DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECNOLOGY

EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES OF DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY'S WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING STUDENTS

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Supervisor Dr SS Pillay__ __Date__3 June 2024_____

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my sons Rahul, Nikail and Nehal, for being my inspiration,each in your own way.

You are my biggest achievements and my greatest supporters undoubtedly!

ABSTRACT

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) focuses on the student applying their theoretical knowledge achieved at the University to that of the workplace. The anticipated outcome is an enriched understanding of the workplace, how it functions and thereby allowing the student to become competent and proficient. At DUT, selective qualifications have WIL as a compulsory module for students. In order for a student to fulfil the requirement to graduate, the student must successfully complete a placement at an industry partner for a stipulated period. The University conducts monitoring and assessments during the placement. In this study, the purpose was to explore and analyse the perspectives of employers regarding WIL students. WIL programs have gained prominence as an effective means of bridging the gap between academic education and industry requirements.

Understanding the employers' viewpoints is crucial in assessing the impact and effectiveness of the WIL initiatives and identifying areas for improvement. This study applied mixed comprising quantitative and qualitative studies. Theories aligned to Work Integrated Learning (WIL) guided the discussion about employers' perspectives of Durban University of Technology. The findings of the study reveal that employers (industry partners) noted the need forthe improvement of the quality of the students. Much of which can be achieved through the development and enhancement of the students' knowledge as required for the world of work. There is a need to implement an integrated system that supports a value-added consistency of information. In addition, computerized systems are in all spheres of the work environment and the university must ensure that there exist programs that allows for adequate practical usage of such programs.

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ACRONYMS

DUT	-	Durban University of Technology
WIL	-	Work Integrated Learning
DHET	-	Department of Higher Education and Training
UOT	-	University of Technology
TVET	-	Technical and Vocational Education and TrainingColleges
FET	-	Further Education and Training Colleges
CHE	-	Council on Higher Education
HEQF	-	Higher Education Qualification Framework
SETA	-	Sector Education and Training Authority
TLIU	-	Technology Localization Implementation Unit
CSIR	-	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
SET	-	Science, Engineering and Technology
OLUMS	-	On-line University Management System
NCHE	-	National Commission on Higher Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The changing landscape of South Africa has prompted a change in Higher Education, which resulted in the merger of Universities and Technikons. According to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). Currently there are twenty (20) Universities and six (6) Universities of Technology (UoT's) (Sakhiseni 2021:70). The Universities of Technology (UoTs), former Technikons, continue to adopt the model of theory and practical work where students being allocated to the relevant workplace platform for a specified period also assess practical's. In this model, only students that achieve the relevant passes (credits) are eligible for placement. According to Luk et al. (2024: 1-3), this placement is commonly known as Work Integrated Learning (WIL). WIL can be seen as an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum to close the employment gap for both graduates and newly skilled and employable workers around the world, as well as in South Africa. (Patrick, Peach and Pocknee 2015:1).

According to an article in *The Mercury* (September 29, 2014) by Catherine Wijinberg, the fact that the education system is lacking is well known, but the role that educational establishments play in meeting the needs of the business sector (rather than simply the needs of the student) is notalways considered. Educational institutions have a critical responsibility in bridging the gap between the market (employers) and graduates' skills. The Durban University of Technology (DUT), created by the merger of ML Sultan Technikon and Technikon Natal in 2002, is committed to preparing its graduates for the ever-changing World of Work. Employers look for graduates who are able to quickly become active in their organization. Generally, employers consider experience with a qualification when it comes to making an appointment. A candidate with some experience, even just six months, as an internmay be chosen over one with no work experience.

The most common form of WIL involves a student's placement within the workplace. Universities, students and employers work together to design and create a learning experience that benefits all parties. The student's progress and learning outcomes are monitored and assessed by the university, with input from the employer (Chaudhry, et al., 2023: 1-6). WIL offers students the opportunity to explore and expand on theoretical concepts encountered throughout their academic studies in an applied real-life context. WIL also assistsstudents in their transition from educational to professional practice informed by experience, engagement and reflection (Luk et al., 2024: 1-3). In order to provide a scope to the reader this study comprises five chapters. It begins with Chapter One, wherein the background, research problem, aims andobjectives of the study are discussed. The next chapter details the literature review which presents the theoretical aspects of the variables under study. The third chapter details the methodology and the fourth chapter, the findings from the study. Finally, Chapter Five presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study based on the literature reviewedand the primary research conducted.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at the University of Technology, also known as cooperative education or internship programs, is a vital component of the university's curriculum that provides students with hands-on, real-world experience in their chosen field of study. WIL opportunities are designed to bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry practice, helping students develop relevant skills and knowledge that will prepare them for successful careers after graduation (Almusaed et al. 2023.). WIL has been considered an instrumental tool in preparing students with necessary employability skills in order for them to cope in the workplace (Jackson,2015:250). WIL combines theory with practice of an enrolled program of study, making a significant contribution to graduates' work and industry readiness. Research reports established that employers consider it important for graduates to have a broad range of cognitive and behavioral competencies (Hodges, 2011:55) However, Rhew, Black and Keels(2019:1) reported that employers and policy makers have criticized higher education institutions for the perceived knowledge and skill deficiencies of graduates. There are concerns about the readiness of students for the world of work, and that the studentslack some of the most elementary skills needed for successful employment.

According to Andrews and Higson (2008) Ng and Feldman (2009) Rae (2007); Yorke (2004), employability is better and more easily developed outside the formal curriculum with particular emphasis placed on employment-based training and experience.

Jackson, (2015:250) states that WIL makes a significant contribution to graduates' work and industry readiness and can be seen as a cornerstone of partnership building with industry, community, government and other educational providers. Du Pre (2015) asserts that the cooperative education model has existed in South Africa since 1979. The author further states that Technikons, otherwise known as Universities of Technology, implemented the cooperative education system in the 1970s and 1980s, with six months' study time, and six months working time. WIL has been considered as an instrumental tool in preparing students with the essential employability skills in order for them to cope in the workplace. Employers in general believe that student work placements are beneficial for their industry, however, a number of issues impacted on their WIL engagement. These included identifying suitable students and concerns with student performance (Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns and McLaren 2017:35).

Furthermore, Morreale and Pearson, (2002:224) assert that communication, knowledge and skills in the workplace are listed as one of the most important aspects employees can possess. It appears that employers are not impressed with the quality of students that are being placedfor work integrated learning. This observation is made by the researcher, who is employed asan Administrator in the Co-Operative Education Department of the DUT for more than a decade and is instrumental in the placement of students for WIL.Through association and alliance with industry partners, the researcher is acutely aware that students are lacking readiness for WIL programmes. Additionally, feedback from employers reveals that students lack soft skills which can be problematic. "Soft skills are key to buildingrelationships, gaining visibility, and creating more opportunities for advancement," says KathyRobinson, founder of Boston career-coaching firm Turning Point. Identifying and developing the important competencies required of graduates is a challenging task.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Employers play a critical role in shaping the academic and professional development of students through Work integrated Learning programs. However, it is important to understand the perspectives of employers on the effectiveness and relevance of these programs in preparing students for the workforce. According to (Yaseen et al., 2023; Rosenberg and Ward, 2020), in most cases, matching students' skills and abilities with the specific needs and requirements of the employer can be a challenge. Employers may find it difficult to find the right fit for their organization among a large pool of work integrated learning students. In addition, communication and coordination between the university and the employer can sometimes be a challenge. Clear expectations and guidelines need to be established to ensure a successful partnership (Tancred et al., 2024). Furthermore, time and resource constraints can be a challenge for employers. Supervising and mentoring Work Integrated Learning students can be time-consuming and may require additional resources that some employers may not have readily available. Numerous studies have been conducted on the students' perspective regarding Work Integrated Learning, however, few have concentrated on employers' perspectives.

A study conducted by Jackson, et al. (2017:12) established that employers noted the identification of suitable projects as being particularly problematic with over 60% of respondents rating this as being 'challenging', 'very challenging' or 'extremely challenging'. Most recently, authors such as Rhew, Black and Keels (2019:1) reported that employers and policy makers have criticized higher education institutions for the perceived knowledge and skill deficiencies of their graduates. Jackson, et al. (2017:12) further reveal that employers generally believe that student work placements are useful for their industry, however a number of issues impacted on their WIL engagement. These included identifying suitable students and concerns with student performance. Vlok (2012:1) argues that the curriculum has not kept pace with what is required by the industry as far as Work Integrated Learning is concerned. In addition, a number of research Reports have established that employers consider it important for graduates to have abroad range of both cognitive and behavioral competencies (Hodges, 2011:55). Additionally, despite the challenges expressed above, WIL can provide great opportunities to employers. For example, WIL programs provide employers with the opportunity to mentor and groom potential future employees.

This allows them to identify and develop talent early on, potentially reducing recruitment costs in the future. In addition, employers have the opportunity to bring fresh perspectives and ideas into their 5rganization through work integrated learning students. This can lead to innovation and creativity within the workplace. Also, WIL programs can serve as a way for employers to give back to the community and support the development of future professionals in their field. Thus, WIL may be challenging, but employers may see WIL programs as a valuable investment in the future of their industry and a way to contribute to the development of the next generation of professionals.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to evaluate the employers' perspectives of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students from Durban University of Technology.

In order to achieve the above aim, the following objectives will be addressed:

- To examine the perceptions of employers on the quality of the DUT WIL students.
- Identify the shortfalls in the competencies of and attributes of the DUT WIL students.
- Assess the adequacy of the placement of the DUT students.

1.5 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the employers' views of work integrated learning students from the Durban University of Technology. It is expected that the data analysis and findings will contribute towards the development of training platforms that will enhance the students' holistic knowledge prior to the students being placed in the workplace. Recommendations will be made to the Department of Co-Operative Education at the Durban University of Technology as to the various skills, ability and knowledge that students require, from the perspectives of industry employers. Students learn best when their education is

Complemented by experiments or hands-on training. (Kumar a nd Hsiao, 2007:22). Hence WIL is a powerful method of learning.

1.6 DELIMITATIONS

This study is limited to employers that offer work integrated learning to students from the Durban University of Technology, as the researcher seeks to establish the view of these employers.

1.7 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The report on this study is made up of five chapters. These chapters cover the following areas:

1.7.1 Chapter one - introduction

Provides the problem under investigation and outlines the background and preliminary review of the literature in order to contextualize the problem, with the aims and objectives being specified and the rationale for the study followed by the delimitations of the research.

1.7.2 Chapter two – literature review

Deals with the comprehensive review of the literature related to the study, including thetheoretical framework that has informed the study, as well as expanding and further elucidating key concepts.

1.7.3 Chapter three – research methodology

Explores the description of the methodology to be used in the study, where the research design will be specified, methods of data collection described and data analysis procedures outlined, together with a detailed description of the population of the study and the sampling procedures.

1.7.4 Chapter four – data analysis

This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the data and focuses on the interpretation of theresults of the survey and interview sessions.

1.7.5 Chapter five – conclusions and recommendations

The final chapter of the study will contain recommendations and conclusions that are drawn from the findings in Chapter Four and will also provide suggestions for further research and include the outlining of the limitations of the study.

1.8 SUMMARY

This chapter examined the background to the study, the research problem, the aim and objectives of the study, as well as the rationale of the study. This chapter explained the challenges and opportunities linked to WIL. While there are challenges facing employers in terms of time and resource constraints, students' skills and abilities to fit specific needs and requirements of the employer, and lack of appropriate partnerships, collaboration and communication the university and the employe, which the effectiveness of WIL; employers generally perceive work integrated learning programs as beneficial for students' readiness for the workplace. These programs provide students with real-world experience, helping them to develop practical skills and gain valuable insights into their chosen field. In addition, employers also appreciate the opportunity to assess students' capabilities and fit within their

organization before committing to hiring them full-time. This can lead to a more seamless transition for students into the workforce and reduce the likelihood of turnover or mismatches in the future. The next chapter focuses on evaluating employers' perspectives of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students from Durban University of Technology. It highlights the positive impact of WIL programs on students' employability and the importance of continuous feedback and collaboration between academia and industry. The next chapter review relevance literature to the main concepts underpinning this study. It also presents the summary and potential recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a continuation of chapter one whereby the main the study`s objectives were spelt out explicitly. In addressing the topic of the study in this chapter, a background study to guide the reader will serve a good purpose, especially, in terms of South African context since the issue here is to review what the literature says about "Employers' Viewpoints on Durban University of Technology's Work Integrated Learning students". The chapter opens up related matters that can lead to further discussions for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) programs because it has the potential to save the country from the massive youth unemployment due to lack of experience. This will address the issue stressed above as held by the existing research after completing the chapterwhich proceeds as follows: theoretical and conceptual background after the background study, then, work integrated learning (WIL) definition, followed by how WIL student placement and qualification criteria are determined, the purpose of the DUT WIL policy, the purpose of the DUTWIL advisory board, experiential learning monitoring and evaluation, expectations of the WIL program, examination of the perceptions of employers on the quality of the DUT WIL students,followed by identification of the shortfalls in the competencies and attributes of the DUT WIL students, and finally WIL student access and placement criteria at DUT.

2.2 THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Adhering to the technikons merging and consolidations that generated the principle of institutional differentiation of Colleges of Innovation, the Universities of Technology (UoTs) wereborne. The last took the kind of totally new face that additionally culminated in the process of the establishment of the Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. These were producedto resolve a series of problems consisting of lack of abilities, and as an action to the high demand for college as well as expanding access to education, especially for the

sections of thecommunity that were formerly left out (Council on Higher Education (CHE) 2000).

Universities of Technology (UoTs) were joined to be a field better placed to reply to the needs of companies. They were, according to this approach, expected to make students much more competent, experienced, and employable and give continuous updating with brief programs, taking establishments to industry, and also communicating with employers to make sure that graduates remain appropriate (CHE 2006; 2010). Among the aspects which UoTs case as their distinguishing characteristic is innovation but above all, Work Integrated Learning (WIL). The assertion is that WIL is a one-of-a-kind feature of universities of modern technology that directly attaches these establishments with the globe of job, therefore guaranteeing the significance oftheir offerings as well as advertising the suggestion of University - industry relations that controlled the discussion of higher education with the notions of the mode 1 and mode 2 dichotomies (Kraak 2000). In line with this affirmation of WIL, Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns and McLaren (2017), insist that WIL is an important device that drives considerable advantages forits development while enhancing the groundwork of students for their transition to the world of work. Employers think that leaner job positioning are important for industry due to the fact thatit improves their professional capabilities (Jackson *et al*., 2017:33).

2.2.1 UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Through a procedure of mergers and re-designations of South Africa's 36 higher education andlearning establishments (21 'conventional' universities as well as 15 technikons) were cut downto 26 universities consisting of 11 traditional universities (some of which were combined with others), 6 comprehensive universities (emerging out of mergers in-between a traditional collegeand a technikon), and also 6 universities of technology (created from 11 merged and unmergedtechnikons) (Bohloko 2012; CHE 2010). A further 2 comprehensive universities were constructed. The table below illustrates the various categories of universities.

Table 2.1 Public Higher Education Universities

Universities of Technology (UoT)	Comprehensive Universities	Traditional Universities
Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT)	University of Johannesburg(UJ)	North-West University (NWU)
Central University of Technology(CUT)	Nelson Mandela University (NMU)	Rhodes University (RU)
Durban University of Technology (DUT)	University of SA (UNISA)	University of Cape Town (UCT)
Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)	University of Venda (UV)	University of KwaZulu-Natal(UKZN)
Tshwane Universityof Technology(TUT)	University of Zululand (UNIZULU)	University of Pretoria (UP)
Vaal University Technology (VUT)	Walter Sisulu(WSU)	University of Limpopo (UL)
	Sol Plaatje University (SPU)	University of Stellenbosch (US)
	University of Mpumalanga (UMP)	University of the Western Cape(UWC)
		University of the Witwatersrand(Wits)
		University of Fort Hare (UFT)
		University of the Free State (UFS)
		Sefako Makgatho Health SciencesUniversity (SMU)

The Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) additionally streamlines plans that differentiate UoTs from various other colleges and Universities (Bohloko 2012). In an apparentlysupporting debate that WIL is a distinct feature of UoTs, Du Pre (2009: 26) suggests that WIL 'will certainly come to be even a lot more crucial in colleges of technology programmes becauseof the growing need as well as need in industry and business for graduates that are currently acquainted with the globe of job before they are used for employment. Graduates that are ready for the workplace are in high demand with moderate and tiny enterprises, since the latterdo not always have the money or the ability to spend on experiential training or on-the-job training of graduates. Though HEQF offers little in understanding curriculum and pedagogical discourses in UoTs sofar as WIL is concerned, the policy seems to be a guide to institutions when developing their qualifications mix.

Therefore, the issues that warrant further discussions on WIL as an aspect of the curriculum and pedagogy apparatus is that, the guidelines contained in the policy documents have to emphasise on WIL and the related aspects of curriculum development and pedagogy, including examination of perceptions of employers on the quality of the WIL program, identification of the shortfalls in the competencies and attributes of the WIL students, assessment of the placement criteria of the WIL student and work-based learning (Chaudhry et al., 2023). The guideline record is quiet on the curriculum as well as rear discussions of WIL in occupational-directed fields in UoTs. WIL is often thought about as a distinct feature of UoTs, which is an inclusive term to suggest all kinds of discovering in these institutions. Instead of focusing on the existence and execution issues of WIL, this study is suggesting in this chapter that the growth of a strategy where WIL must be seen as a curriculum imperative also an instructional program, needs to be emphasized.

The issue of WIL and its ramifications for the UoTs can partially be connected to the principle of 'cooperative education and learning' inherited from comprehensive colleges and erstwhile technikons (Bohloko 2012). The UoTs and for that matter DUT, offered by the inclusion of web-based learnings, interactions and technology as well as the social media for WIL supply added academic and logistic advantage and possibilities to the higher education market as a whole. Notwithstanding the good intentions of WIL as noted above, aspects that continue to be unexplored connecting to WIL and the objectives of these establishments are whether any research is (Sulelo, 2023: 6-8)

- To examine the perceptions of employers on the quality of the WIL program,with specific reference to DUT WIL students;

- To identify the shortfalls in the competencies and attributes of the DUT WILstudents; and

- To assess the placement criteria of the DUT students.

These are the research objectives baffling this present study. Whether WIL is a curriculum or apedagogical problem and also the ramifications of these three objectives for concept and technique, needs clarity.

Bernstein's (1996) critical job is used to foreground discussions on WIL in these studies. The theoretical and contextual dichotomy of understanding used by Bernsteinian philosophers is taken on to review concerns on WIL as an important part of this study and the curriculum in UoTs.

2.3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

The CHE challenges the value for the South African higher education area, in discussion with international peers, to develop curricular, instructional and top-quality monitoring systems that

improve the stamina of existing and finest UoTs, to address areas of weakness, and engage thoroughly and intensively with educational program and WIL (Bohloko 2012; CHE 2011: 15). Kliebard (1999: 545) traces the development of work training as an instructional practice incorporating the concept that the educational program in its entirety exists for the purpose of preparing trainees to hold down and also acquire tasks. Hence, the suggestions that a differentiating feature of any type of educational program needs a mix of different types of

knowledge, drawing from both contextual and conceptual domain names to make sure that theeducational program enables both understanding progression and work progression, in additionto testing the boundaries in between understanding and method in the educational program (Gamble 2009: 3) falls perfectly in line with this belief of Kliebard (1999: 545). In this study, curriculum is seen as a common set of ideas and principles which supply a basisfor recurring discussions as well as discussions throughout, and within the faculties of UoTs. In this feeling, without an educational program, a UoT will certainly find it hard to be pro-active inresponding to the outside stress that it deals with or to the job of boosting high quality of students. Pedagogy refers to the tasks of lecturers in encouraging learners as well as creating means of allowing them to acquire the ideas stipulated in the educational program (Bohloko 2012; Gamble 2009). It describes approach and practice of showing a curriculum, particularly as a scholastic subject or theoretical concept.

Gamble (2009: 3) describes plan papers in the education and training domain as evidence that refer to both theoretical as well as contextual understanding when specifying functional work. Although Gamble's job focuses on a school setting, UoT programs can integrate these techniques in the form of WIL (Bohloko 2012). As aresult, Gamble`s (2009) definition relates and aligns well to the discussion in this chapter. The author further defines useful job as: a reflective web link between job efficiency as well asthe capacity to understand and also discuss the premises for action that offers the basis for trouble resolving in strange and also new circumstances. A knowledge-grounded discursive ability provides the means to factor brand-new test services that are not based on theuniqueness of the immediate scenario or context for definition. To explain further, the capabilityto believe virtually as opposed to mechanically performing previously rehearsed routines (Gamble 2009: 3) is what the scholar describes as a job. This means that the growing demand to examine relationships between expertise and practicein vocational and job-related areas in South Africa, as well as these relations in colleges of technology are warranted. Consequently, the issue nonetheless, should be how this understanding and also practice can be incorporated right into programmes and, especially, into those of colleges of innovation or UoTs.

