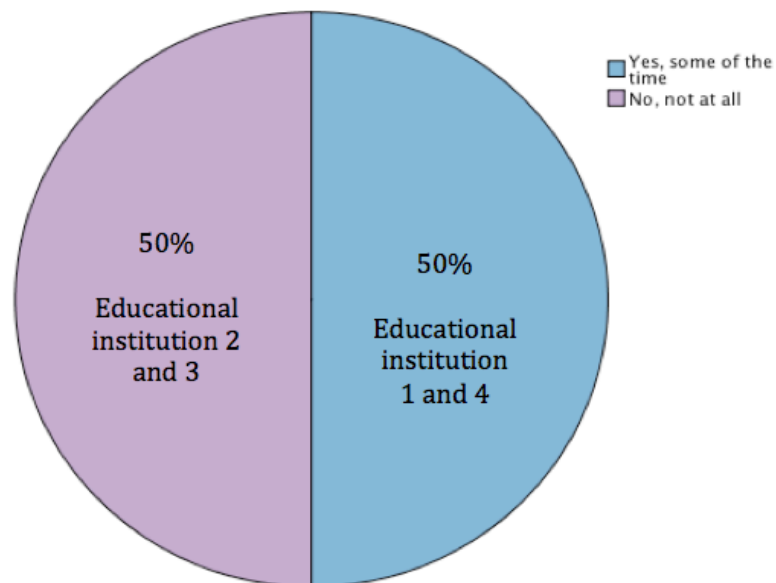
Appendix J: Statistical Chi – square Test

Chi – square Test	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	16.554 ^a	4	.002
Likelihood Ratio	17.087	4	.002
N of Valid Cases	161		

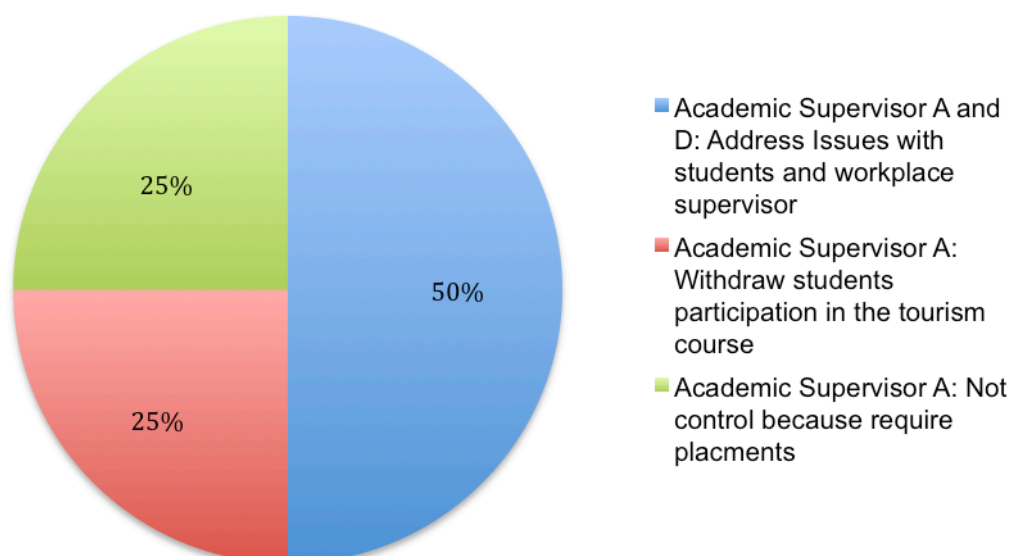
Appendix K: Reasoning provided by graduates for expectations not being met during WPL



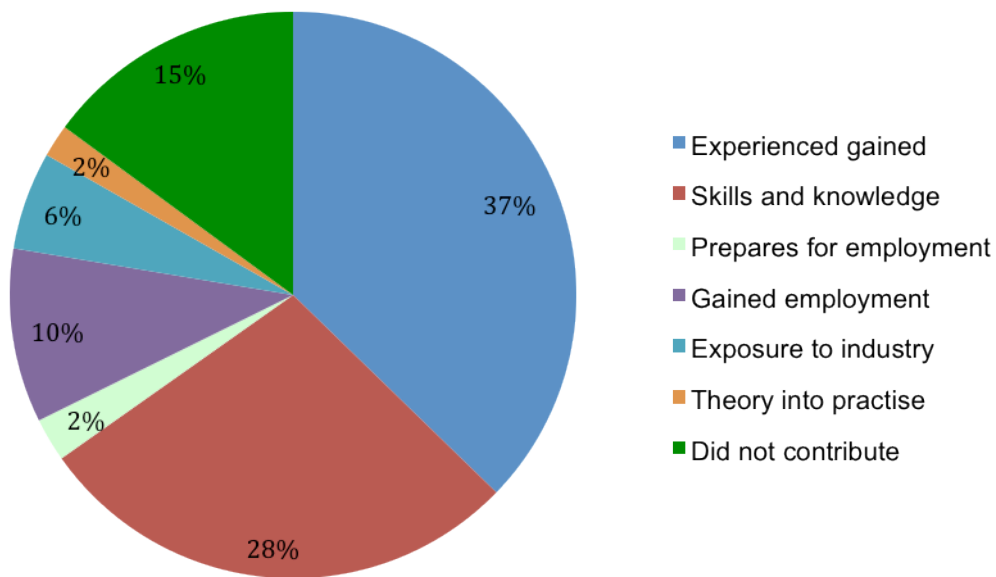
Appendix L : Academic responses to students performing inappropriate tasks during WPL