While the primary focus is on the stipulation of chances for students to obtain genuine and sensible work experience in order to establish thisreflexive capability, assumptions may be

made about many elements that will certainly have abearing on the quality of the programmes that incorporate practical job or WIL, along with the standards of the top quality of the sensible work itself (Bohloko 2012). For the purpose of this literature review on colleges of innovation or UoTs, any type of useful job that the students areplaced in, in order to acquire practical experience describes WIL. While the requirement for WIL cannot be disputed, Wager (2009: 4) appropriately argues that the mental power to address issues in a brand-new and unknown scenario will certainly have been acquired by the student from the programme of study before the office placement. This setting, in a sense, goes beyond the widely accepted approach where WIL is thought about tobe a special feature of UoTs. This method has dominated disputes because these universitieswere created and presumed that the best method of preparing graduates for employability is to start with WIL as a practice (Bohloko 2012). Conversely, WIL as a method needs to be informed by solid theoretical or conceptual expertise. However, the WIL idea has so far been erroneously cheapened or just resulted in a regressivemotion on exactly how UoTs need to respond (Bohloko 2012; Gamble 2009).

Gamble (2009) goes additionally to warn against the effects of this narrow and simplistic understanding, arguing that in curriculum terms, the incorporation of conceptual and contextual knowledge is not a straightforward procedure. What is/should be the knowledge base that functions as a springboard for practical application and unique issue resolving should be thoroughly researched by UoTs. Should an explicit theoretical data base be acquired in a classroom scenario prior to practical work in a workshop, lab, or simulated office? Should understanding be established in or via useful delivering, so that it is valuable rather than conceptual understanding that develops for the students? If learners can execute useful jobs, can it be presumed that they comprehended the basis for activity which they can express what is often called the "underpinning data base?" How shouldassessment happen: separately, or in combination? (Wager 2009, 4). In the light of the disagreements over, the notion of the contextual and also theoretical knowledge continuum that was drawn from Bernstein, offers fresh as well as ingenious methods-contextualisation, relocation of areas and also singulars to generate disputes on an alternative understanding of WIL in UoTs.

Wager's work of a contextual and theoretical continuum connecting to exercise that expands on Bernstein's work and therefore its pertinent to discovering ingenious means of addressing

existing epistemological voids in curricula as well as education in UoTs should be seen as an improvement on the HEQF recommendation which lacks in differentiating between WIL and theinterconnected facets of syllabus expansion or pedagogy, with work-based knowledge and recognition of prior learning (RPL). This is because, the technique of HEQF does not identify aseries of WIL components for sectorial job-related offerings in UoTs, neither does it recognize the reality that WIL has, for a very long time, created part of the expert advancement of the traditional occupations such as engineering, medicine as well as law provided in traditional colleges (Bohloko 2012). In general, it does not sufficiently record the life-long understanding aspect of WIL. Again, the standard paper is silent on the educational program and also background discussions of WIL in occupational-directed fields in UoTs (Bohloko 2012). Regardless of the nuances of difference, WIL is distinctively linked to universities of technologyand must be accepted as such. The term WIL tends to be merged with various other forms of discovering, ranging from officialto informal experiences.

Thus, the current study intends to draw on the literary works as well as research studies to create more discussion on the feasible individuality of WIL for career- focused higher education programmes as opposed to just the execution of WIL as part of UoTs.In line with this, the study is arguing for the development of a method where WIL must be seen,as a curriculum issue and an instructional issue related at the UoTs. WIL positions numerous challenges for typical, comprehensive, and research warranted trials but these can be overcome. The ramifications for UoTs can partially be connected to the principle of 'participatingeducation' acquired from former Technikons and also through colleges, while the cutting-edgetechniques used by the addition of web-based information, communication and technology andother media in WIL can serve to provide additional academic and logistic hopes and possibilities for the greater education field as a whole. Gamble (2009: 3) recommends that a distinguishing attribute of any kind of educational programneeds a mix of various forms of understanding, attracting from both contextual and also theoretical domain names so that the educational program makes it possible for both expertise progression and work development, as well as checking the borders between expertise and practice in the educational program. In this study, educational program will be seen as a common set of concepts, and concepts which give a basis for ongoing debates and conversations across universities.

“For, where determination exist, failure should not be allowed to dismantle the flag of success” (Kymlicka -2012). Previous studies have established several key findings regarding Work-Integrated Learning, including (Jackson, et al., 2023: 7 and Winborg et al., 2023: 12):

- WIL programs can enhance students' employability by providing them with real-world experience and skills that are valued by employers.

- WIL can improve students' academic achievement and engagement by integrating theory and practice in a meaningful way.

- WIL experiences can have positive impacts on students' personal and professional development, including increasing their confidence, communication skills, and problem-solving abilities.

- Employers value WIL graduates for their practical skills, industry knowledge, and ability to adapt to work environments.

- The quality of WIL experiences can vary significantly depending on factors such as the quality of supervision, mentorship, and integration with academic programs.

- WIL programs can benefit both students and employers by providing opportunities for mutual learning, collaboration, and innovation.

- There is a need for more research on the impact of WIL programs on students, employers, and the broader economy, as well as best practices for designing and implementing effective WIL programs.

This chapter as a result attempts to give abase for taking a look at an alternative understanding of WIL in DUT as they have the twin purpose of creating a special type of expertise and its application in the work environment.

2.4 WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL) DEFINITION

It is essential to say that WIL is an important tool that has considerable benefits for students (Jackson, et al.: 2017). The University of Johannesburg (UJ n.d) and Murdoch University (MU n.d) of Australia contend that WIL programs are designed to assist students to complete the practical component of their studies, establishing a clear and committed path to completing their National Diploma. Workshop-Based Training and Experiential Training are two WIL programs that give workshop training, experiential training, and on-the-job experience to students. These programs are tailored to the needs of Universities of Technology (UoTs) qualifications as well as the area of specialization of the participants (Govender and Taylor 2015; CHE 2011). WIL is a formal component of degree programs that is assessed and rewarded with credit points. Students are required to integrate and effectively apply past learning and information to make and justify judgments in a work-related environment through learning activities. In addition, students are taught and encouraged to critically evaluate themselves by reflecting on their own judgments and behaviours in those work-related activities (Corominas and Capell 2000).

The reasoning behind the DUT's usage of WIL as a cornerstone incentive that can lead to a valuable “one-hand-in-hand” concept that can lead to individual placement inside a company or institution of choice (Ade, Schuster, Harinck and Trötschel 2018; CHE 2011). Furthermore, WIL can provide students some route abilities for negotiations, knowledge, and skill development. Outside the negotiating area, researchers from several disciplines have looked at the transfer of learning from the classroom to the real world and found that abilities learned over a long period of time are frequently not used outside of the classroom. Training programs are frequently complicated, and determining which of the numerous interacting components of an intervention that will build work experience (Ade et al., 2018). WIL can establish some road directions, information, and skill development that will prepare students for appropriate professional practices once they are put in a job and a quiet trip to a professional leading path for a student could be described as a proper and a necessary exercise for students (Ade et al., 2018). It is thus, a matter of not just making an exciting career choice, but also choosing it after completing a cycle of education that includes a premium-led work experience.

Lumen learning (n.d) briefly adhere to the idea that the Employers/Managers should know, master and manage a variety of functions, which are commonly categorized as: planning, organizing, staffing, directing/leading, controlling/monitoring in order to be able to monitor students for their proper development. Among these qualities, planning is the most fundamental function it is the management form from which the other four emerge. However, so far as WIL is concerned, controlling is also a force to reckon with. Only after goals and plans to achieve organisational plans are in place is a manager ready to organize and staff properly (Lumen learning n.d). Similarly, the leading function (that is, influencing people's conduct in thecompany) is dependent on the objectives to be met. Therefore, if WIL is an objective, then controlling should be given serious attention in the organisation. In the controlling function, thejudgment of whether or not goals and standards have been reached is based on the objective,and for that matter the purpose of the WIL. Employers are in charge of overseeing and controlling the placement process as well as individual performance, including WIL student monitoring and evaluations. Employers are also accountable for monitoring job performance and submitting information to the government or learning institution for future employment as they are solely responsible for WIL students' placement and control. Importantly, institutional and government collaborations can help to promote young skill infusion for future employment. Industry, on the other hand, is particularly interested in new skill engagement for employability in the twenty-first century (Phillips 2014).

WIL is a continuous process that involves both employees and newly unemployed graduates who are working to improve their abilities (CHE 2011; Lumen learning n.d). WIL being a word used to describe an activity that combines academic learning with industrial application as part of an engagement program of study, blends theory and practice, and is also an educational method that connects academic and workplace practices for the mutual benefit of students and workplace according to the Council on Higher Education of South Africa (CHE 2011:78). Therefore, this statement should serve as an important catalyst to support the statement that; institutional and government collaborations can help to promote young skill infusion for future employment. WIL is again, a type of education that combines periods of academic study with periods of workexperience in positions related to the students' interests (Engelbrecht 2003: 24). Thus, when the programme is properly executed, it can yield potential

benefit for the country as a whole. Asa result, WIL suggests that there is a concurrent process. UoTs have included WIL into their curricula in order to provide professional work for graduatesand apprentice, as a holistic assessment of individual skill acquisition abilities for the concretization of skills enhancement among the learners. As a result, DUT as one of the vibrantcreators of skill-workers for employers, can focus on a prioritised and personalised insights, imparted to each student/trainee for a well-balanced distribution that leads to quality productionand the well-being of each student through the use of the WIL experiences. This not only alignsthe institution in line with the HEQF policy and aspirations for the country, but also make it a real UoT as defined in the context of the country - South Africa. To ensure WIL student equity, an established quality criterion that ensures the DUT has the competencies and traits necessary to detect trainee competency gaps is put in place. This is done through the institution`s advisory board, and this concentrates on how to improve the quality of life skills of students as trainees.

2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING

Bolnick *et al.* (2019), argued that the importance of WIL is that it can add to the individual self-training development and improve the trainee`s individual skills opportunities in their specific field such as:

- The development of professional identity
- Theoretical knowledge advancement and skills transferability
- Abilities to communicate with people in diverse functions
- Being able to partake in teamwork and be capable to solve problems and self-management.
- Abilities to improve own digital skills and literacy

- Acquire a higher level of practice and be able to understand what ethical practice means

- Ability to strengthen mutual respect and relationships

- Ability to strengthen mutual recognition and teamwork importance.

The above-mentioned field of training seems to show and make sense of what WIL students should expect as they stand before and after training to demonstrate practically to the Human Resources (HR) their abilities to be efficient in employment. It can be a challenge for both WIL student as well as employers to adhere to the company's recruitment guidelines, circumstances, and practices in many cases. It also can be a stressful moment for the majority of businesses, notably HR and newly recruited members, and recruitment partnerships, during this process. This is because, all parties, can neither show that they can transfer, participate in, and transform their theoretical knowledge acquired in academic studies into the "real world" of the workplace through practical exercises used to prepare students with the various employability skills acquired in a given company that facilitate the trainee's ability to cope in the workplace (Wang, et al., 2023: 11). Though the above creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, WIL contributes significantly to graduates' job and industry preparedness and can be viewed as a cornerstone of creating partnerships with business, community, government, and other educational providers (Jacksonet al., 2019**)**. WIL has long been seen as a valuable tool that is frequently used. As a result, WIL serves as a bridge for students to cross through training and testing/assessment, allowingthem to increase the height of their academic current knowledge and achieve their professionalfuture climax with ease. In accordance with this, trainees may be able to apply for specific employment opportunities during their WIL time. As a result, WIL can be a training and exam for newcomers, preparing them for a job while also giving them the opportunity to build essential professional skills. A number of study findings have shown that companies regard the WIL exercise as a vital lifetime academic path for graduates with a "wide spectrum of cognitive andbehavioural competencies" (Hodges 2011:55).

There has been a worldwide outcry over the dangers of technology's rapid growth in 21st-century skills (TFA). To this end, Joynes, Rossingnoli, and Amonoo-Kuofi (2019) claim that theglobal need for 21st-century skills is a contributing cause to a complication: on rational considerations and in light of today's TFA realities, there is no compelling reason why WIL and its potential impact on student development should not be sought by individuals and businessesseeking to increase their work output for the development of skills among new graduates fromhigher education institutions in general (Including DUT). The capacity of DUT professionals within the school management, business and industry partners enforces the enhancement of WIL student activities (Joynes et al., 2019). Actually, WIL has become a major component for the DUT in particular, and higher education in South Africa in general, because of its value to trainee graduates. As a result, WIL students at DUT must be developed in order for them to beable to translate and transfer their key academic knowledge and abilities from the lecture hall to the workplace (Joynes et al., 2019). The goal of this research is to give holistic outcomes on DUT WIL students. On this basis, it can be argued that, given the growing Demand for Quality Qualifications (DQQ) and skill delivery in the twenty-first century, a special focus on WIL students is required (Joynes et al*.,* 2019).

There is much evidence to support the idea of enhancing good practices that can help WIL students' progress, and create good connections between partners which should be maintainedat all costs (Schmoker 2018). Employers can expect colleges to equip students with a strong knowledge background, based on the foregoing consultations. The literature scoping of this study provides solid proof that DUT recognizes the value of close ties with industry, as discussed in the previous chapter. As a result, the industry sector and the DUT should both besensitive to the workplace. For the sake of this discussion, WIL is a three-way partnership ideabetween students, DUT and training partners, in which students apply their learning core in a real-life setting should be given all the need concentration. At the workplace, under the supervision of experienced mentors, as well as being put under theacademic staff of the institution, Taylor (2001) says that it has never been more important for South Africa to begin the process of developing a National Development Plan that envisions the triple helix of 2030, which includes partners such as the government, universities and Industry. Moreover, industry, as well as professional and academic institutions, should work onreducing unemployment which was purged at 27% in 2011 (Staff Writer 2015; South Africa 2011a)

from 27% in 2011 but now 34.4% to 6% by 2030 (Reuters Staff. 2021). In terms of work,various conditions must be met by the student, including qualifications, some curriculum vitae,and other related information before the completion or fulfilment is attained.

2.6 STUDENT PLACEMENT AND QUALIFICATION CRITERIA

Patrick, Peach, Pocknee, Webb, Fletcher, and Pretto (2008) allege that WIL placement is a sortof work-based learning that involves the student to be present in the workplace, and for that matter, organization, communication, and documentation are three crucial parts of a successful placement preparation that must be identified. Good planning lays a strong foundation for long-term connections and successful WIL placement initiatives. The criteria for student placement at work connected to WIL at DUT is one of the problems thathas been considered as a mandatory stage indicated in the university Workbook that studentsare invited to go through before graduating. As a result, the University has worked hard to acquire WIL opportunities for students. The co-operative co-coordinators in collaboration with the program supervisors, will determine the quantity and variety of work placements available in a given industry, and therefore, every WIL student must meet the criteria in order to be qualified.

Maseko (2018) elucidate that the issues regarding student placement is important because students'/college learners' placement for workplace can be considered as part of curriculum and college programmes. In light of the reasons as proposed by Maseko (2018) WIL students will require the following: -

- Compulsory practical component that is monitored by the employer's representative toward trainees.
- Will is a student/trainee's own responsibility to seek and find a workplace for her/his ownpractices.
- It is also a student/leaner's responsibility to abide by the school and industry established rules.

However, every WIL student must meet the placement criteria/conditions, which begin with thestudent application for admissions, registration to a certain faculty/program or curriculum, and then the introduction of a personal CV, followed by an interview and results (Maseko 2018). Students' applications will contain a recent curriculum vitae and, if applicable, a portfolio or portfolios. The Co-operative Education unit guarantees that students are thoroughly screened in accordance with corporate requirements. The acceptable CVs will be given to the right company, which will pick the students to whom training will be provided. The co-coordinator will set up the necessary interviews, ensuring that the requirements of the employer and the studentare a good match (Maseko 2018). When the general advisory board has evaluated the student'scompetence, the issuing of a qualification at the end of each course can be sanctioned with a certificate, diploma, or degree.

2.6.1 Interviews and qualifying criteria for WIL student

Co-operative Education is a comprehensive approach to higher education that integrates academic learning with real-world experience gained via collaboration between the university, its students, and industry (Fleming and Hickey 2013). All sectors of commerce and industry, as well as small businesses and the informal sector, regional, provincial, and state departments, are included in industry. Co-operative Education serves as a link between the university, employers, professional associations, and other relatedgroups, such as student organizations. It involves experiential learning/in-service training+ (IST), which entails placing a student in a relevant industry for work-integrated learning with a focus on the student learning by doing (Maseko 2018).

This may be necessary, in which case the student will not be able to earn the Diploma when fails to comply until the required time in industry is fulfilled properly, unless it is optional. Specialist personnel and workplace supervisors / mentors must organize, coordinate, and supervise the experiential learning. The processes for evaluation must be properly followed. There is a necessity to build sustainable working relationships/partnerships between the University and the corporate and public sectors for Co-operative Education to succeed. Sectors will be involved in the development of curriculum that is relevant to the demands of theindustry, and this will ensure that the student has the necessary skills and experience to

work in the business. Industry partnerships include not only placement of WIL students, but also graduate success. To keep these connections going, each party will make sure that they are mutually benefiting from this. All workplace stations that match the requirements of a certain program will be accredited by the university (Fleming and Hickey 2013).

2.7 THE PURPOSE OF THE DUT WIL POLICY

WIL policy at DUT is a set of principles for experiential learning that focuses on integrating academic learning into the workplace as part of a regular evaluation procedure and policy. As a result, DUT's WIL policy is overseen by an advisory group comprised of responsible and academically qualified and civil society individuals. Furthermore, a WIL student (workplace learning) at DUT is a holistic and formal workplace employment practice for a short length of time based on industry demand in collaboration with an academic institution. WIL is a high-quality capacity-building practicum and one of the exercises that brings together graduates and senior students, and DUT is no exception. Employment-based learning is described by Maseko (2018), as learning that occurs at or viawork. WIL practical has also been a feature of Wits apart from the U J students' work-based learning.

Other Universities in South Africa, including DUT have logbook as one of themonitoring methods (CHE 2011: 16-21) used to control the WIL program. Businesses must conduct a thorough examination of the experiential learning of student candidate graduates or senior students selected for a specific workstation. While focusing on the health and safety of employees, it is critical that the sending university (UoTs/DUT) guarantees that each WIL student is assigned a mentor or a learning field experienced monitor. For WIL students, a field experienced monitor on health and safety that focuses on production also requires communication, teamwork, and students who are devotedto learning and possessing basic soft-skills before entering the sector (CHE 2011). Employers frequently seek employees with communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving skills (CHE 2011). Employers' expectations may be the underlying argument in favour of communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem solving among new graduates (Lester 2013). Similarly, employers must have critical observation skills for better management and leadership that demonstrates

visibility and chances for employment. The advisory board`s oversight role at DUT also covers the purpose of the WIL policy.

2.8 THE PURPOSE OF THE DUT WIL ADVISORY BOARD

The advisory board is professional qualified people who belong to an institution for the purpose of debate and proper evaluation of job advancement. The advisory board is frequently made up of employees, who can be from the local company's working team or from the private or public sector. In terms of the university's demands, the preceding discussion implies that the advisory board is a team made up of academic members as well as the work force that gives counsel, shows the way to go, and proposes long-term solutions to a variety of issues inside the university and industry (CHE 2011). According to Taylor, Marino, Greenhalgh, & Hudak, 2010, an advisory board consists of a group of university and community stakeholders from various local or regional institutions. In general, boards tend to have various labels and flexible structures. However, a well-selected board will align around common interests in active participation, shared mission, and direct influence with students, faculty, and other board members.

The input of Industry and Professional bodies also forms an integral part of the department's advisory committee. The aim of the Advisory Board is to promote communication between the institution, industry, professional bodies and the public sector. They provide an exchange of ideas, information andadvice with regard to (Tancred, et al., 2024: 17):

a) Curriculum development

b) Work-integrated Learning

c) Professional Body activities

d) Sector needs analysis

e) Sector policies and practices

Each discipline has an Advisory Committee. Employers of our students have the opportunity to be members of these committees which communicate the needs of industry to the institution. Through membership in these committees, industry helps to shape the training thatthe students receive at the institution. At the Durban University of Technology all the qualifications have an Advisory Board. Industry and professional organizations are also represented on the department's advisory group. An Acting Head of the Public Relations Management Department who works with the DUT advisory boards (AB), emphasized that theDUT Advisory Board focuses on the interdisciplinary approach (Maseko 2019). The AdvisoryBoard's mission is to improve communication between the institution, industry, professional organizations, and government. Employers and advisory board members serve as rule and regulation custodians and appearto be protecting sector policies and practices at the majority of institutions. All qualifications atDUT have an Advisory Board. As a result, the Advisory Boards of say, DUT and Nelson Mandela University believe that they are charged with promoting curriculum through a diverserange of programs that aim to facilitate academic matters between the university and stakeholders, as well as the local community, in order to achieve success (Maseko 2019).

2.9 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Students in the Co-operative Education unit would be monitored at least twice during their WIL term according to Mbuso (2018). Each WIL student submits their CV to the Co-Operative Education Unit for onward transmission to an Industry partner. According to the company's criteria, each student should go through a thorough screening process, and their progress will be evaluated for the jobs that demand practical experience in society, wholesale and retail sector, such as (Bolnick, Smith and Fuentes 2019):

- Education
- Hospitality
- Engineering

The above components have been put on the map to assist students with experiential learning integrated component with numerous instructional components to give illustrations and instructions in light of a competitive economy of education and the ecosphere in close cooperation of a competitive economy (Duke, Halvorsen, Strachan, Kim and Konstantopoulos 2021). Commerce, industry, government, and the community all work together quite closely. For WIL recruiting, pre-requisites and qualifying criteria for students' placement and skill implementation demand a minimum of credits and theoretical understanding that looks at the origins of Life skills, the milestone of Technical Higher Education in particular. As previously said, the goal of the expansion of Technical Higher Education in South Africa is to open the Pandora box (CHE 2011).

2.9.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to ensure that the student succeeds during the Work Integrated Learning placement, each unit has a critical role to perform.

2.9.2 EMPLOYER (INDUSTRY PARTNER)

The Employer allocates a Mentor to supervise, guide and coach the students during their work integrated learning experience at the workplace. The Work Integrated Learning Portal is a user-friendly management system that offers online access to Employers and Mentor to manage students engaged in work integrated learning. The Mentor and the Academic Assessor work together in the assessment of the student’s performance. The Mentor can monitor and assess the student’s progress and provide feedbackto the Academic Assessor and Student. Upon completion of the work integrated learning training, Mentors and Students complete Feedback Reports on curriculum issues. These Reports are collected and presented to the respective Departments for consideration during the curriculum review process (Boud, et al., 2023: 2-5).

2.9.3 STUDENTS

Students have online access to constantly submit progress reports and upload supporting documents, conduct self-assessments and offer feedback to the Mentors and Academic Assessors in real time. The student can view in real time, all the Mentor's and Academic Assessor's comments and assessment of tasks completed by the student. At the end of the work integrated learning training, students provide feedback to the University on curriculum and performance related issues. These feedback reports are a crucial part to improving the quality and relevance of the qualifications offered by the University (Yaseen, et al., 2023: 17).

2.9.4 ACADEMIC ASSESSOR

The University assigns an Academic Assessor to monitor and assess students engaged in work integrated learning. The Academic Assessor is also liable for approving the Employer workstations and conductingonsite visitations to monitor the student's performance. The academic assessor performs thefollowing functions online (Mtiki, 2021:2-4):

- approval of the student work integrated learning registration
- assessment of student's progress reports
- provides feedback to students and Mentors
- plans onsite visitation schedule and completes onsite visitation reports
- receives work integrated learning portfolio for assessment.

2.10 DEPARTMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION

The Co-operative Education Department of the University monitors and follows up on all non-compliance of work integrated learning activities, manages the Certification of Accredited Employers, tracks all students who are ready for WIL placement, tracks the graduation

of Students who had completed WIL, tracks the WIL statistics per qualification in the format as required by professional councils and bodies such as the Engineering Council of SA and the Council on Higher Education. A two-month process of evaluating the WIL model is as follows (Govender and Taylor 2015): gaining feedback from the lecturer, students and industry partners; and evaluation, recognitionand appreciation of the industry partners and stakeholders. The essential resources required during this phase are lecturer assessment ratings of student POEs as per the assessment criteria; quantitative and qualitative research data from students and industry partners; and the hosting of award ceremonies to acknowledge the participating industry partners and other stakeholders.

2.11 STUDENT STIPEND

The monitoring team ensures that, students receive stipends from their training. Govender andTaylor (2015) argue that a stipend offered to a trainee can help pay some of their personal expenses. It is an amount paid to address various demands and expenses for an individual especially, a trainee. Although businesses may choose to pay stipends to the students, this is not an expectation in this WIL partnership model. Ideally though, a cost structure for the WIL model should be budgeted for to support the partnership building sessions, documentation andfeedback mechanisms to be implemented professionally (Govender and Taylor 2015). Therefore, a stipend should not be misconstrued as wages. The main distinction between a stipend and a wage or salary is that the former is an ad hoc and sporadic low payment used topurchase food, transportation, and housing, whereas the latter is paid to an employee at the end of a fixed and determined period of time and is based on time and service-basedperformance (Shahjahan, et al., 2023: 7-9).

2.11.1 SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITY (SETA)

Some students are funded by Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), an initiative ofthe National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). The SETAs support education and training and their function is to help implement the National Skills Development Strategy and to

increasethe skills of people in their sector (Shahjahan, et al., 2023: 17-18 and Rosenberg, and Ward, 2020: 21). The table below illustrates the various SETAs.

Table 2.2 SETA's

ABRIEVATION OF SETA	DETAILS OF SETA
BANKSETA	Banking Seta
CHIETA	Chemical Industries Education and Training Authority
CETA	Construction Education and Training Authority
DIDETA	Diplomacy, Intelligence, Defense and Trade and Industry
ETDP	Education, Training and Development Practices Seta
FASSET	Financial and Accounting Services
FIETA	Forest Industries Seta
FOOD BEV	Food and Beverages Manufacturing Industry
HWSETA	Health and Welfare Seta
ISETT	Information Systems, Electronics and Telecommunications Technologies

INSETA	Insurance SETA
LG SETA	Local Government, Water and Related Services Seta
MAPPP	Media, Advertising, Publishing, Printing and Packaging Seta
MERSETA	Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Seta
PAETA	Primary Agriculture Education and Training Authority
POSLEC	Police, Private Security, Legal and Correctional Services
SERVICES	Services Seta
SETASA	Secondary Agriculture Seta
TETA	Transport Education and Training Authority
THETA	Tourism and Hospitality Education and Training Authority
CTFL	Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather Sector Educationand Training Authority
ESETA	Energy Sector Education and Training Authority
FP&M SETA	Fibre Processing and Manufacturing Sector Education and Training Authority

MICT	Media, Information and Communication Technologies Sector Education and Training Authority
MQA	Mining Qualifications Authority
PSETA	Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority
SASSETA	Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority

According to (Govender, 2023: 13-14), There is not a specific answer to this question as studies on SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) can cover a wide range of topics and perspectives. However, some common themes and findings from current studies on SETAs include:

- Effectiveness of SETAs in addressing skills development and training needs in specific sectors or industries.
- Challenges and limitations faced by SETAs in implementing their mandate and achieving desired outcomes.
- Impact of SETA interventions on workforce productivity, employment, and economic growth.
- Stakeholder perceptions of SETA performance and relevance in the skills development landscape.
- Strategies for improving the efficiency, accountability, and governance of SETAs.
- Comparison of SETAs with other types of skills development providers, such as universities or private training institutions.

Overall, the findings of current studies on SETAs highlight the complex nature of skills development systems and the need for continuous evaluation and improvement of SETA functions and operations.

2.11.2 REQUEST FOR SETA FUNDING

According to (Govender, 2023: 13-14), the process to request for SETA funding includes the following steps:

- Research: Before applying for SETA funding, research the specific requirements of the SETA you are interested in applying to. Each SETA has its own mandates and criteria for funding, so make sure to familiarize yourself with these before beginning the application process.

- Contact the SETA: Once you have identified the SETA that aligns with your training or development needs, reach out to them to inquire about their funding programs and application process. You can usually find contact information on the SETA's website or by calling their office.

- Complete the application form: The SETA will provide you with an application form that you will need to complete. Make sure to fill out all sections accurately and provide any necessary supporting documentation.

- Submit the application: Once you have completed the application form, submit it to the SETA according to their specified guidelines. This may be done online, via email, or in person.

- Wait for a response: After submitting your application, the SETA will review it and notify you of their decision. This process can take some time, so be patient and follow up with the SETA if necessary.

- Attend any required meetings or interviews: If your application is successful, the SETA may require you to attend meetings or interviews to further discuss your training or development needs.

- Receive funding: If your application is approved, you will receive funding from the SETA to support your training or development initiatives. Make sure to use the funds responsibly and in accordance with the SETA's guidelines.

The university is required to apply for funding to the relevant SETA's. Information regarding application is available on the website. Once the application is successful, the university is then informed of the number of students that the SETA has approved for funding. A Memorandum of Agreement is then signed between the University and the respective SETA. This enables the payment process to the University from the SETA. TECHNOLOGY LOCALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION UNIT (TLIU)

Another government initiative through the Department of Trade and Industry is the Technology Localization Implementation Unit (TLIU) which is hosted by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). The TLIU has been implementing the Science, Engineering and Technology Industry Internship Program (SETIIP) over the past 3 years. The aim of the program is to support students studying Science and Engineering related disciplines at a University of Technology (UoT) with Practical 1 (P1) and Practical 2 (P2) training. The P1 and P2 training is required by these students in order for the student to complete the relevant qualifications (Jacobson, et al., 2018: 14-16). The key objective of the TLIU SETIIP is to increase the graduation rate of science and engineering students through the provision of structured practical work exposure and training (in fulfilment of P1/P2 University requirement), either at affiliated institutions linked to industry or directly in industry itself. Students from science, engineering and technology (SET) related fields of study may be considered for participation in the TLIU SET Internship Program These include:

- Mechanical Engineering
- Electronics Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Civil Engineering
- Metallurgy Engineering

TLIU programme is a national programme and therefore students would need to be placed in at least four provinces: Western Cape, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.

2.12 WIL STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

In line with the proper management of WIL, the DUT On-line University Management System (OLUMS) placement system was built. The Department of Cooperative Education, in conjunction with academic departments, at the universities, employers, mentors, and students collaborated to build the University WIL Portal known as University WIL Portal (UWILP), DUT OLUMS placement system. This is an intelligent tracking systems that was meant to help the Department of Co-operative Education which is responsible for the placement of students in industry to the management of WIL at the University. The OLUMS DUT system, is expected to work as an internet highway for all of the university's unified information and data under the DUT Multi-system management and online learning. The UWILP, DUT OLUMS is again expected to make work integrated learning and student placement easier to manage. The important expectations of OLUMS for academic officials and students are that:

- The OLUMS integrated system processes all data derived from various campuses andfaculties;

- it also combines information derived from all Faculties, including the management ofwork integrated learning processes such as:

  - Student placement Management System

  - Work Integrated Learning Management System

Figure 2.1 Online University Management System

Adapted from (Durban University of Technology, n. d.)

With regards to certain training program and term in school completion, one can apply for professional training practices that can provide a thorough understanding of how to run-througha skill in a related subject and profession. Furthermore, WIL student curriculum and practical imply for placed candidates as a roller coaster of triple helix parties interacting with the institution, some of whom do not know each other such as schools, industries and governmentofficial/representatives. Badat (2015) argues that since the report of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) in 1996, higher education policy debate has focused on transforming the higher education system and developed a new institutional environment that is better suited to satisfythe development goals of a democratic South Africa. Vision 2030 for South Africa means that unemployment, poverty and inequality are

reduced by promoting the triple helix partnership among education, government and industry stakeholders. The HRM Diploma qualification aims to create employable, future-fit leaders using a ‘learningto be’ philosophy and a WIL partnership model that integrates theory and workplace practicelearning (Govender and Taylor 2015).

Companies or organizations who accept students for a set amount of time to participate in WIL learning activities are referred to as industry partners. Industry partners are frequently referred to as "employers" that are either hiring trainees internally or externally. An industrial company can either be a private or a public entity that accepts novices for professional skill development and assessment, even if the students are not usually paid a wage in South Africa (Maseko 2018). The reason being, WIL student trainees are not salary paid members since the WIL student is considered an academic curriculum training path. Therefore, WIL student as a curriculum is administered in a form of triple helix by the Department of Higher Education (DHE), Industry business and government. Moreover, Industry business or organizations whoaccept students for a set amount paid in a form of stipend by the sending school to WIL students are known as industry partners. The WIL Partnership Model is to promote the employability of graduates and allow students to gain workplace knowledge, skills and experience while industry partners observe the newlyemerging talent in the form of future-fit leaders entering the world of work (Govender and Taylor 2015). For successful learning prior to WIL student achievement, the triple helix valueof collaboration between the DHE, industry, and the South African government is expected tobe critical so that accredited students can further perform acquired skills accordingly. In a bid to address the three objectives of the study, the following three sections (2.12, 2.13, 2.14) will focus on these.

2.13 PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYERS ON THE QUALITY OF WIL STUDENTS

The trend from recent advertisement for job openings have shown phrases that demonstrate that, employers no longer want to employ students who do not have work experience, but rather, those who are ready to contribute on the first day of employment with little or no supervision. A variety of research study records have actually developed that companies consider it essential for graduates to have a wide range of both cognitive as well as behavioural

expertise (Hodges 2011: 55), so that, they will fit in well with the above objectives of the organization. Though the recognition for both cognitive and behavioral competencies are expected to bid well for the implementation of WIL and its general acceptance among employees, the latter have actually reported that some learners that were offered were insufficiently competent to handle job marked as WIL activities (Phillips 2014; Sattler and Peters2013). WIL needs to be perceived as an understanding chance for students and not always contributeto tangible results for which host organisations would generally pay.

This may present issues for tiny and also moderate enterprises who might want to join WIL, especially for harnessing experience, yet lack the facilities as well as sources to meet the requirements of a top-quality positioning, particularly in regard to supervision and mentoring (Jackson, Rowbottom, Ferns and McLaren 2017; Phillips 2014) or anticipates the learners to come 'already made'. Once again, employers are now demanding that graduate candidates have appropriate experience, proof of work-readiness and also the technical abilities to function effectively in the office (Edwards et al., 2015). This is particularly crucial for organisations to be ingenious as well as remain competitive in global markets (PwC, 2016) when their hired trainees already possessall of it. They do not wish to work with trainees who will certainly require to be trained at an added expense to the firm. This obviously serves as a disincentive for such companies in futureWIL interaction, therefore defeating the purpose of WIL. Establishing equally helpful collaborations with neighbourhood universities can be specifically challenging for smaller sized services (Hjartarson, Mendelsohn, McGuire and Shlozberg 2011)and proof suggests employers tend to favour collaborating with just one university as soon as a relationship is established (Sattler and Peters 2013).

Probably so that they can be guaranteedof the high quality of the learners that originate from that partner institution. Although this is simple to imagine, organisations often disengage from WIL as they do not have suitable work for the learners who are available for WIL (Sattler and Peters 2013). In terms of support from universities, some employers want higher participation from the university in relation to the arrangement of information about WIL, higher university synchronisation of WIL programs and boosted interaction throughout the experience (Peters, Sattler and Kelland 2014). Some employers also want a better and more formalised involvement in the style, distribution and analysis of WIL (Sattler, Wiggers and Arnold 2011). A study by Nogaya (2012) on DUT WIL revealed that Employers require the competencies of

graduates to match the functions required in employment. In a related study from the faculty of engineering, the data generated also clearly suggests that industry is fully supportive of an inclusive participation process (Hariparsad 2015). The data created likewise resoundingly recommends that industry is completely helpful of an inclusive involvement procedure.

It further emerged that, sector really intends to be associated with educational program conversations, and also choices for factors varying from getting involved to develop more appropriate trainingcourse content, to contributing to production of graduates with better employability attributes (Hariparsad, 2015). When another question was tossed at companies to articulate out their opinion concerning the most reliable way to influence the Civil Engineering curriculum, 80% said that this takes place only through the WIL or in-service procedure. Additionally, the study on the same DUT WIL issue calculated the mean scores for skills requirement in the workplace for both graduates andemployers (Nogaya, 2012), and the results were similar to Smith and Kruger (2008: 12) who reviewed a list of generic skills and identified interpersonal skills as one of the crucial skills thata graduate need to acquire. Other skills include teamwork, network as well recognising interestand achievement (Nogaya 2012). According to Maes, Weldy, and Icenogle (1997) oral interaction, problem solving skills and self-motivation were to be the three most vital proficiencies called for of a graduate at the job site.

Companies desire graduates with appropriate subject details skills, understanding, in addition to searching for well-developed generic skills in a variety of locations (Pool and Sewell 2007:282). Though this seems contradictory, Hodges and Burchell (2003:17) mentioned Joseph and Joseph (1997) who said that employers think educational institutions need to supply appropriate employment experience and common skills before employment.

When Nogaya (2012) asked participants to provide scores based on graduate efficiency (taken as an indication of the relative importance of items for employers in addition to the graduates), the mean ratings for the companies' rating for efficiency was primarily above 4, (which was interpreted by the researcher) to recommend that employers were pleased with the performance of the DUT WIL graduates. This was done in order to address the first objective

which was to examine the views of companies regarding DUT WIL efficiency in the office. Theoutcomes exposed that companies were satisfied with the efficiency of the DUT WIL graduates (Nogaya 2012). The study findings reported that companies believed that graduates had a suitable level of computer literacy, however there appeared to be an area for development in some other skills as well as efficiency in the office. This recommended that somewhat, one might anticipate that the degree of importance companies placed on graduates' quality would be more than their assumption of graduate performance.

Other employers like even more flexible techniques that are not extremely prescriptive or administratively difficult. They need flexibility to fit the useful truths of running an organization as well as dealing with issues such as the business cycle, the economic scenario and also team sources and workloads (Sattler and Peters 2013). That stated, it is essential to bear in mind that too much adaptability might be at odds with organized college programs and also course needs for granting graded credit score for WIL activities, so versatility needs to fulfil the demands of both universities as well as companies. Rooting out the intricacies of provision to make sure that WIL is versatile enough for a series of employers and also structured sufficiently for university needs will be difficult, but it is clear thatemployers require to be made more familiar with the advantages to their company to encourageinteraction and 'buy in' the WIL concept. While the cost as well as time problems are not likely to decrease, if employers can see the worth to their service as well as the wider industry, they might be extra involved with universities to give WIL. In an attempt to fill any knowledge gaps that may exist, as well as determine the effectivenessof WIL students' and practicum at DUT, Maseko (2018) states that practicum is a period of workthat provides the student with opportunities for practical experiences in the real world as part ofan academic programme.

In this vein, the Senate of DUT was charged with the approval of theexperiential policy, based on the WIL model for the institution, which has five campuses in Durban and two in Pietermaritzburg. Furthermore, when the DUT Experiential Learning Policy was approved by the Senate, there has been a steady increase in the number of firms that seeDUT as one of the best academic partners for students pursuing WIL. A measure of learning demand was stated in level descriptors in terms of problem types, knowledge required abilities, and responsibility, and this became performance needs that must be proven by students (Maseko

2018). The second objective talks about identifying the shortfalls in the competencies and attributes ofthe DUT WIL students which follows below.

2.14 COMPETENCIES AND ATTRIBUTES OF WIL STUDENTS

The National Plan for Higher Education of South Africa clearly specifies that as a result of workforce requirements, more graduates need to be created by establishments of college (Celeand Menon, 2006:24). In order to supply eligible and also skilled graduates, a UoT needs to improve learning possibilities where the learner can be subjected to markets and offered the possibilities to place their theoretical knowledge right into practice (Cele and Menon, 2006:24).It is partly because of this that WIL was set up as the key strength of UoTs (Biesma 2006:18). The quality of a graduate is defined by the ability to access relevant information and to solve problems in additional to the graduate having abilities such as computer proficiency, team structure, networking and social sensitivity (CHE 2007:24). If a graduate is able to demonstrate these abilities and also employable capabilities in the office, then that individual is regarded to have the needed basic expertise that are required in the workplace.

According to Suite, Juan, Corominas and Capell (2000:390), the employability of graduates is among the essential signs of an institution's high quality. Advice services such as those used by the UoTs are prompted to use programmes that are focused on establishing job abilities aswell as capability in order to achieve greater work rates. A research was conducted by the University of Luton on employability of the graduates. The elderly administration team of this college embraced a sight that, if the students were not outfitted with the necessary skills when they graduated, the college was failing its responsibility (Stephen 2007:75) because, it was not adequate for a student to be experienced on scholasticself-control only but likewise both education and learning and occupation significance. The university program revealed that neighbourhood as well as global employers were worried about whether the graduates that they assigned were reliable. Companies acknowledged specific abilities as being essential specifically; the requirement to establish communication skills, transactional skills, problem solving skills and management skills.

Stephen (2007:75-85) offers confirmation that graduates ought to have experience alongwith a qualification to be able to protect beginning placements. Graduates ought to be able to bring in employers not just in regards to their academic environment, however also in regards to their mind-sets, abilities, as well as knowledge. According to the advisory board conference of a Department in the Management Sciences of DUT, companies were worried regarding the lack of specific soft and hard skills from the graduates. The soft skills abilities required to be attended to were identified as: language as well as communication abilities, confidence structure, record writing and also management abilities, while the adhering to difficult skills were of problem namely mathematic strategies, fundamental scientific research concepts as well as production technology (Department of Operations and Quality Management advisory meetings, 2008:3). An essential obstacle to graduates is that they go into the labour market with concepts, as well as details yet lack extensive work understanding before they can be valuable to organisations (Hodges and Burchell, 2003:18). The study by Nogaya (2012) had respondent (66.2%) agreeing that the subject material, of DUT educational program needs makeover.

One participant said, 'analysis's procedure ought to be extra functional and also pertinent to the job place setting' 'Concepts in lectures should be put into context of troubles in industry' and 'subject material to be a lot more industry associated including the use of the proper layout software packages'. Presently subject material for some courses emphasizes the initial concepts of Civil Engineering rather than real world troubles and it is because, this is within the ambit of the academic environment. The DUT WIL 'graduates are unable to relay academic expertise' or' lectures are not able to connect the actual curriculum to just how students have to apply it'. These comments recommend that DUT Civil Engineering educational program expends more time on design concepts than the sensible application of these ideas, to the point that the line in between concept and real-life design troubles is obscured. Even though, these shortfalls are noted for the current student, may be the way and manner the placement are done could also attribute to the shortfalls encountered. To this end, the studynow moves to investigate this.