Appendix M: Extent to which academic supervisors resolve students issues on performing inappropriate tasks during WPL



Appendix N: Contribution of WPL to graduates



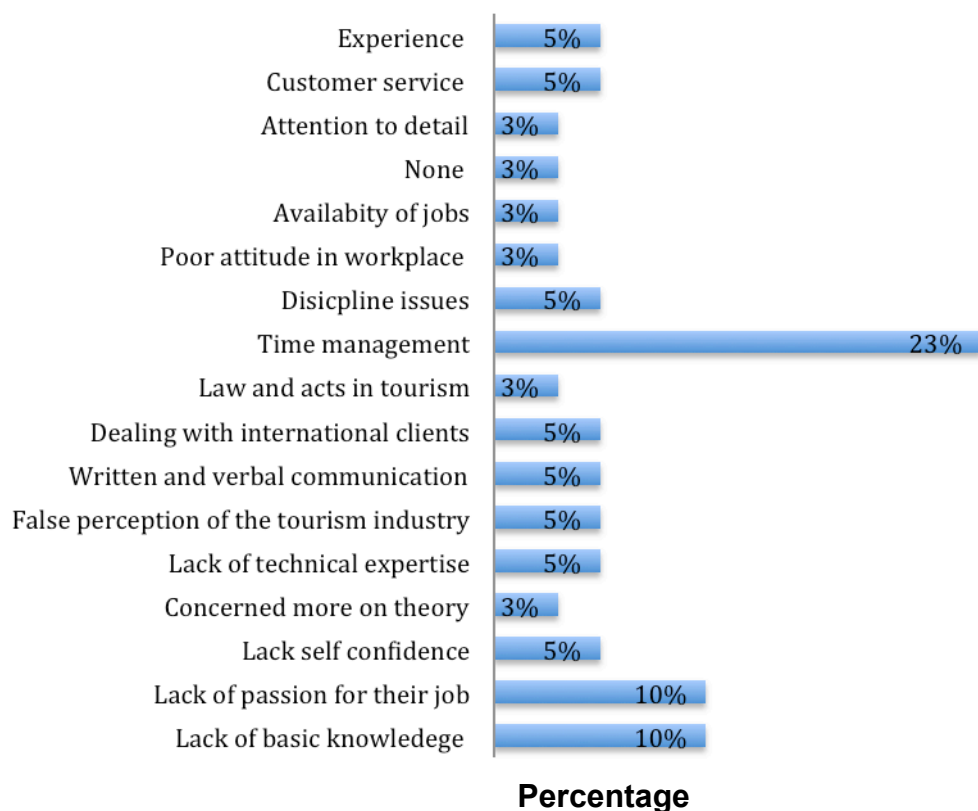
Appendix O: Graduates reasons for not enjoying tasks during WPL



Appendix P: Workplace supervisors' reasons for not hiring graduates after WPL

Tourism sector	Graduates did not apply for the job	Graduates lacked skills/content knowledge	Recession or other economic issues	No job openings available	Graduates salary expectations were too high	Total % n=32
Accommodation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%
Adventure Tourism	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	6.3%
Events and Conferences	3.1%	3.1%	0.0%	6.3%	0.0%	12.5%
Tourism Services	0.0%	3.1%	6.3%	15.6%	0.0%	25.0%
Transportation	3.1%	6.3%	3.1%	12.5%	3.1%	21.9%
Travel Trade	3.1%	9.4%	0.0%	21.9%	3.1%	28.1%
Total %	9.4%	21.9%	9.4%	68.8%		6.3%

Appendix Q: Workplace supervisors' responses to aspects hindering employability of graduates'