2.15 CRITERIA FOR WIL STUDENT ACCESS AND PLACEMENT AT DUT

Parents view quality as the ranking of the university's reputation and its employability of graduates and academic placement. They therefore are thrilled to know that their wards will receive WIL at some point in their study for practical experience. Therefore, the placement system should ensure equitable programme for all qualified students and the industry. The industrialists act at a high level, advising and helping with strategic change and curriculum development or simply providing the students with ready access to senior-level industrial experience' (Guo and 2010: 30). For the companies that take on students, it amounts to 'a year-long interview and many students subsequently receive offers of employment from their placement company', (Guo and Lamb: 17). Consequently, 'the employer is able to help them adapt to the culture of the organisation and develop work habits and skills that the employer values', (Taylor 2001:7). The DUT) has certified each industrial partner (employer) as a qualified training facilitator. The accreditation process is led by the relevant Co-Op Coordinator and professional academic personnel, who provides an overview of the prospectiveindustries for practicum placement for students. For this reason, Singh (2012: 5), opines that the social change has led to new guidance of academic writing as well as blended learning environment. To ensure student monitoring, each student has a logbook, sometimes known as a portfolio, which they keep for the first few days of school before handing it over to the DUT corporate supervisor, who is responsible for submitting it to the firm's department for grading and moderation.

2.15.1 Management of student work placement

WIL students at DUT are part of a South African project that chooses registered students for professional training. During this recruiting process, WIL student recruitment and file materialization are done in accordance with the institution's rules, and the WIL's academic development structure follows government and industry-established standards for improving employability skills. Through the WIL, the institution sets standards for improving job placement skills and thereby reducing unemployment among students. Scourfield, et.al (2019) stressed that student recruiting entails more than just matching a student's profile to a suitable job place. A variety of factors influence both students' choices andtheir chances of

success. All of these variables should be addressed in good student recruitingtactics so that students have all of the evidence they need to make informed decisions.

2.15.2 Students role and responsibility in the WIL program

WIL exposes students to, and allows them to get in touch with, the central aspects of pre-professional identification (PPI) and also ideally the extra nuanced aspects of PPI certain to their desired occupation. Students can proceed through stages of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda 1998), a structure thought about as associated with individual development (Nadelson, McGuire, Davis, Farid, Hardy, Hsu and Wang 2015). Throughout the practical training and solutions stage, students observe and imitate professionals completing jobs in theirday-to-day duties. Trainees take 'an active role in building definition and asking questions fromwhat they come across' (Billett and Somerville 2004: 315) as well as will certainly discover appropriate behaviour in pertinent expert functions, what standards are expected, and what knowledge and abilities are needed to run successfully in the work environment. They will proceed to what Nadelson *et al.* (2015) term the questioning phase, synonymous with cross roadways, where they do not just search for solutions from professionals but additionally 'startto question the authenticity or worth of procedures and suggestions of the occupation' (Nadelson et al., 2015: 5). This vital evaluation of office experience needs to be inherent to any WIL experience (Billett 2009) in order to grow graduates who are 'seriously aware as well as analyse techniques around them as opposed to merely being hung out and enculturated into existing practices andassessments (Campbell and Zegwaard 2011: 214).

Student responsibilities in the WIL program at DUT OLUMS is part of a user interface system that allows Students to:

2.15.2.1 View all positioning activities on their own control panel for selection

2.15.2.2 Edit their accounts and also post their resumes, and

2.15.2.3 Search for as well as obtain jobs that are posted online.

As a result, the office will certainly establish a core suggestion of techniques based on the student's capacities and conformity. It becomes the role and also the responsibility of the

pupilto examine processes and suggestions at the job place in instance s/he is effective in interviews(Billett and Somerville 2004: 5). This allows the program to be managed properly.

2.16 SIMULATIONS AT THE WORKPLACE PLACE

Simulations are a common sort of professional training activity held in schools and is a copy oftruths. it suggests that it is a replica of the expert training skills that every hired graduate can get out of the industry. DUT organises career fairs (World of Work) on campus where recruiterscome and demonstrate their operations and opportunities for the students. Again, students getto see simulations during their WIL placement onsite as an introduction to work-related practices under the supervision of a corporate monitor who is in charge of the student. The overwhelming evidences show that most academic institutions see simulation as an essential deal between a student as well as the academic institutions associated with the WIL (Vlachopoulos and Makri 2017). For individual trainee ability promotion, substitute techniques could consist of the corporation, the training institution/school, and amateur trainees in their training environment. The South African government has actually developed this program as amandatory and organized task to concentrate on trainees and also current high school graduates to get to receive comprehensive skills training (Cheung and Powell 2012). To manage the placement criteria to meet the employers' expectations of the DUT WIL and thatof the WIL programme, at the least, it is imperative that investigations are done for the records. This study will therefore do this through questions like 'How long have you been involved in supervising Work Integrated Learning? This will give a picture of what to expect from the training as well as the kind of evaluation to receive at the end of the training.

The study will also find out the number of students the host organisation has offered WIL before, host organisations perception on theory to practice, processes and systems, and will be askedto rate the students' ability to use the following Microsoft packages: Teamwork and co-operation, attitude to the work situation, understanding of workplace practices, desire to learn and continue learning, analytical thinking skills, problem solving, initiation abilities, verbal communication, written communication, adherence to occupational health and safety standards among others. All these will help DUT to measure the actual performance of students against expectations and thus serves as a feedback loop for corrective actions. They

will also help to contribute to the advancement of research as the feedback can be published to assist as guidance.

2.17 THE CASE OF UNEMPLOYMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA AND WIL

The fact that the country's jobless rate is the highest in the world has sparked outrage. However, the South African government has launched a National Development Plan (NDP) in conjunctionwith civil society to implement a number of projects to tackle unemployment. How to address unemployment has been a source of heated discussion in South Africa for decades (Sefalafala, 2024: 9-11; Mathenjwa, 2023: 17). In order for someone or student to find a job, there must be an employer who is willing to hire an unemployed person. Drawing on these arguments, there is a need to establish an analysis that can hint the resultants of the relationships between the employers on one hand and the WIL student as a recruited and placed person to be guided and observed on the other.

As indicated above, "employers difficulty in identifying, assessing, and relocating appropriate WIL students or new employees can entail several equity challenges which can hinder successful career and employers' perspective of WILL students. These can be attributed to issues such as (Awsumb, et al., 2022 9-13; Nolan, et al., 2017; 2-5):

- Lack of WIL student discipline and incapacity to implement assigned tasks (laziness)
- Difficulties to integrate the new workplace environment (uncomfortable zone;international students or inter-regional WIL student move).
- Poverty and poor/lower social economic background (low self-esteem)
- Disability, long life illness or stigmatization
- Linguistic assertiveness and cultural diversity and selectiveness
- Tribalism, racism and nepotism and;
- Inaptitude to adapt to multicultural work environment.
- Corruption

Morrison, Ramsey and Bond (2017) argue that community capacity building (CCB) focuses onhelping all members of the community, particularly the poorest and most disadvantaged, to develop their skills and competences. Therefore, successful career, workplace, neighbourhood, economy, and early employment are all important factors for the nation building capacity. Mashabela (2020), alleges that Entrepreneurship in local communities is guided by the drive tocreate socio-economic value by using local resources in an innovative and efficient manner. Hence, if the local project of WIL from DUT is well articulated and have all the needed support,one would expect a better outcome of youth unemployment as compared to the current situation. WIL student under placement can gain greater control over their life skills and use their minds for further job creation and local development, and thus, communities can become more cohesive, but they can also become more robust and better prepared to face economic and social crises. It appears reasonable to assert that the majority of graduates want to improve their prospects and obtain a better job.

However, it seems to show that the majority of new graduates are concerned more with improving their job prospects than improving their readiness and academic performance (Almusaed et al., 2023: 9; Tawafak, et al., 2023: 14). As a consequence, the majority of qualified graduates seems to be not adequately equipped with skills for the job (Monteiro, et al., 2022: 15-16; McGunagle and Zizka, 2020.). Worried enough for this cause, employers feel that a highly qualified graduate must likewise be highly and professionally equipped for this job. In fact, students must be placed in student work placements in order for them to acquire productive and relevant skills. The consensus view seems to be that employers believe that, students can provide the most up-to-date knowledgeand experiences to the firm, and therefore, both old and new theoretical knowledge can be employed to benefit the company's activities development (Jackson, Rowe and Fleming 2019).Skill sharing and communication in the workplace can boost employee productivity as well as that of the student. Imparting communication knowledge and abilities at work is one of the most significant skills that employees can have (Morreale and Pearson 2002: 224). The significance of communication knowledge and skills transfer are principally teamwork enhancers, and so form part of industry

production and benefit drivers. The benefit drivers stand on the student and learners universities where they are placed to acquire academic knowledge in context of their future practical period within the workplace to come. Jackson *et al.* (2019) opine that it is critical that when students create information in the classroom, they are able to discover meaning in it later by actively relating it to new scenarios that arise in other contexts, such as on the job. Students graduating from higher education areexpected to apply their skills and knowledge in a variety of work settings (Broadbent:2007).

Nevertheless, the majority of unemployed graduates in South Africa have acceptable degrees but lack soft skills, putting them in the category of unemployable graduates. Employers' positive perspectives on WIL students can be a valuable asset in attracting excellenttrainees and to manage industrial output. Employers are the only managers who set the production plan and launch projects that benefitthe company's production and customers. The way workers are steered through their job endeavours is based on how the employer plans and executes production goals as well as thebelief in the workers, regardless of who the followers are.

To better grasp employers' views on WIL, it would be necessary to emphasize that most that WIL is an established method that provides students with a working chance that develops their future working abilities and work ethics for subsequent employment (SAE Institute 2013). While the employers'/managers' deploy empowering skills that may lead, assess, and sanction rendered services by externallyrecruited persons to the organization, the notion of WIL needs to change for the better.

Hence, courses should always be made to fit the needs of students and industry expectations,with a practical focus (SAE Creative Media Institute 2013). They offer a highly individualized, interactive, and collaborative learning environment and offered using online cutting-edge technology (as a necessary means in this century). The reason for this is that the WIL students’system is a series of training programs that the South African government oversees in order tofacilitate and extend the conditionality of today's new graduate employment, and today`s graduate is expected to be a techno savvy individual without excuses (Freshwater, 2023). The University of Johannesburg (UJ 2020), has ensured that WIL programs are intended to assist students to complete the

practical WIL component of their studies with this in mind, establishing a clear and committed path to completing their National Diploma. DUT WIL programs should imitate this vision. Workshop-Based Training and Experiential Training are two WIL programs that give workshoptraining, experiential training, and on-the-job experience. These programs are tailored to the needs of (UoT) qualifications as well as the area of specialization of the students (Recker, et al., 2023; Hilmi, et al., 2023.

2.18 SUMMARY

This chapter focused on employers' perspectives on WIL that can be regarded as their understanding of its engagement in placing students in new working environments for their future work placement opportunities or skills empowerment. Employers' attitudes on WIL students at DUT can be characterized as managerial, judgmental, and assessment-skilled behaviours directed at a single student or a group of trainees. Therefore, literature showed that employers were cautioned to make the assessment genuinely, devoid of any bias or hasty generalizations. In addition, employers' thoughts on WIL students at work placements are in high demand for quality monitoring purposes, and selected and placed learners can be eager to learn on the job because, they expect that they will be assessed at the end of the training for possible future hiring. In the academic world, the term "work-integrated learning" can be used at the end of workplace exercise.

Therefore, WIL student assessment can be considered as one part of learning and novice evaluations that enhance their knowledge and performance to meet certaincriteria. Hence, the characteristics for DUT students and the assessment criteria, when lookingat the antecedents of life skills, by identifying gaps in evaluation, competences, and traits among WIL students should be done in all fairness. To make the promotion of student creative thinking through practical actions in the field work areality, the university, in collaboration with industry, must demonstrate a strong dedication andcommitment to providing services to student candidates and the industry in charge of studentsthrough concrete actions of WIL student monitors. Following the processes, the DUT has been working with local enterprises and organizations to provide important WIL student

services to registered students. The next chapter examines the Research Methodology of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the analysis of literature relevant to this study. This chapter discusses the research methodology used in this study. The discussion includes the research design, target population, sample size, and data collection methods. The types of questionnaires, the administration of the questionnaires, data analysis techniques and reliability and validity issues are also addressed. Research methodology refers to the systematic process of collecting, organizing, analysing, interpreting and presenting data in a scientific study. It is a critical component of research that outlines the methods and techniques used to conduct research, ensuring the validity and reliability of the results obtained. Research methodology provides a structured approach to answering research questions and testing hypotheses, guiding researchers through the various stages of their study.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research is a series of steps taken to collect and analyze information in order to increase our understanding of a topic or issue (Creswell 2008: 272). Sekaran and Bougie (2013:95) define research design as a plan for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data, based on the research questions of the study. According to Creswell (2009:3) research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. This author also states that there are three types of research design, namely quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. For this study, mixed methods design, including quantitative and qualitative methods was applied to examine the aim and objectives of the study.

3.2.1 Quantitative research

Babbie (2010:1) states that the quantitative approach stresses the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through questionnaires and surveys and this could be used by manipulating pre-existing statistical data using computational techniques. Babbie further indicates that this approach focuses on generalizing data across groups of people orto explain a particular phenomenon. Williams (2011) concludes that quantitative research creates meaning through objectivity uncovered in the collected data.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

In this study, the qualitative approach explores a real life, contemporary, bounded system or multiple-bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as interviews and observations (Creswell, 2013:97). Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding, based on distinct methodological traditions on inquiry that explores a social or human problem (Khan, 2014:225) and that the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports details of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.

3.2.3 Mixed Methods Research

The better examine employers' perspectives of Durban University of Technology's work integrated learning students, this study employed mixed methods. Therefore, Hesse-Biber (2010:3) asserts that the mixed methods approach is where the researcher employs research design that uses both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a particularquestion or set of questions. Mixed methods research is a methodological approach that combines different research methods to gain a more holistic understanding of a problem or issue. Mixed methods research also allows researchers to better understand the participants' perspectives and experiences.

3.3 RESEARCH PROCESS

According to Weirich, Pearson and Churyk (2010:10) the research process is defined as a scientific method of inquiry and a systematic study of a particular field of knowledge in order todiscover scientific facts or principles. In order to achieve the aim and objectives defined for this study, the researcher followed the following process:

- **Define the research questions**: The first step in examining employers' perspectives of Durban University of Technology's Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students was to clearly define the research questions. These questions focused on understanding how employers view the skills, knowledge, and experience of DUT's WIL students, and how these perceptions influence their hiring decisions.
- **Conduct a literature review**: Before conducting primary research, it was important to review existing literature on the topic. This helped provide context for the study and identify gaps in the current research that the study can address. The literature review included studies on work-integrated learning, employer perceptions of university graduates, and relevant research on DUT's WIL program.
- **Develop a research methodology:** The next step was to develop a research methodology that outlines how the study should be conducted. This included determining the sample size, selecting participants (employers who have hired DUT WIL students), and designing interview questions or surveys to gather data on their perspectives.
- **Collect data:** Data collection was done through interviews and surveys with employers who have supervised or hired DUT WIL students. This data will provided insights into how employers perceive the skills, knowledge, and work readiness of DUT's WIL students, and whether they believe the program adequately prepares students for the workforce.
- **Analyze the data:** Once data has been collected, it was analyzed to identify common themes, trends, and patterns in employers' perspectives of DUT's WIL students. This analysis helped draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the program and potential areas for improvement.

- Draw conclusions and make recommendations: Finally, the research conclude with a summary of the findings and recommendations for DUT to enhance its WIL program based on employers' perspectives. This includes suggestions for curriculum changes, opportunities for skills development, or ways to strengthen partnerships between the university and employers.

3.4 TARGET POPULATION

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:196) population is an entire group of people, events orthings of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. Cox (2011:2) refers to the target population as the entire set of units for which the survey datais to be used to make inferences. Hence, the target population defines those units for which the findings of the survey are meant to generalize. Defining a study population early in the research process assists in assuring the overall validity of the study results (Eldredge, Weageland Kroth, 2014:1). In this study the target population comprises of 170 employers.

3.5 SAMPLING

Charan and Biswas (2013:1) advise that the calculation of the exact sample size is an important part of research design. The sample size of this study consisted of 50 companies. The study targeted selected employers within KwaZulu-Natal province. The researcher used non-probability sampling for this study. In this sampling, all elements inthe population have no equal chance of being considered or chosen (Sekaran and Bougie, 2009). Therefore, the simple, random sampling method was used in this study. This was done by creating a random number table and the participants will be selected accordingly, until the sample size is reached.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

According to Awaisu (2013:1) a data collection tool is the actual process by which the researcher collects the information needed to answer the research questions or problems in collecting data. In this research, the questionnaires and follow-up interviews were used as tools to collect data from the respondents. Follow-up interviews imply that there is ongoing interest in a candidate for a job or position after an initial interview. It suggests that the individual has progressed to the next stage of the hiring process and that the employer is considering them for the position. Follow-up interviews can involve more in-depth discussions, additional evaluation, or clarification of certain points discussed in the initial interview. Overall, it indicates that the employer sees potential in the candidate and is further assessing their qualifications and fit for the role.

3.7 QUESTIONNAIRE

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2010:91) a questionnaire is a pre-formulated set of questions where respondents record their answers. A well-designed questionnaire is going to provide accurate, good quality information (Brace, 2008). This study used closed and open-ended questions. The close ended questions allowed the participant to choose an answer from a pre-determined list of alternatives provided by the researcher. These are commonly used in surveyresearch because they produce more consistent responses and are easier to interpret than open-ended questions (Babbie, 2017:244). The questionnaire applied the Likert scale. Similarly, Kumar 2014:136 states that close ended questions make it easy to answer and code and classifying responses for the researcher.

Open ended questions allow the respondent an opportunity to express themselves with much detail in a way as decided by themselves towards a longer response or a shorter response. The questionnaire included one such open-ended question, using the Likert scale. These were carefully worded to obtain information to answer the research questions and attain the researchobjectives. Open-ended questions were included to allow participants to formulate and expresstheir own ideas and responses.

As explained by Somekh and Lewin (2013:224), questionnaires are a cost effective approach of obtaining structured data from geographically distributed people in a standardized way through self-completion. The population identified for this study were located in KwaZulu-Natal. As high-lighted by Eiselen and Uys 2015:2 a questionnaire has the following advantages:

- They are less expensive to administer than “face to face” interviews;
- They are relatively simple to give and analyze;
- The majority of people are familiar with the notion of a questionnaire;
- They lessen the risk of buyers; and
- They are viewed as less intrusive than telephone or face to face surveys.

3.8 PILOT STUDY

A pilot study excludes problems during the recording of the data and is meant to improve the questionnaire so that respondents will not have difficulties in answering the questions. (Saunders et al., 2016:308) Churchill and Lacobucci (2005:254) state that the real test of a questionnaire is how it performs under conditions of the data collection. The pre-testing of the questionnaire is critical as it allows for a trial run that would identify any issues the respondentsmay experience in completing the questionnaire. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007:470 agree that pre-testing also eliminates problems when analysing data. Van Teijilingen and Hundley (2001) explain that a pilot test is a small trial, where a few examinees take the test andcomment on the mechanics of the test. They point out any problems with the test instruction, instances were items are not clear and formatting and other typographical errors. The pilot study was carried out with 10 of the respondents from the population. The feedback provided by the respondents were considered and minor adjustments to the questionnaire were made.

3.9 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

According to Khan (2014), it is imperative that the researcher discloses all benefits and losses that may affect the participants whilst collecting any kind of information or data from the participants. In this study, the respondents were assured that the information they provided would be safely stored and shredded after five years. Furthermore, the letter of information had all the details and necessary information that the respondents need to know in relationto ethical, validity and reliability matters. It is of paramount importance to measure the accuracy and consistency of the research undertaken. Zohrabib (2013) states that validity is concerned with whether our research is believable and true and whether it evaluates what it is supposed to evaluate. According to Bolarinwa (2015:1) a drafted questionnaire should always be ready for establishing validity.

Bolarinwa concludes that validity relates to the amount of systematic or built-in errors in the questionnaire. For this study, validity checks will help identify grammatical errors before the administration of the instrument. Lincoln and Quiba (1985) as cited by Stahl and King (2020) rely on the four general criteria in their approach to trustworthiness which are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In order to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher followed established research protocols and best practices that include the following:

- Use of reliable and valid research instruments: The researcher ensured that the tools and measurements used in the study are valid and reliable for measuring the study variables.
- Transparent research design: Clearly outlined the research design, methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques in the study to provide transparency to the research process.
- Peer review: the study was reviewed by peers in the field who provided feedback and to ensure the study's credibility.
- Mixed methods: The study used multiple sources of data, and methods to cross-validate the findings and enhance the study's credibility.

- Consistent and systematic data coding: The researcher developed a coding system for data analysis and ensured that it is consistently applied across the study to enhance reliability.

By following these steps, the researcher ensured to enhance the trustworthiness of the study and ensured that findings are credible and reliable.

3.10 DATA ANALYSIS

The data will be analyzed and captured by a statistician and the researcher by using the latest version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The first type of analysis will work at frequencies, for example, the number of times a certain response will be made. Data will be presented by means of graphs (pie charts, and bar graphs).

3.11 ETHICAL CONCERNS

The Researcher had given due consideration to ethical concerns in order to give comfort to therespondents when they had provided feedback to the questionnaire. All respondents were assured that the responses will be treated with confidentiality and that their personal information would remain anonymous throughout the study. The researcher obtained ethics clearance from the DUT Institutional Research and EthicsCommittee (IREC). A letter of informed consent was issued at the commencement of the research questionnaire. During the collection of the data no respondent was coerced to answer the questionnaire asthis was a voluntary approach.

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology that was adopted to conduct this study. The mixed methods design was implemented in this study. Using mixed methods in this study provided a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of a research

aim and objectives. By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this study managed to gather both numerical data and rich, detailed insights from participants. This led to a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of the findings, allowing for a deeper exploration of the research objectives and potentially uncovering insights that could not have been possible with just one method alone. Additionally, using mixed methods helped to validate and corroborate findings by triangulating data from different sources. This contributed to improve the credibility and reliability of the study results, as the researcher cross-checked and verified findings by using different methods. Overall, using mixed methods in this study enhanced the rigor and depth of the research, provided a more robust and thorough analysis of the research objectives. The next chapter presents the research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA AND EXPLANATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, the research design, data collection method and questionnaire designwere discussed. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of the study. Data collected from the responses was analyzed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists), version 20.0 and Tableau. The results are presented in the form of graphs. This was done through both data visualisation and statistical inferences approach with the helpof Tableau, SmartPLS and the thematic analytical software. Thus the universe of this study is that of mixed method, with a longitudinal mode of data collection.

4.2 SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS OF PARTICIPANTS

It is a common technique as well as protocol to examine the historical statistics of respondents of a research because, this history influences the end result of the research study. In checking out some managerial elements similar to this research, many studies (e.g. Borgia and Newman 2012; Nawi 2018), have undertaken to understand the years of experience of the participants in order to be able to figure out how these impact the result. This research had it first area (A) of the questionnaire devoted to biographical information of the participant to identify similar influence on the WIL procedures at the various organisations. In all, 112 useful feedbacks were gathered revealing the following qualities:

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 4.1 summarise the descriptive statistics of respondents who participated in this study. Out of the 170 participants who were invited to participate in this study, the study managed tocollect 112 responses as stated above. This represents 66% response rate. The sample respondents comprised of staff at various levels within the organisation. These calibre of

employees were directly connected with WIL, and therefore, were in a position to offer constructive responses to the study. Their statistical distribution as shown in Table 4.1 displays the quality of this sample for the study.

Table 4.1 Measures Variability Descriptive

Abbreviated constructs	Mean	Median	Min	Max	Standard	Excess Kurtosis	Skewness
3.8. Appl Accep	3.823	4.	2.	5.	0.812	0.236	-0.668
3.3. Assmt Rep	3.664	4.	1.	5.	1.001	1.245	-1.265
3.1. HR	3.832	4.	1.	5.	1.088	1.259	-1.329
3.4. Logbk Ref Wkpl	3.469	4	1.	5.	1.057	0.107	-0.853
3.6. Purp of Sup WIL Ind	4.018	4	2.	5.	0.752	1.636	-1.040
3.7. Std CV aid Preselect	3.752	4.	1	5.	0.826	1.389	-0.940
3.2. Stds Logbk	3.805	4.	1.	5.	0.967	1.675	-1.322
3.5. WIL Info Avail 3.5	3.717	4.	1.	5.	0.973	0.438	-0.921

Num. of Observations 112.

4.2.2 Descriptive statistics research application and relevance

At the end of the day, research needs to notify strategic plans that can have a big effect on a research study's significance and bottom line. The much-loved items of the study procedure are involved in seeking trends in the data as well as seeing where the tale lies. This also delight in assimilating the information and as well as finding the most effective ways to connect all of it searching for viewers in a manner which is useful as well as workable. Mean, median, as well as standard deviation, excess kurtosis and skewness have evolved as important tools

along the way in instructional study. Mean suggests average as well as it is the sum of a set of information split by the number of information. Mean can confirm to be a reliable tool when contrasting various collections of data;and can be labelled as a statistical version of the center of the circulation of the marks (Yıldırım,2021). Median is the centre when the data is prepared in mathematical order. It is one more efficient tool to contrast various collections of data in case scientists require reproducing this research study to confirm it dependability. An unfavorable influence of extreme values is lesseron median compared to typical mean. The standard deviation is described as an estimate of the typical irregularity (spread) of a collection of data while skewness is utilised to measure the balance of a frequency distribution, where the symmetrical distributions is expected to have a skewness of 0 (Yıldırım, 2021; Elyasiani, Gambarelli and Muzzioli, 2021). A collection of data is categorised as balanced if itscentremost point lies in the middle of the scattering and the circulation of ratings to the left andthe right of the centremost point are mirror images of each other (Treiman and Kessler, 2021). A favourable skewness suggests that the tail on the appropriate side of the distribution is longerthan that on the left side, and that most of the values are clustered to the left of the mean (Elyasiani, Gambarelli and Muzzioli, 2021). An adverse skewness value on the other hand suggests that the tail on the left side of the spreading is longer than that on the best side whicha lot of the values are clustered to the right of the mean (Elyasiani, Gambarelli and Muzzioli, 2021).

These can bring about more investigation in case the distribution was expected in someother directions opposite of what was recorded. Scientist further discuss that a reference of big divergence from normality in data distribution isan outright skewness significance higher than 2 (Hernández-Torres, Carminelli-Corretjer,Tollinchi-Natali, Rosario-Hernández, Duarté-Vélez and Rivera-Segarra, 2021). For that reason,the skewness values need to drop in between -1 and also 1 to be thought about as acceptableto prove a normal distribution (Jang, Kim and Kwon, 2021). Kurtosis gauges the degree to which scores gather in the tails of a frequency distribution (Yıldırım, 2021). The original kurtosis estimate is sometimes called kurtosis (appropriate), a well as a regular distribution is referred to as a bell-shaped distribution or a mesokurtic circulation (Furnell, Collins, Kelvin, Baldry, James, Manolopoulou, Mann, Giles, Bermeo, Hiltonand Wilkinson, 2021). A basic tendency that is complied with when utilising statistical plans is to compute the 'excess' kurtosis by subtracting 3 from the kurtosis

(appropriate), and the excess kurtosis must be 0 for a regular distribution (Elyasiani, Gambarelli and Muzzioli, 2021).

A considerable separation from normality as an absolute kurtosis (correct) value > 7 need to call for an investigation into the data as this can create suspicion. Yıldırım (2021) mentions thatthe further a value is from 0, the more likely it is that the information are not normally distributed. Scientist even more indicated that the kurtosis values between -2 and 2 are considered acceptable in order to show normal univariate distribution (George and Mallery, 2010). Nevertheless, kurtosis values between -3 and 3 are also taken into consideration as acceptablefor verifying typical distribution (Walker, Craig, Szeszulski, and Fernandez, 2021).

Table 4.1 above summarises the means, median, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis of each of the eight measures used in this study. As it can be seen from above, the results satisfy the cut-off points discussed above and therefore the study can be considered reliable. The duration of supervision experiences of the various organizations sampled for the study of the WIL program can add some credence to the quality of their responses.

4.3 PERIOD OF STUDENT SUPERVISION

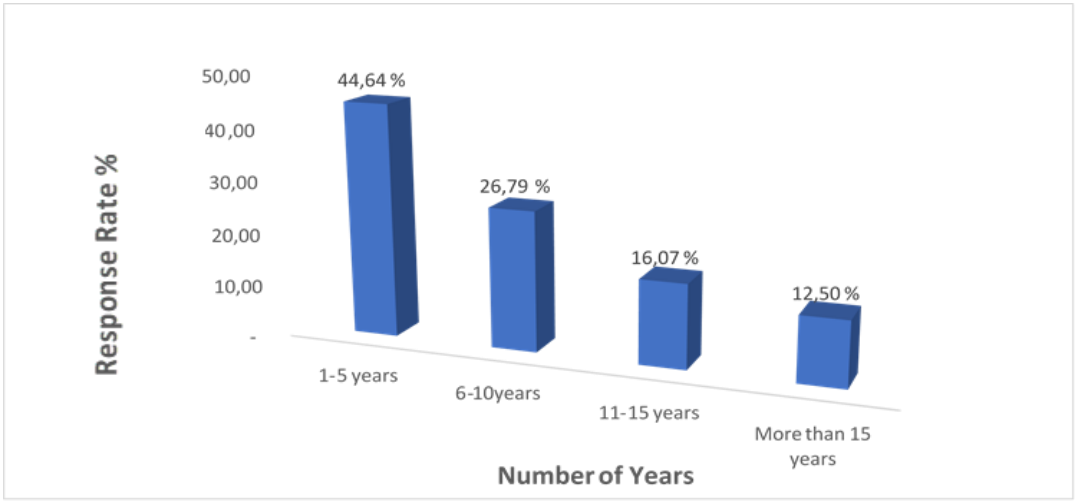


Figure 4.1 Duration involved in supervising Work Integrated Learning Students

From the figure (4.1), it is evidently clear that as the number of years investigated increases, the chosen respondents' decreases, thus making the majority of them to fall within the first 1-10 years (71.43%) of work experience. This is however considered as knowledge that is good enough to give a reliable response to the study. When this is corroborated with the count of students offered the WIL program, it became evident that the respondents actually have some experience regarding students and their WIL program. Additionally, 28.57% of the respondents(industry partners) have provided Wil for a period of 11 years and more, thus showing the respondents' willingness for such an extended period.

4.3 NUMBER OF STUDENT PLACEMENTS

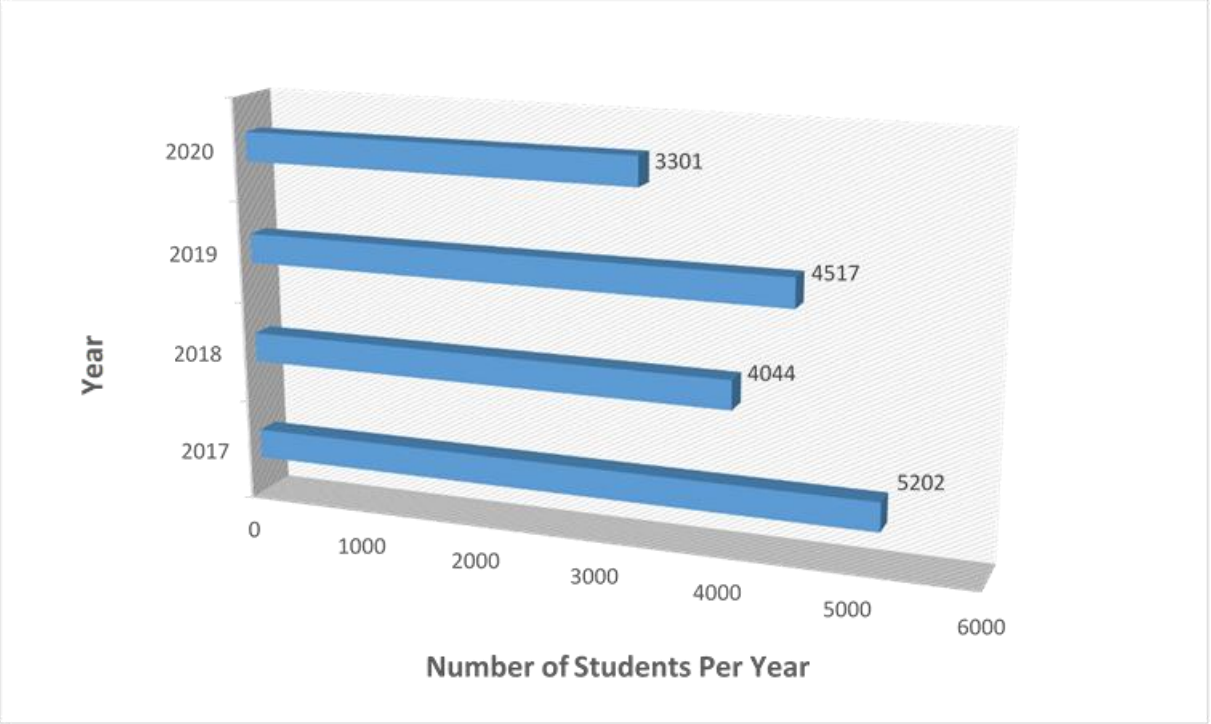


Figure 4.2 Number of WIL students in placement sites between 2017 and 2020.

The year 2017 stood out to be the period that most of the students were offered WIL in the various organisations investigated. Although the year 2020, was marred with serious global pandemic and strict policies a significant intake of students was made possible with the help

of the remote working scenario. This augured well for the various employers because they had noobligation to pay any stipends. Students were also involved in project-based learning during thepandemic. Otherwise, it would have meant that there would be no graduation for those years that were disturbed by the pandemic lockdowns since students will have no WIL experience.

4.4 APPLICATION OF THEORY TO PRACTICE

The students' ability to apply their University knowledge in the work environment can be seen as a measurement to ascertain the level of understanding the students have gained. A variety of factors affects their skills of theory to practice and question 3 presented eight statements to the respondents for a rating according to the Likert scale. The options were; Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

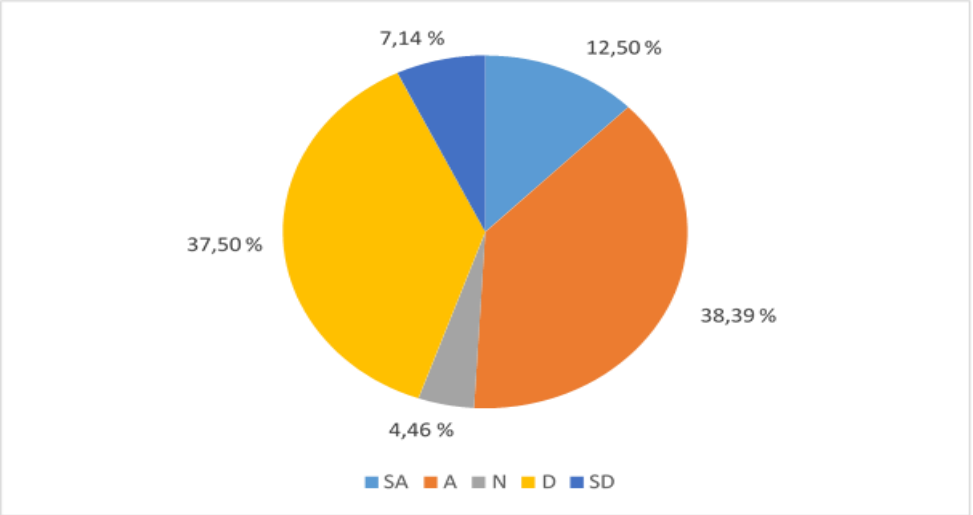


Figure 4.3 The number of hours allocated for Work Integrated Learning is sufficiently allocated

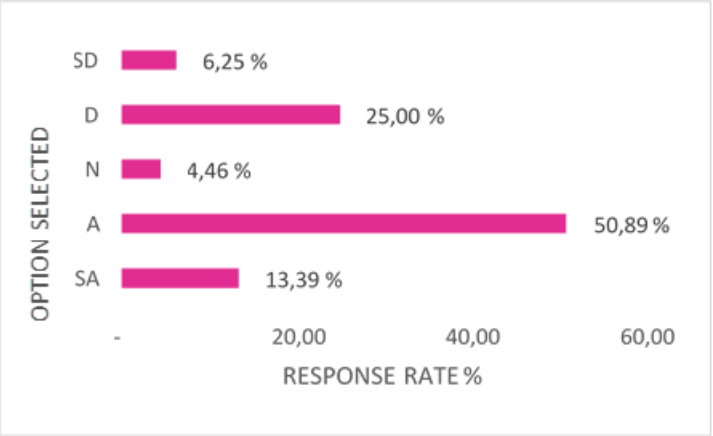


Figure 4.4 The students' logbook represents the outcomes and key deliverables of theory to practice/workplace

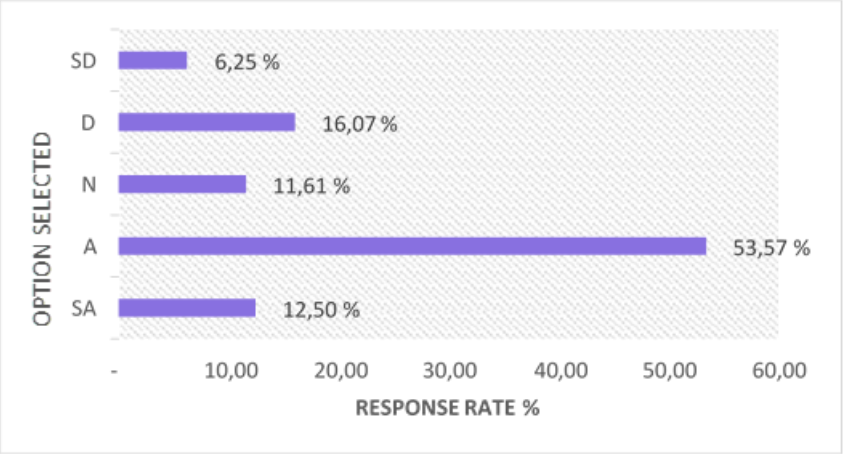


Figure 4.5 The assessment criteria, in the logbook, is sufficiently represented

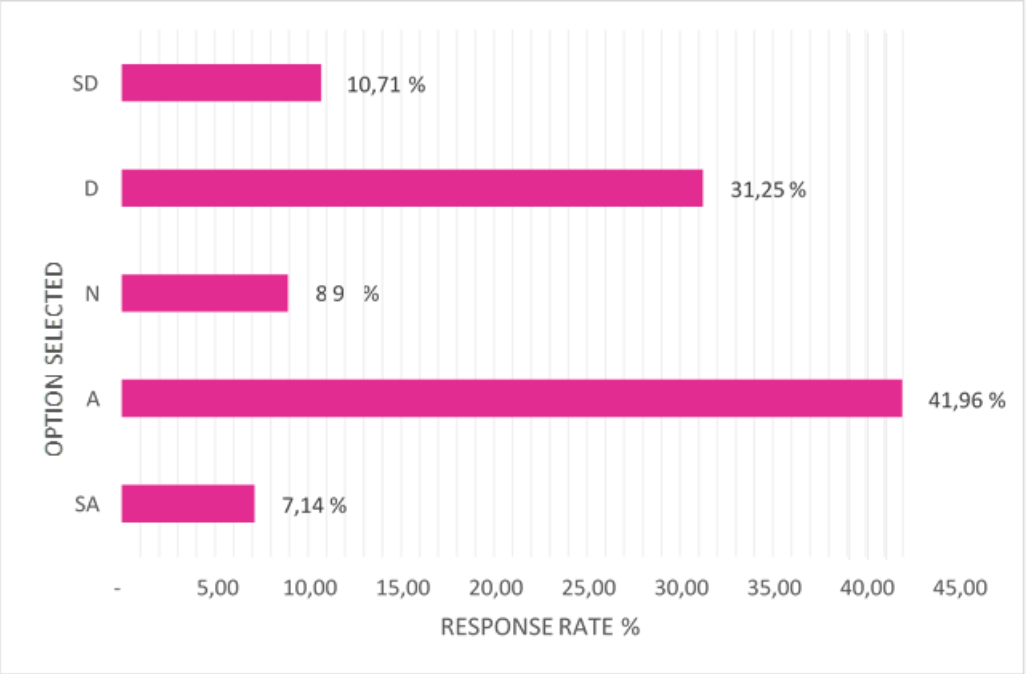


Figure 4.6 Logbooks reflect workplace scenarios

As illustrated above, respondents who agreed to almost all the questions surpassed those of other categories. This is an indication that, the WIL program and its managers have the organisation of the program rightly under control. The Construct Reliability and Validity in Table 4.2 all of which are 1 (perfect measure) also attest to the reliability of the WIL program.

Table 4.2 Construct Reliability and Validity

Measures	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite	Average Variance
3.1.The number of hours allocated for WIL issufficient	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.2. The students logbook represents the outcomes and key deliverables of theory to practice/workplace	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.3. The assessment criteria, in the logbook, issufficiently represented	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.4. Logbooks are a reflection of workplacescenario	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.5. Information regarding WIL is readily available	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.6. The purpose of supporting WIL students isclearly indicated	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.7. A standardised format of CV's assists in faster pre selection and comparison of students	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000
3.8.Application to be accepted as a WIL industry partner is well defined	1.000	1.00	1.00	1.000

The two most central elements of accuracy are reliability or dependability and validity. Reliability is computed by taking a number of dimensions on the exact same things. As a result, inadequate reliability breaks down the precision of a solitary dimension and also reduces the ability to track adjustments in measurements. Cronbach's alpha is a reliability coefficient that suggests exactly how well the things in a set of data are positively associated to each other (Talib, Rubin and Zhengyi, 2013). A reliability coefficient of 0.70 or greater is considered as acceptable cut-off point. Matarazzo, Penco, Profumo and Quaglia, (2021) view dependability as the level to which findings are independent of unintended situations of the study and assumptions of acquiring the exact same results should scientist attempt to replicate the samestudy one more time.

In agreeing with the above, Veneti, Lilleker and Jackson (2021) gave a thumb up to the above interpretation of integrity and added that the tool needed to gauge similarly every single time itis utilized as well as relates to the chance that a research treatment or research method would generate exactly or similar outcomes. Voluntary involvement in this study by individuals was guaranteed to decrease bias. A pilot study was done to enhance the reliability of the questionnaire. The credibility of the set of questions was sustained by the use of an operational supervisor as well as a statistician in practice. Therefore, credibility was to evaluate whether the research study accurately describes the sensation that it is intended to define, which includes the research study layout, approach as well as final thoughts of the research which are expected to consider the validity of the procedure (Thomas, Coleman and Terry, 2021).

Table 4.3 presents another important measure of constructs in a study, which is the T-statistics and the P-values that indicates the statistical significance of the measures.