Appendix R: Cross tabulation results indicating support received from academic supervisors during WPL

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	13.0%	36.0%	1.9%	7.0%	1.9%	57.8%
2	0.0%	3.7%	0.0%	3.7%	1.2%	8.7%
3	0.0%	12.4%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	13.0%
4	31.9%	9.3%	0.6%	7.5%	9.3%	20.5%
Total %	14.91%	61.49%	2.48%	16.7%	4.35%	100%

Appendix S: Graduates' responses to support regarding WPL by workplace supervisors'

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	8.1%	32.9%	3.7%	11.2%	1.9%	57.8%
2	0.0%	3.1%	0.6%	3.1%	1.9%	8.7%
3	0.0%	11.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	13.0%
4	3.08%	11.2%	1.2%	5.0%	0.0%	20.5%
Total %	11.18%	59.01%	6.21%	19.88%	3.73%	100%

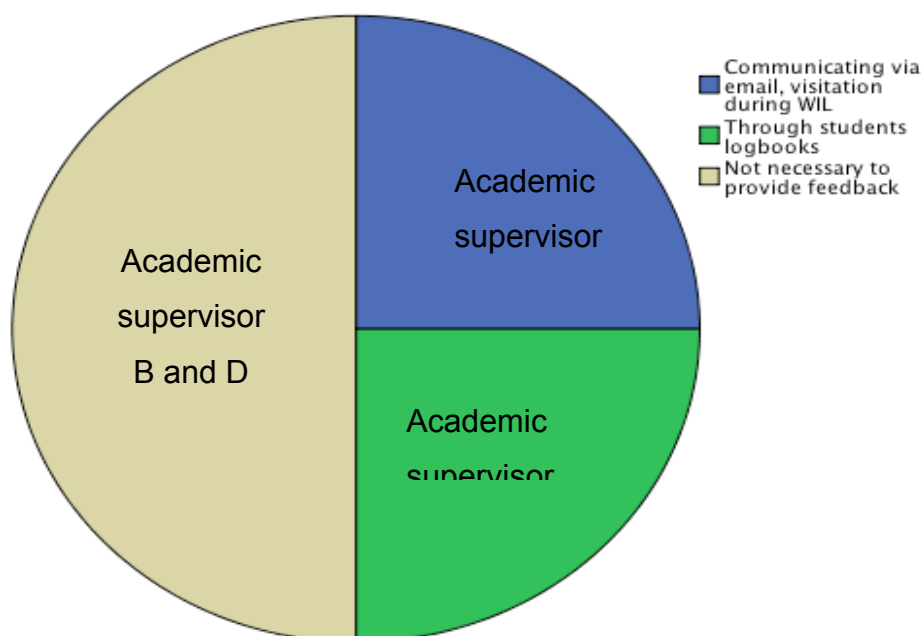
Appendix T: Cross tabulation indicating graduates' responses to their dissatisfactions regarding WPL attended to efficiently by academic supervisor

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	3.7%	37.4%	3.7%	9.3%	3.7%	57.8%
2	0.6%	2.4%	4.5%	3.1%	1.0%	8.7%
3	1.2%	8.0%	1.9%	1.9%	0.0%	13.0%
4	1.3%	9.3%	1.2%	7.5%	2.1%	20.5%
Total %	6.8%	57.1%	11.2%	21.7%	6.8%	100%

Appendix U: Cross tabulation of graduates dissatisfactions regarding WPL attended to efficiently by workplace supervisor

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	5.0%	38.5%	0.6%	13.7%	0.0%	57.8%
2	0.0%	5%	0	3.7%	0	8.7%
3	0.0%	3.1%	0	9.9%	1%	13.0%
4	0.0%	3.6%	8.0%	8.1%	2.1%	20.5%
Total %	5.0%	54.7%	9.9%	27.3%	3.1%	100%