Table 4.3 Mean, STDEV, T-Values, P-Values

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T-Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P-Values
Appl Accep -> HR	0.035	0.041	0.100	0.348	**0.728**
Assmt Rep -> HR	0.244	0.252	0.130	1.877	**0.061**
Logbk Ref Wkpl_ -> HR	0.155	0.134	0.125	1.239	**0.216**
Purp of Sup WIL Ind_ -> HR	0.038	0.034	0.115	0.331	**0.741**
Std CV aid Preselect -> HR	0.014	0.015	0.099	0.142	**0.887**
Stds Logbk -> HR	0.214	0.219	0.139	1.539	**0.124**
WIL Info Avail -> HR	0.159	0.161	0.100	1.587	**0.113**

HR = The number of hours allocated for Work Integrated Learning is sufficiently allocated. The t-statistic is the ratio of the departure of the approximated value of a criterion from its assumed value to its standard error. It is used in hypothesis screening using learners T-test. The T-statistic is utilized in a T-test to figure out whether to sustain or deny the null theory. It isvery similar to the Z-score however, with the difference that T-statistic is used when the

sample size is tiny as in the case of this study or the population standard deviation is unidentified. For instance, the t-statistic is used in approximating the population mean from a testing distributionof sample means if the populace standard deviation is unknown. It is also used along with P- value when running theory tests where the P-value tells us what the probabilities are of the results to have actually taken place.

The current study did not hypothesise but it tested theoriesthat impacts on quality of WIL. A very small P-value means that such a severe observed end result would certainly be really not likely under the void hypothesis. Reporting P-values of statistical examinations is common practice in scholastic magazines of numerous quantitative areas and so therefore, this study considers it important to report T-statistics. Given the sizes of both the P-value and the T-stats, one can say that the theories used to investigate the current study are worthy of study.

4.5 PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS

Statements were presented in the questionnaire on processes and systems with the use of the Likert scale. Figure 4.7 presents information regarding WIL is readily available. The options were: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

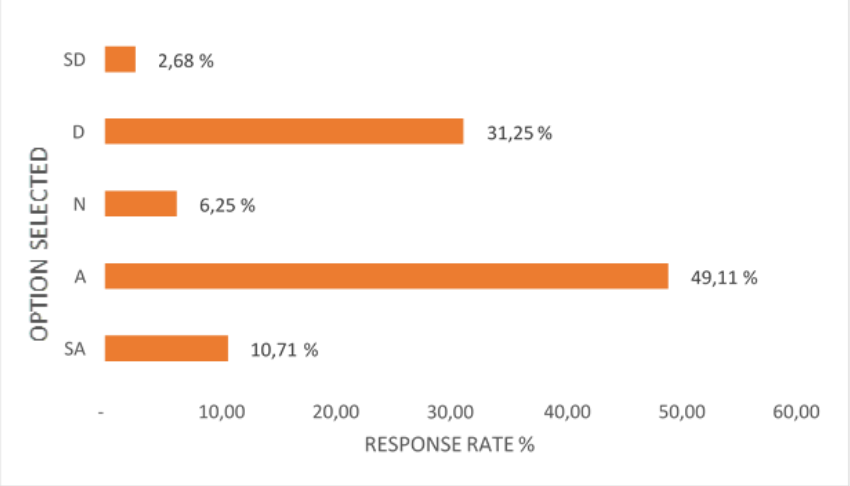


Figure 4.7 Information regarding WIL is readily available

Figure 4.7 illustrates the purpose of supporting WIL students. A cumulative response of 59.82% (A=49.11% + SA=10.71%), is indicative that the respondentsare satisfied with the availability of information. However making information more readily available is a necessity for decision making by respondents and is indicated by a little more than one third (33.93%)(SD=2.68% + D=31.25%) of the responses.

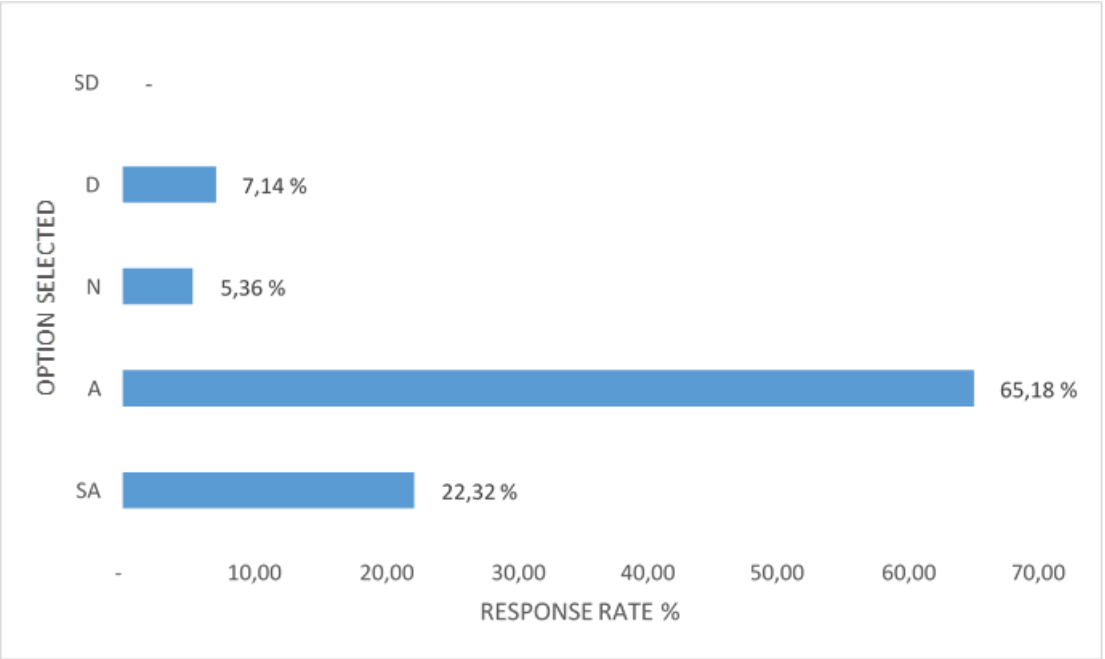


Figure 4.8 Purpose of supporting WIL students

With responses of 65.18% and 22.32% for agree and strongly agree respectively, it clearly illustrates the university has explained the purpose of WIL. Critically so, is how it supports the students ensuring the student graduates. Figure 4.8 illustrates the application to be accepted as a WIL industry partner.

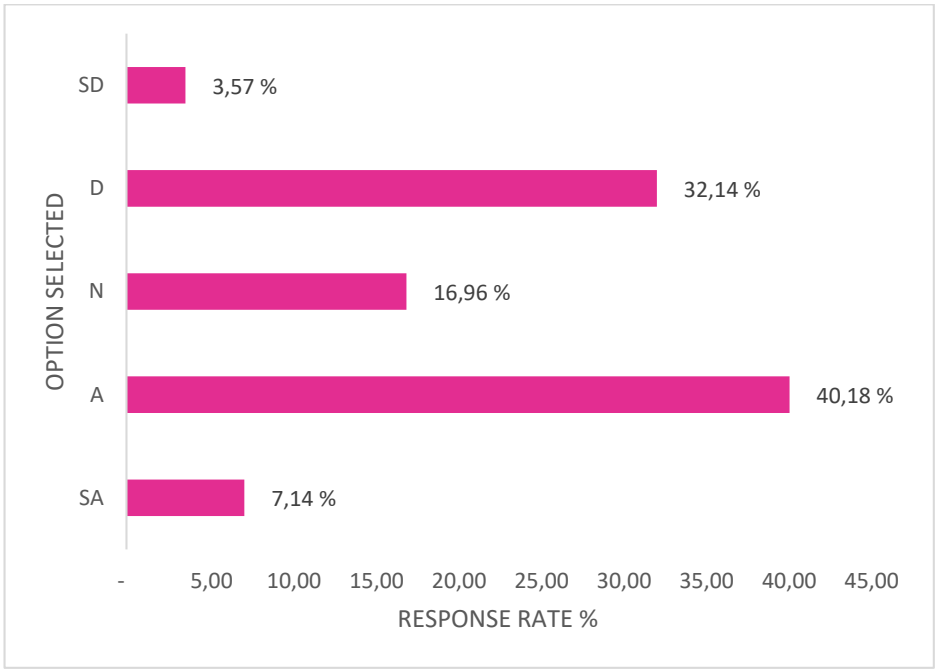


Figure 4.9 Application to be accepted as a WIL industry partner

Less than half, 47.32% (SA=7.14 + A=40.18) of the respondents find that the application to beaccepted as a WIL partner, well defined. Hence, with the view to increase the number of industry partners, the process that allows for partnerships necessitates clear explanations. Lengthy process will only serve to discourage potential partnerships.

Figure 4.10 shows the standardised format of CVs that assists in faster pre-selection and comparison of students

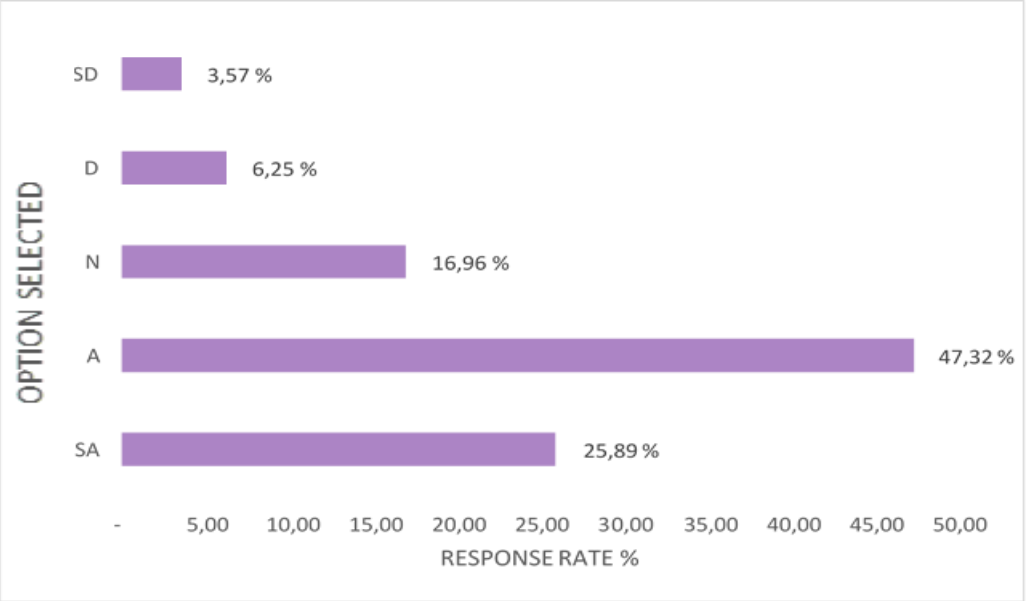


Figure 4.10 Standardised format of CVs that assists in faster pre-selection and comparison of students

Standardization allows for easier comparisons as well as a faster turnaround time to assess information. The sections of the CV providing information can be commonly populated throughthe development of a template. The response rate of 47.32% and 25.89% of agree and stronglyagree respectively, is a clear indication of the necessity for such an enhancement.

Figure 4.11 demonstrates the responses to queries and requests, which were attended to promptly/timeously.

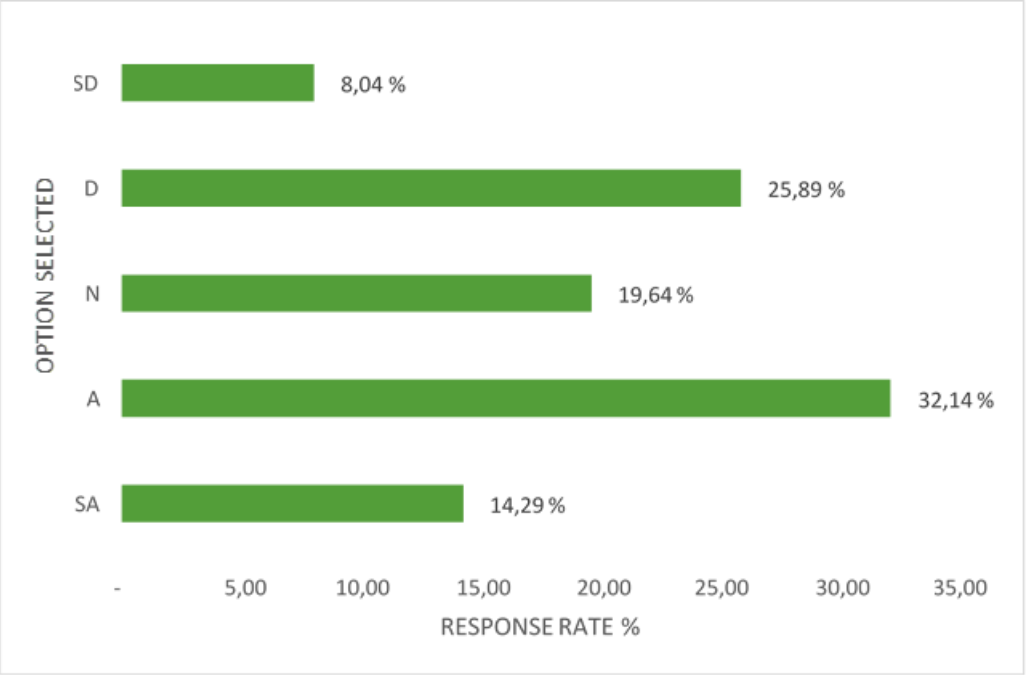


Figure 4.11 Responses to queries and requests are attended to promptly/timeously

The mixed responses per above shows that there is a need to improve on responding and attending to queries so as to ensure that the university maintains a good image.

In order to gauge the importance of the WIL program to the University, as it directly relates to the quality of the program as an essential requirement for graduation, the respondents were asked “Were students monitored by the department”

4.6 MONITORING OF STUDENTS

Respondents were requested to identify whether the students were monitored. This information provides an assessment as to the engagement the university, through the WIL coordinators, have during the placements

From the figure (4.12), one could see that the students were seriously monitored by their respective DUT departments. A massive (77.68%) responses for yes with only (22.32%) for Nos, indicates the DUT commitment to visit many organisations to assess students. Following from this result, the University authorities are advised to keep the momentum going as it paid off after all the efforts. If WIL is really an essential part of the learning curve, then the outcome from this investigation should be maintained unabated.

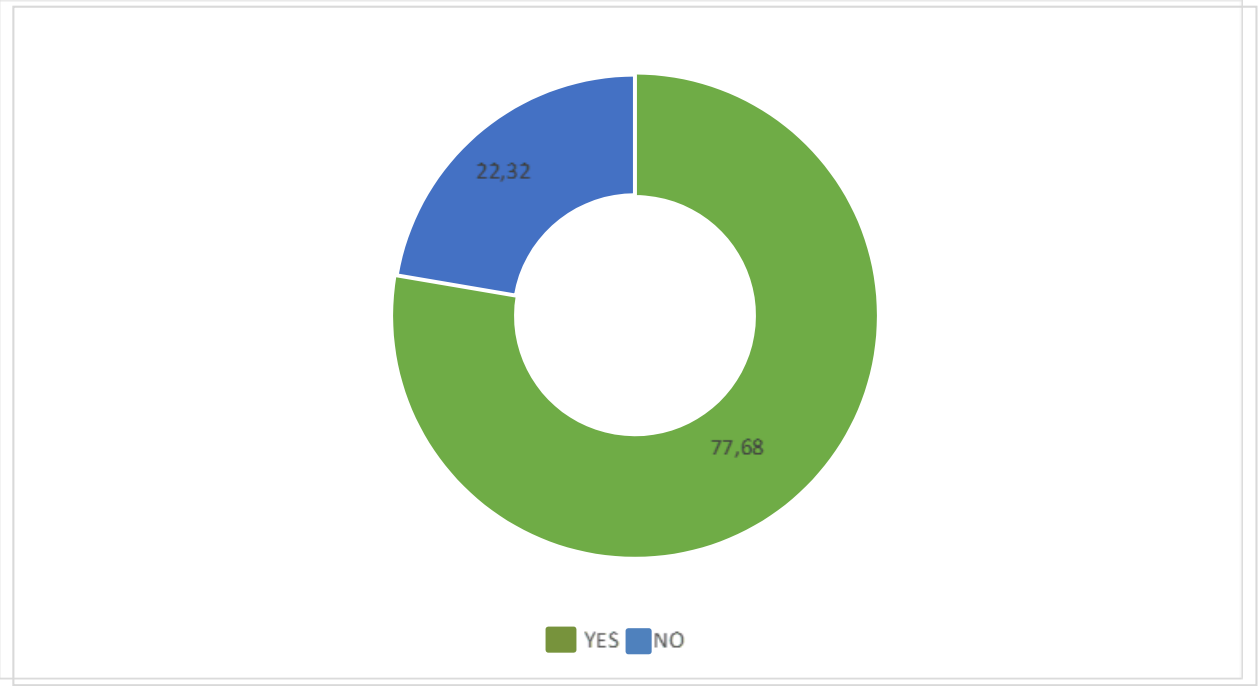


Figure 4.12 Where students monitored by the department

Seeking for a more detailed response from the participants, figure 4.12 sought to follow figure 4.13 with a probe to investigate the number of times and periods their respective departments monitored those students during their WIL program

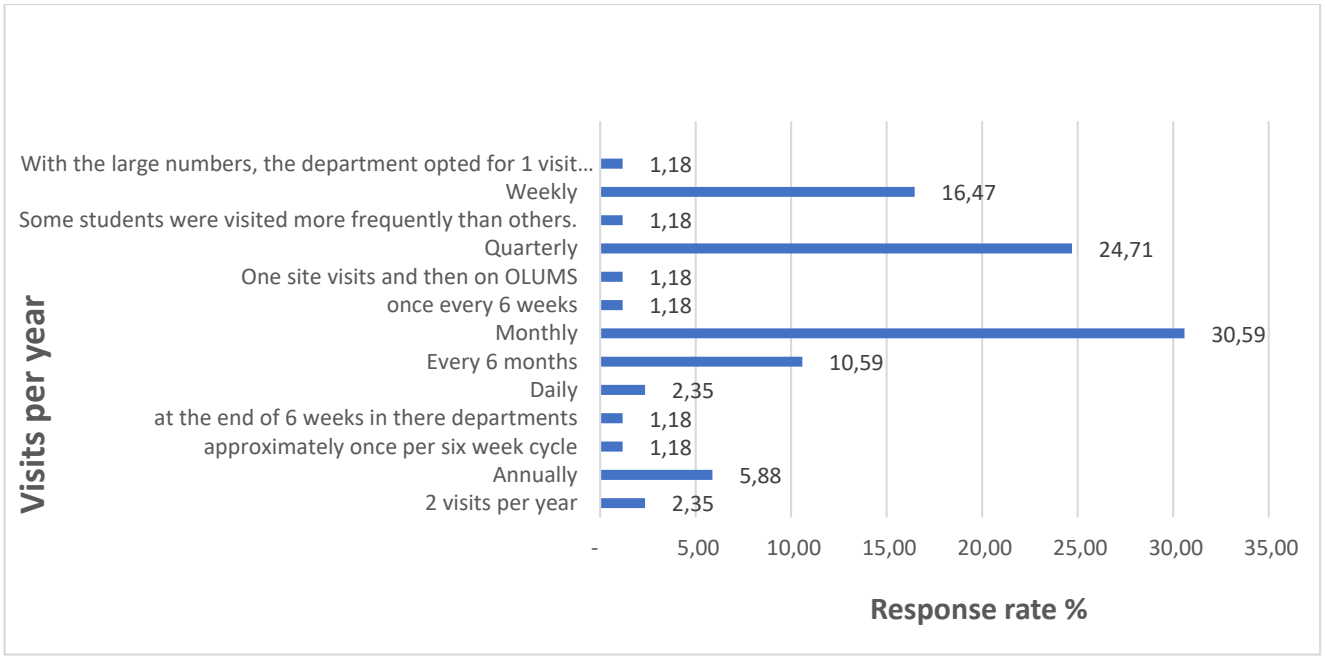


Figure 4.13 Frequency of monitoring

From the above it can be seen that monthly (30.59%), quarterly (24.721%) and weekly (16.47%) were the most favourable responses. Of concern is the balance of the limited number of visits, which could contribute to the students' poor understanding in the work place. Furthermore, some of the limited visits may be because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.7 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY KNOWLEDGE

Work environments have progressed with the use of various information technology software and other applications for their performance

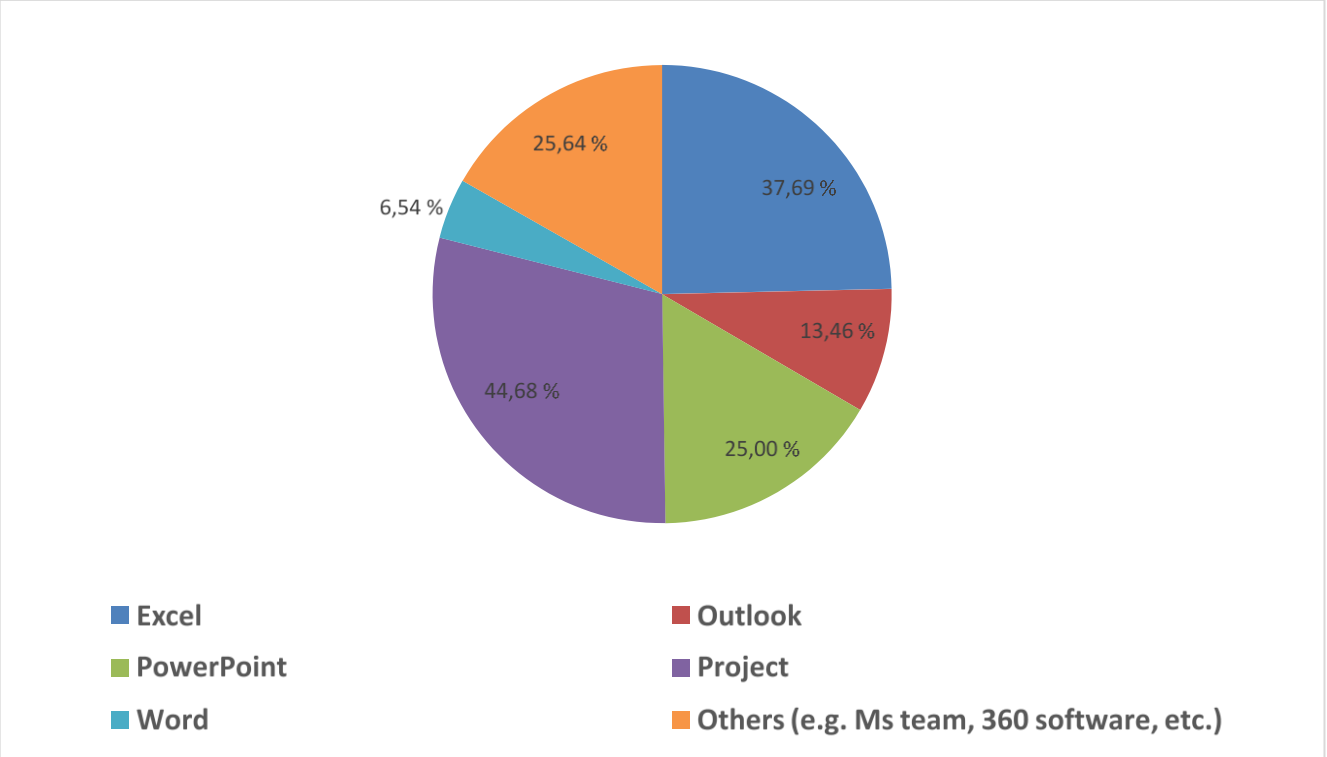


Figure 4.14 MS packages

The abilities of the WIL students were measured in terms of basic Microsoft suites. So far as excel was concerned 37.69% of the respondents felt that they were average or fair and 24.62% said they were good. Talking about Ms Outlook, 50% of the respondents rated the students to be good, and 36.54% said they were average while 13.46% said they were fairly okay. 43.27% ratedthem average for PowerPoint, 25% and 31.73% as fair and good respectively. Ms Project revealed a rating of 43.62% for average, 44.68% for fair and 11.7% for good.

For Ms Word, 29.91% gave them average, 6.54% fair and 63.55% good. Others such as Ms Team and 360 software scored 53.85% for average and only 25.64% and 20.51% for fair and good respectively. In an era of information technology such as the current dispensation, the studentsare expected to be better equipped.

4.8 STUDENT SKILLS

The study went on to investigate the skills of the students. Respondents were required to rate the students as follows; P=poor, A=average, G=good, E=excellent.

The graphs presented below displays the responses.

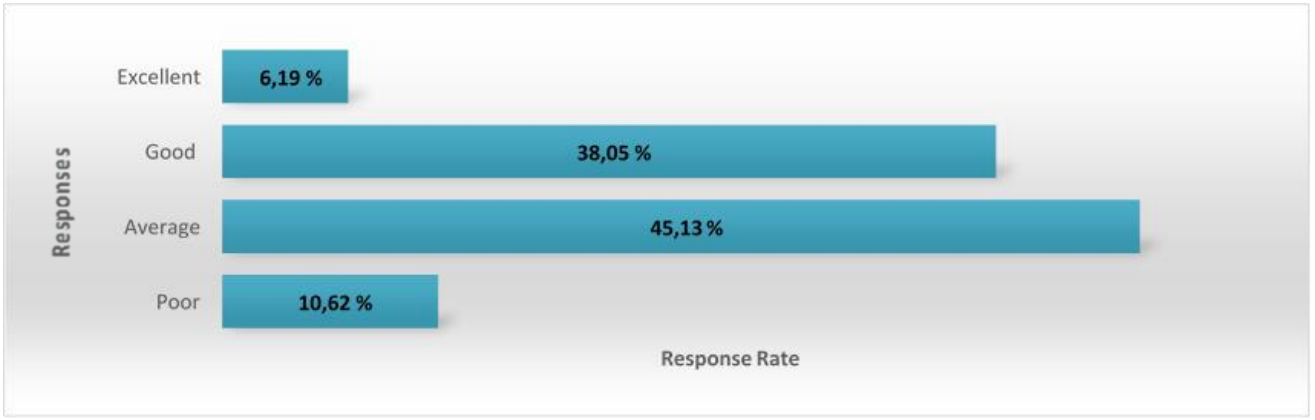


Figure 4.15 Analytical thinker

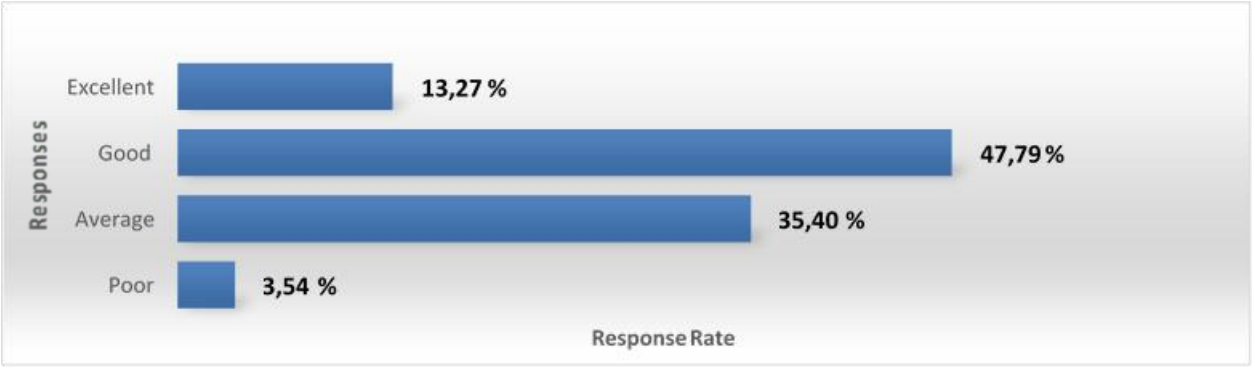


Figure 4.16 Attitude to the work situation

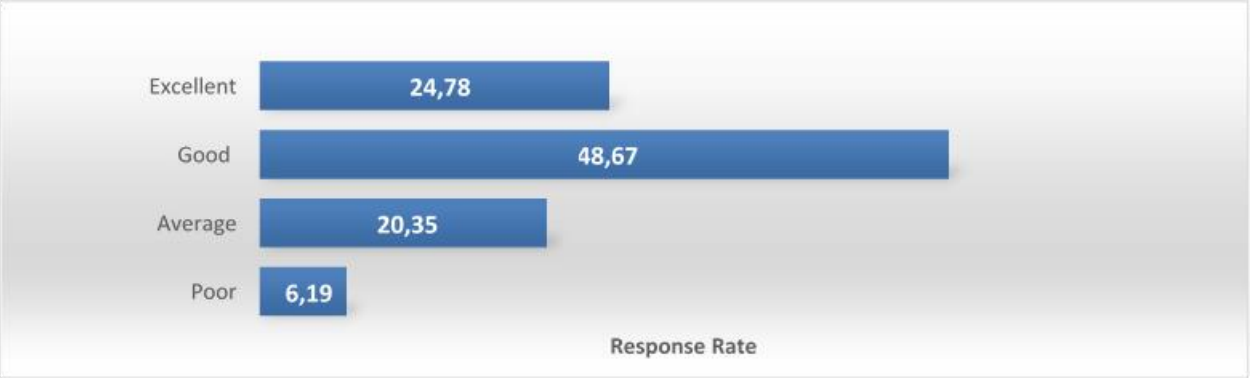


Figure 4.17 Desire to learn and continue learning

Figure 4.18 Initiative

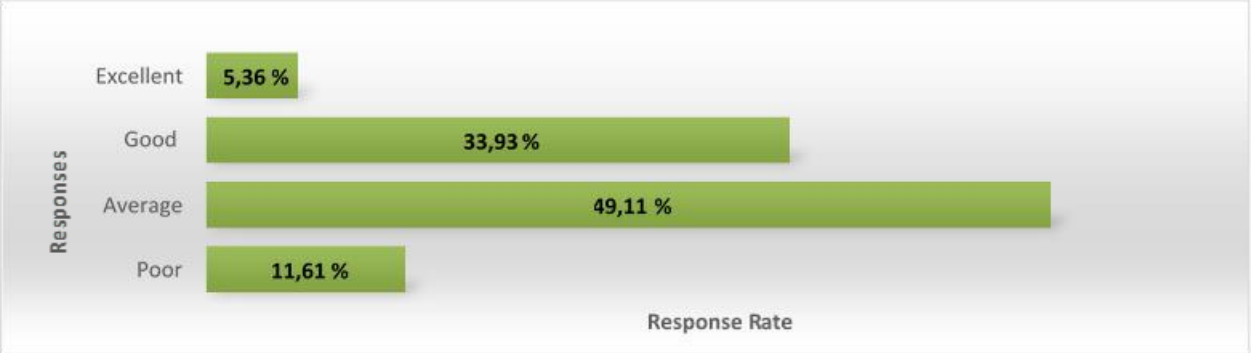
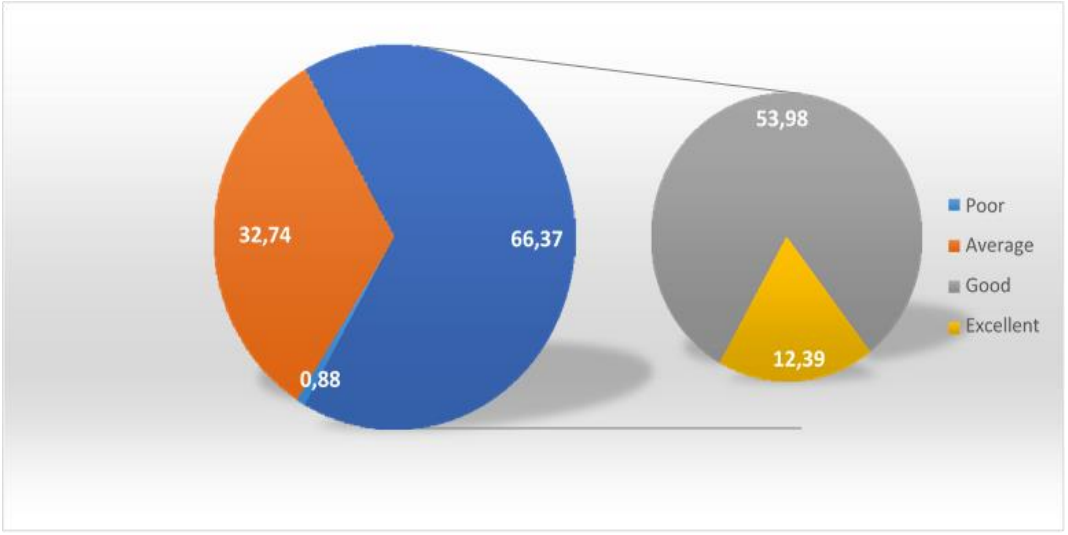


Figure 4.19 Problem solving

Cognitive skills are important aspects of students in order to function optimally at the workplace. In light of this, the study investigated the WIL students' skills for analytical thinking, attitude to the work situation, desire to learn and continue learning, initiative and problem solving skills. The outcomes are displayed in the above figures whereby a good rating was recorded for analytical thinking (38.05%), attitude to the work situation (47.79%), and desire to learn and continuelearning (48.67%), for initiative (36.61%) and for problem solving (33.93%). The rest of the scores as displayed above, serves as a reminder to both the WIL students and DUT to know how employers think about them so far as their cognitive skills are concerned. The scoring of excellent for analytical thinking (6.19%), attitude to the work situation (13.27%), desire to learnand continue learning (24.78%), initiative (10.71%) and problem solving skills (5.36%) need to be worked on for better rating in the future as the job market keeps becoming difficult to get intowith each passing day. Poor scores were: 10.62% for analytical thinking, 3.54% for attitude to the work situation, 6.19%for desire to learn and continue learning, 12.50% for initiative and 11.61% for problem solving. The rest of the measurements in the figures below were prepared for team work and cooperation, understanding of work place practices, verbal communication, and written communication.

Figure 4.20 Teamwork and co-operation



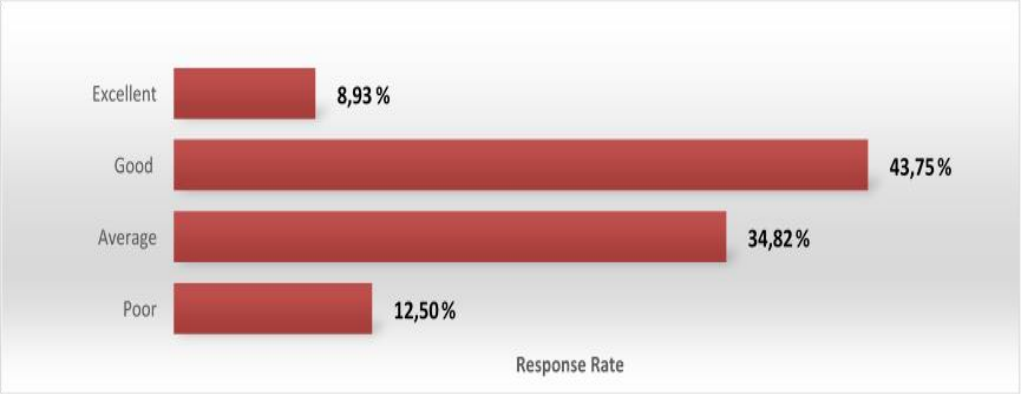


Figure 4.21 Understanding the work place practices

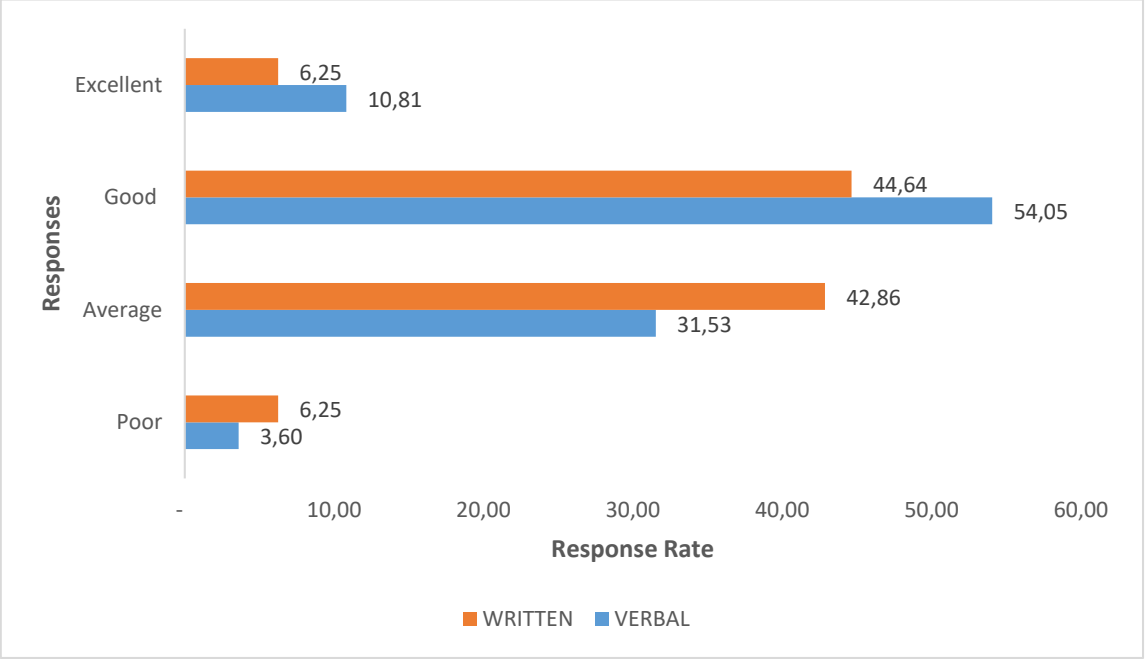


Figure 4.22 Communication

Again, the good scoring was the most prominent one on 53.98% for team work and cooperation, 43.75% for understanding of work place practices, 54.05% for verbal communication, and 44.64% for written communication. Poor scores were the least, of 0.88% for team work and cooperation, 12.50% for understanding of work place practices, 3.60% for verbal communication, and 6.25% for written communication.

This bodes well for the future endeavours of the WIL students. The average scores seem to have followed the good rating at 32.74% for team work and cooperation, 34.82% for understanding of work place practices, 31.53% for verbal communication, and 42.86% for written communication.

4.9 PREFERRED METHOD/S OF INTERVIEWS OF STUDENTS

Here, the study intended to know which methods employers preferred to interact with students after the arrangements have been made between them and the University. This was meant tohint to the university on how to prepare them on how to use those medium of interviews. Most of the organisations (41.07%) selected face to face, followed by face to face at the organisation or through multimedia such as Skype, WhatsApp, Ms Teams and so forth. A further 8.93 % ofthe respondents indicated face to face at the University.

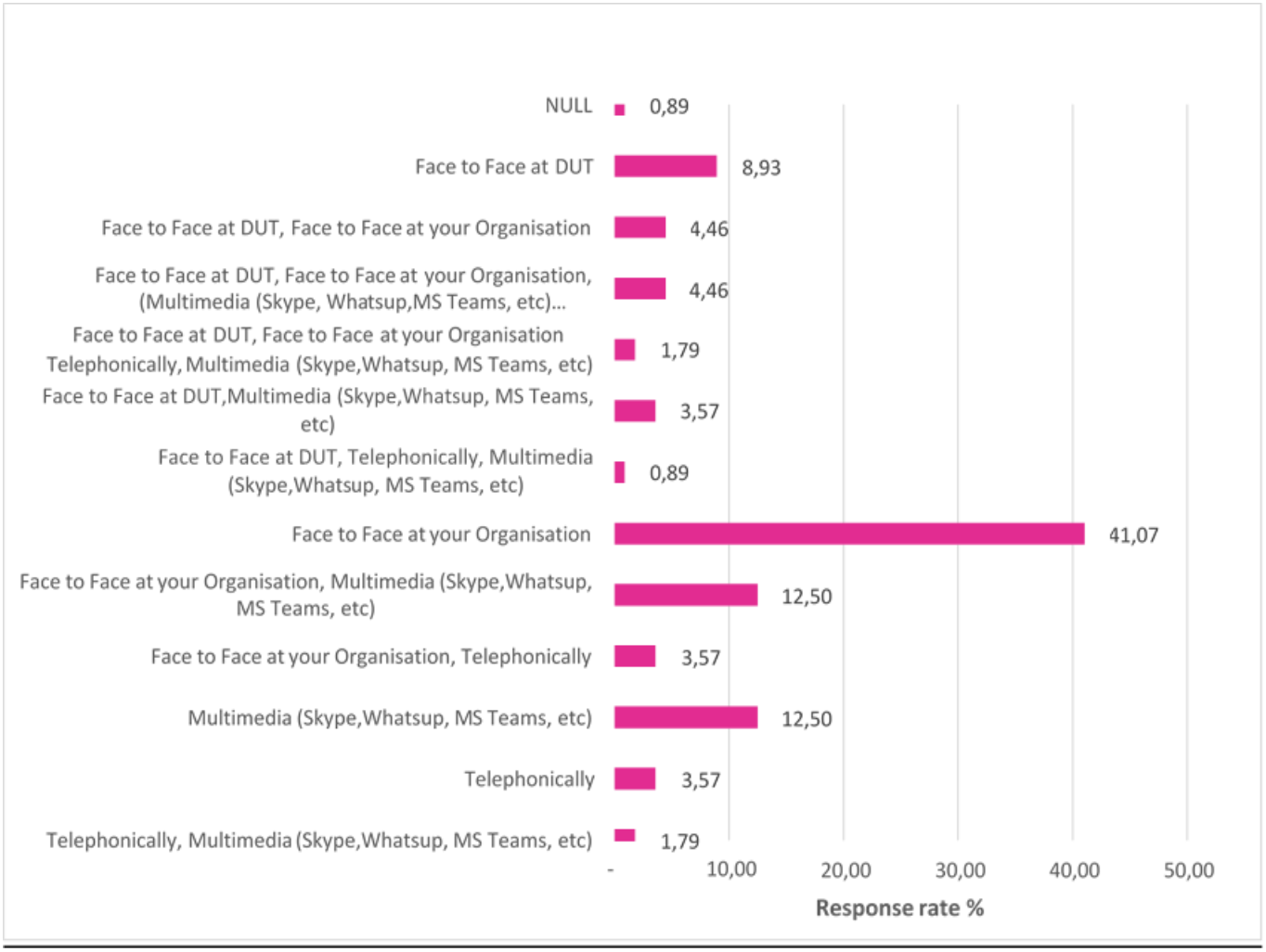


Figure 4.23 Preferred method/s of interviews of students

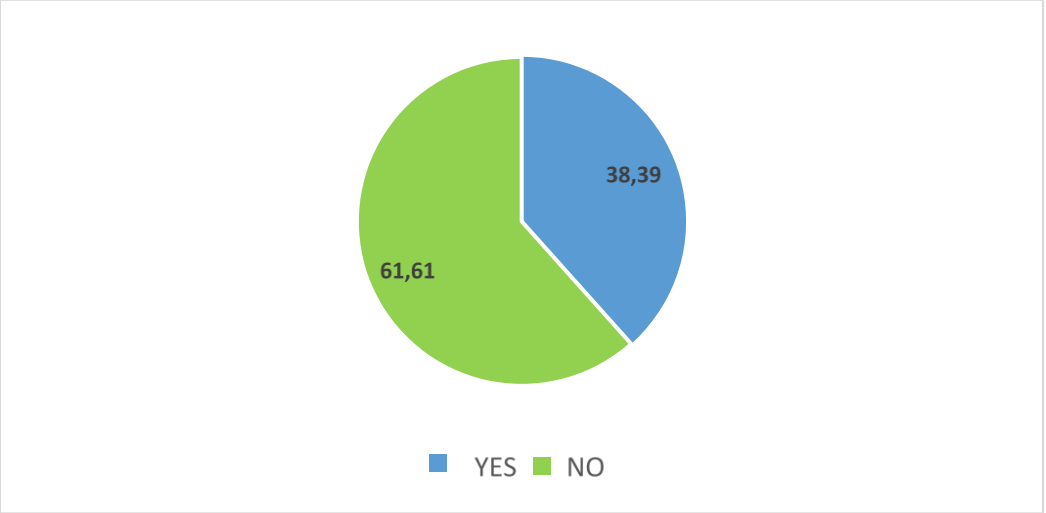


Figure 4.24 Is your organization aware of the students' insurance and medical aid details?