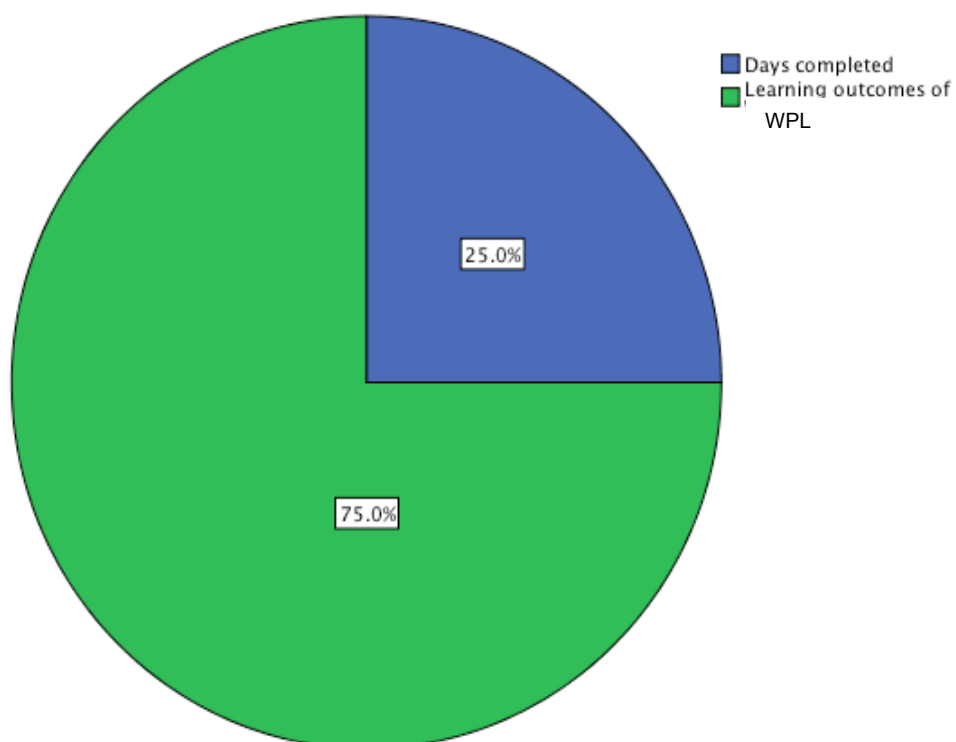
Appendix V: Mediums used for academic supervisors communication with workplace supervisors



Appendix W: Cross tabulation indicating students feedback from academic supervisors

Educational institution	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total %
1	9.9%	41 %	5.0%	15.5%	1.9%	57.8%
2	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	3.7%	1.9%	8.7%
3	0.0%	9.3%	0.6%	3.1%	0.0%	13.0%
4	1.9%	16 %	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	20.5%
Total %	11.8%	47.8%	5.6%	31.1%	3.7%	100.0%

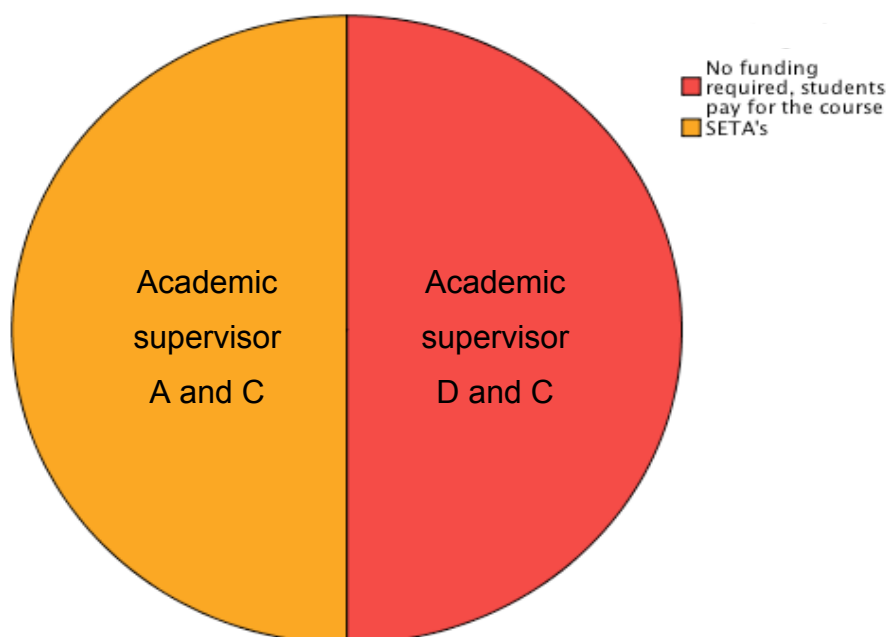
Appendix X: Academic supervisors' bases of assessment for WPL



Appendix Y: Academic supervisors' responses to reasons graduates fail WPL

Educational institution	Incompletion of WPL hours	Incomplete report	Disciplinary issues	Did not achieve WPL outcomes
1	25.0 %	0.0%	25.0 %	25.0 %
2	25.0 %	25.0 %	0.0%	0.0%
3	25.0 %	25.0 %	0.0%	0.0%
4	25.0 %	25.0 %	0.0%	0.0%
Total %	100 %	75.0 %	25.0 %	25.0 %

Appendix Z: Academic responses to funding of the WPL module



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