Figure 4.24 turns out to depict a worrisome scenario as most of the employers of the WIL students indicated that they were not aware of the students' insurance and medical aid details. This was seen as a problem by this study because organisations need to know this so that in case of any eventuality the employer will know exactly what to do. Therefore, a whopping 61.61% of respondents indicating that they are not aware of such policies does not speak well for both the students and the hosting organisation.

The problematic responses from figure 4.25 was however leveraged by the following question which was meant to find out if the organisations were aware of the process to be followed during a students' injury. With 63.39 % of the organisations answering in affirmative, it gave the impression that they know exactly how to deal with it.

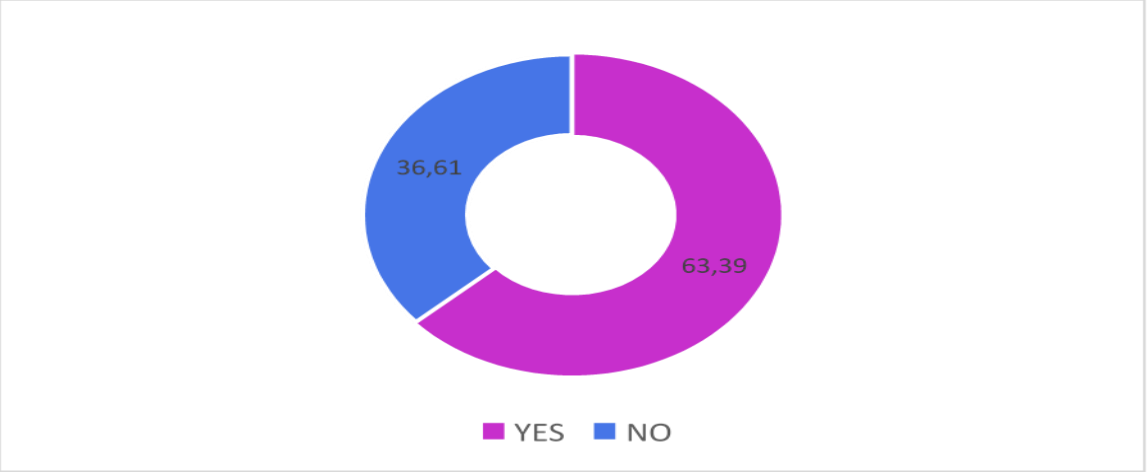
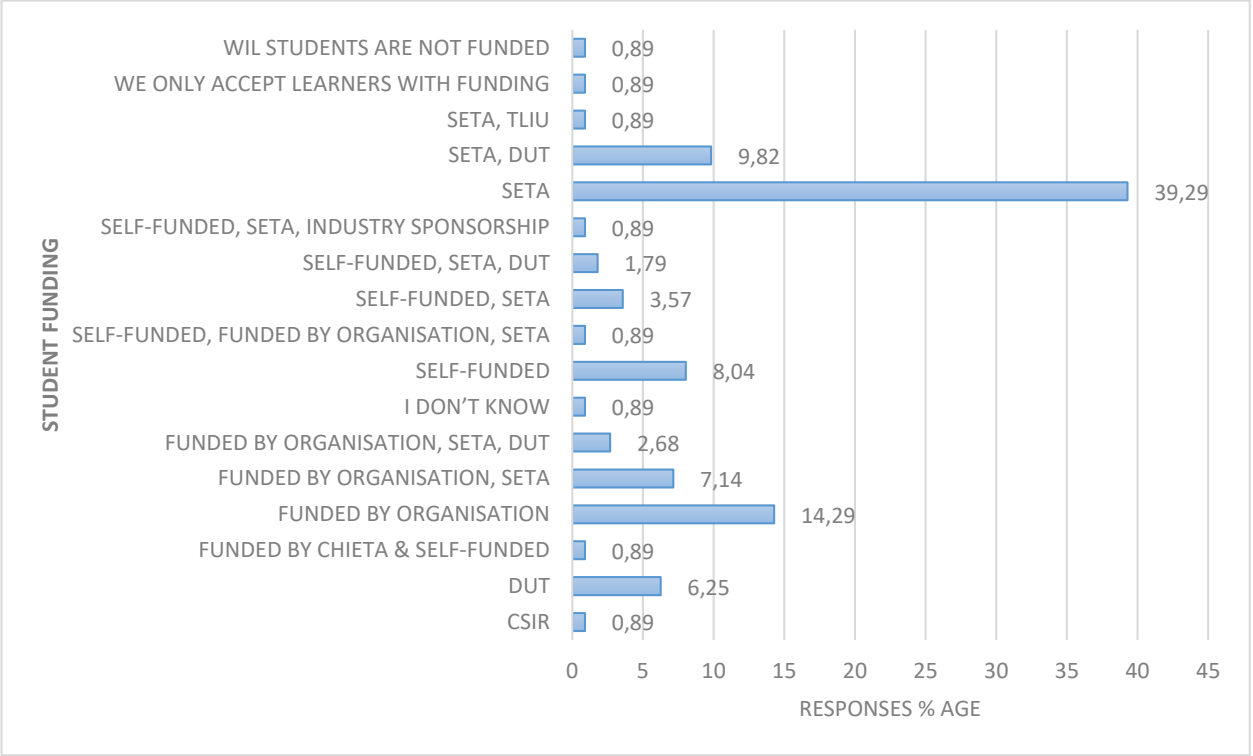


Figure 4.25 Is your organization aware of the process to be followed during a students'injury?

4.10 FUNDING OF WIL STUDENTS

The study then investigated how the WIL students were supported during their placement as reflected in Figure 4.26 below



According to Lettieri (2024), it is not a strict requirement for organisations to pay WIL students otherwise, it will act as a disincentive to them to hire graduates. Nesemann, Morocho-Alburqueque, Quincho-Lopez, Muñoz, Liliana-Talero, Harding-Esch, Saboyá-Díaz, Honorio-Morales, Durand, Carey-Angeles, and Klausner, (2022) argue that a stipend offered to trainees can help them pay some of their personal expenses, including travelling and transportation cost to and from the workplace. Efficient WIL program in today's Higher Education involves a financial budget of stipend and the willingness to motivate the students to complete the training. A stipend is an amount paid to address various demands and expenses for an individual. Though not salary and even smaller than wages in most cases, stipends can help alleviate the little hustles of new graduates.

It came to light that, the sector for education and training agency (SETA) bears the bigger costof the WIL learnership (39.29%), followed by the organisations (14.29%). A combination of SETA and DUT funding revealed a (9.82%) response while 8.04% responded that students were self-funded. The University as a funding source indicated a response rate of 6.25%. If the universities want to increase the number of student placements for the WIL program, then the University will have to find a way to deal with the cost borne by the hiring organisations as this could serve as a disincentive to them to offer WIL to students.

4.11 STUDENT EMPLOYMENT

With the South African unemployment rate increasing there is a need to secure employment ofthe DUT students. Below is the response as to whether the industry partners would consider the WIL students for employment.

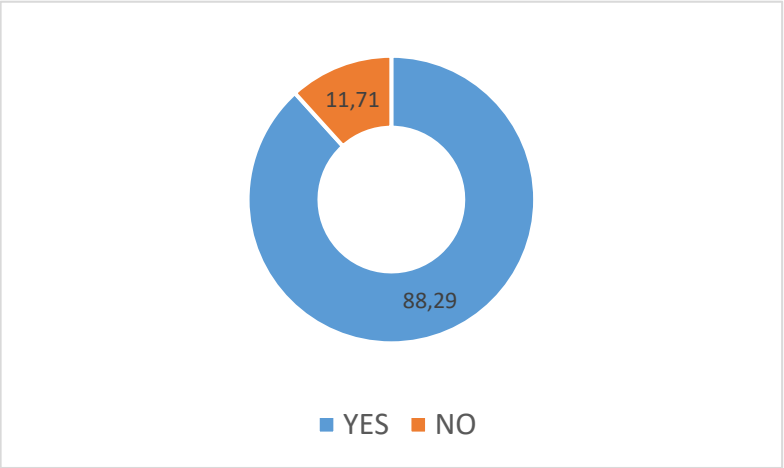


Figure 4.27 Offer of employment to WIL students

A very affirmative response rate is a clear indication that the WIL students are positively viewed by the industry partners and that when the opportunity of employment arise, these students willbe considered.

Edwards (et al., 2015) asserts that, employers are now demanding that graduate candidates have appropriate experience, proof of work-readiness and also the technical abilities to functioneffectively in the office.

4.13 Inference of Qualitative results

This section presents the results of qualitative study, which are supporting quantitative results.

Respondents were asked to identify qualities they expect from the students and the WIL program. Various comments were gathered, and these were grouped into themes with the help of the thematic software as follows. Table 4.4 illustrates the view of respondents aligned to WIL.

Table 4.4 General inference from placement criteria results

FACTORS	**MAIN THEMES** **QUALITATIVE RESULTS**	**SUB-THEMES** **QUALITATIVE RESULTS**
Experience	Improved trainee individual skills	• Students development of professional identity • Theoretical knowledge advancement and skills transferability • Abilities to communicate with people in diverse functions • Being able to partake in teamwork and be capable to solve problems and self-management • Abilities to improve own digital skills and literacy • Acquire a higher level of practice and be able to understand what ethical practice means. • Ability to communicate, chair skills experiences and practical trend • Ability to strengthen mutual respect and relationships • Ability to strengthen mutual recognition and teamwork importance.

Appropriate Education	Co-Operative Education	• Co-operative Education should be comprehensive • Approach to higher education that integrates academic learning with real-world experience gained via collaboration between the university, its students, and industry • WIL students' fundamental understanding of the workplace • Understanding in order to choose and attract good supervision • students equity, as well as rights and welfare-skill
Importance of WIL	Training as a catalyst to reduce unemployment	• The South African government plan to reduce unemployment is sought by the education and academic institutions • Co-operative learning should cover the gaps between academic taught learning subjects and the WIL student practices.

		• DUT Co-operative learning should serve as a link between the university, em professional associations, and other relevant groups, such as student organizations. • Experiential learning/in-service training (IST) should entail placing a student in a relevant industry for WIL • The focus should be on the student learning by doing. • Student must not earn a Diploma until the required time in industry is fulfilled • Specialist personnel and workplace supervisors/mentors must organize, coordinate, and supervise the experiential learning. • The processes for evaluation must be properly followed. • There is a need to build sustainable working relationships/partnerships

		between University and the organisations • There should be corporation between the public sectors and the colleges for co-operative education to succeed
Possibility of remote working	Discipline	• The students must ensure that they are discipline when working from home • They must complete the required work on time • Time management and self-management should be taught as key element at schools
Relevant Curriculum for student	Organisations to be part of curriculum development	• The sectors must be involved in the development of curriculum that is relevant to the demands of the industry • The student must have the necessary skills and experience to work in the business • Industry partnerships should include not only

		placement of WIL, but also graduate positions • The assessment and placement criteria for WIL students need to be taught at schools
WIL efficacy	WIL program organisation	• WIL students should be part of a South African project that selects registered students from among the novices for professional training • WIL student recruitment and file organisation must be done in accordance with the institution's rules • DUT WIL's development should follow government and industry-established standards for improving employability skills • The institutions should set a standard for improving job placement skills and reducing unemployment among newcomers
Organisational requirements	Adherence to the organisational principles	• Student recruiting should entail more than just matching a student's

		profile to a suitable institution. • A variety of factors must influence both students' choices and their chances of success • All of these variables should be addressed in good student recruiting tactics so that students have all of the information they need to make informed decisions
Resources	Availability of supportive systems	• DUT WIL's development must follow government and industry-established standards for improving employability, skills and support. • The education sector should set standards for improving job placement skills to reduce unemployment among novices

Following from Table 4.4 expression by the respondents in line with the objectives defined for this study, the respondents' views and opinions were centred on the perspective of understanding the placement criteria to as they will serve as a yardstick for performance management on students training at the university. the themes

gathered could be summarised as follows: Students development of professional identity is very important and should be based on theoretical knowledge and skills that are transferable to the job market. The ability to communicate with people in diverse functions by students is importance and the university should do well to work on this aspect. Being able to partake in teamwork and be capable to solve problems and self-management are some of the qualities respected by the employers at the job market. Abilities to improve own digital skills and literacy, acquire a higher level of practice and be able to understand what ethical practice means is very much appreciated by employers. This must be communicated, to demonstrate acquired skills experiences and practical trend by students. It also came to light that, ability to strengthen mutual respect and relationships, mutual recognition and teamwork importance must be inculcated in the Co-operative Education of the university and should be comprehensively taught. Approach to higher education that integrates academic learning with real-world experience gained via collaboration between the university, its students, and industry must be emphasised in the curriculums for the students. WIL students' fundamental understanding of the workplace is importance so that they do not display naivety during their tenure of training.

This basis quality of workplace understanding is important in order to choose and attract good supervision and support on the job. Students' equity, as well as rights and welfare-skill are also important criterial for the organisations especial in the South African contest. The South African government plan to reduce unemployment is sought by the education and academic institutions, and this must be augmented with Co-operative learning that covers the gaps between academic learning subjects and the WIL student practices. DUT Co-operative learning should serve as a link between the university, employers, professional associations, and other relevant groups, such as student organisations. This will help the WIL program to go far. Experiential learning/in-service training (IST) should entail placing a student in a relevant industry for WIL and the focus should be on the student learning by doing to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Some of the organisations were with the view that, students must not earn a Diploma until the required time in industry is fulfilled so as they can go to the job market ready made for employment.

To this end, specialist personnel and workplace supervisors/mentors must organize, coordinate, and supervise the experiential learning and the processes for evaluation must be properly followed. Furthermore, there is a need to build sustainable working relationships/partnerships between the University and the organisations so that, there can be corporation between the public sectors and the colleges for co-operative education to succeed. In case it becomes necessary to work from home, the students must ensure that they are discipline when working from home.

They must complete the required work on time, and this should be enabled by time management and self-management which should be taught as key element at schools. The employment sectors must be involved in the development of curriculum that is relevant to the demands of the industry so that the student will have the necessary skills and experience to work in the business world. The industry partnerships should include not only placement of WIL, but also graduate positions, and the assessment and placement criteria for WIL students need to be taught at schools. WIL students should be part of a South African project that selects registered students from among the novices for professional training. Again, WIL student recruitment and file organisation must be done in accordance with the institution's rules. Especially, DUT WIL's development should follow government and industry-established standards for improving employability skills.

The institutions should set a standard for improving job placement skills to reduce unemployment among newcomers, and student recruiting should entail more than just matching a student's profile to a suitable institution. A variety of factors must influence both students' choices and their chances of success, and all of these variables should be addressed in good student recruiting tactics so that students acquire all the information they need to make informed decisions. DUT WIL's development must follow government and industry-established standards for improving employability, skills and support, and the education sector should set standards for improving job placement skills to reduce unemployment among novices.

4.14 Summary

In chapter it was found that stipends for students contribute positively for their placements as it reduces the financialburden on the industry partners. It can be further argued that industry partners are alsoreluctant to receive students for WIL placement, as time is lost in the allocation of staffingfor the students, affecting loss in productive operations. The next chapter provides the conclusion and recommendations of the study, conclusions drawn from the data collected and pertinent recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter focused on the analysis and interpretation of the results gathered from the questionnaire. In this chapter, an overview of all chapters is presented. It presents the summary of the key findings; the limitations of the study; the recommendations from the study;recommendations for further research; and the conclusion to the study.

This chapter explains how the research aim and objectives were achieved. It also highlights thesummary, conclusions on the research findings, recommendations to mitigate the findings andthe limitations of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to evaluate the employers' perspectives of Work Integrated Learning (WIL) students from Durban University of Technology.

In order to achieve the above aim, the following objectives were addressed.

- To examine the perceptions of employers on the quality of the DUT WIL students
- Identify the shortfalls in the competencies of and attributes of the DUT WIL students
- Assess the placement criteria of the DUT students

5.3 ATTAINMENT OF STUDY OBJECTIVES

The following discussion indicates how each of the objectives was achieved.

Objective 1: To examine the perceptions of employers on the quality of the DUT WIL students

Through continuous assessment including reviews at Advisory Boards the analyses of the student's ability to apply theory to practice is a necessity. The industry partners are best placed to carry out such assessments together with the support of the relevant WIL Co-Ordinator.

In responding to the number of hours that have been allocated for WIL, it came to light that the industry partners were averaged in favour and not in favour of the number of hours. To this extent an evaluation of the current allocation of hours must be assessed in line with the syllabusand the need for practical assessments. The monitoring of students in the workplace had returned a positive response. Scheduled monitoring, were "monthly" seems to be the most frequently used option whereas in most other scenarios weekly and six monthly was highlighted.

The details of assessment as contained in the logbooks were found to be of an acceptable standard with a 1/3 of respondents indicating some need for enhancements. Providing the industry partner with a defined set of guidelines for review and assessment of the student contributes timeously for such evaluation to be carried out. With the rapid changes in technology, the need for a continuous plan that includes the changes in the workplace must beincluded in the logbooks. In saying so such changes/enhancements must form part of the theoretical approach at the university.

Objective 2: Identify the shortfalls in the competencies of and attributes of the DUT WIL students

Bridging or reducing the skills gap is an ongoing target that contributes to the up-liftment of thestudents. Communication, both verbal and written pay a pivotal role. More than half of the

responses indicated that communication skills were of a good standing. Teamwork and co-operation contributes to efficiencies in the work environment, to which employers had indicated a satisfactory acceptance of the students' ability. Being able to function in a team is closely linked to the student's attitude in the work environment and as suchrevealing that these two areas require improvement together with the desire to learn and continue learning. Growing the minds of students to foster problem solving skills and become analytical thinkers is a skill that contributes to the life-long learning of the student.

The responses are hovered around an average of 45.13% and 49.11% for analytical thinking and problem solving respectively. The study also examined the students' abilities to use various Microsoft packages. The analyses of the students capabilities to use these packages whereby the respondents has rated them good where that 63.55%, 31.73%, 50% and 24.62% where for MS word, MS power point,MS outlook and MS excel respectively. MS projects revealed that 43.63% for average and 44.68% for fair, given an indication for a need for training in this package. Excel equally shareda 37.69% for average and fair, requiring the student to have more training for the use of this tool. Computerized systems are in all spheres of the work environment and the university mustensure that there exist programs that allows for adequate practical usage of such programs.

Objective 3: Assess the placement criteria of the DUT students

It is commonly known that enhanced systems together with clear policies and procedures contribute to efficiencies and effectiveness. The university, through the Co-Operative Education Department has ongoing engagement with industry partners for the purpose of student placements for WIL as well as for their contribution for their critical contribution to theirdepartments Advisory Boards, thus improving the teaching and research materials as part of the syllabus. Respondents were somewhat satisfied with the availability of information regarding WIL with a return rate of 59,82%. However, the balance of 33,39% have noted a need for improvement whilst 6,25% were unsure. The purpose of supporting WIL is clearly illustrated and respondents had average responses in respect of the criteria to be included as a WIL industry partner. The need for standardized curriculum vitae of students was

highlightedin the data analyses. Even though there had been a mixed response as to the timeous responsiveness to queries, a process of continuous improvement can be maintained.

The scarcity of financial resources (money) is no new dilemma to the needy students. Support in the form of stipends has become a necessity. These stipends provide the basic need for travel and meals for the students. Various forms of funding avenues have been initiated/applied to support the stipend. While the majority of stipend is supported by Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA), some industry partners also contribute to stipends. The university provides some funding and students also support themselves. There has been a small indication by industry partners who have alluded that they would only accept students that arefunded. Building a model that fully supports a financial need is an approach that needs to be adopted by the University. Notwithstanding the need for all applicable students to be placed in the world of work, a processof selection is still applicable. Post Covid pandemic, there has been an overwhelming request for face-to-face interviews with students at the organizations premises and the university. Otherforms of electronic formats of interviews are applied. From a positive perspective, the study reveals that industry partners have shown commitment to allowing students to be part of their organization's world of work. The analyses reveal that employers had been supporting the WIL initiative over the past 15 years wherein a large percentage (71,43%) had accepted students for a period of 1 to 10 years. Despite the year 2020 being directly impacted by the Covid pandemic, the University achieved a placement of 3301 students, with 4517,4044 and 5202 students being placed in the work environment during the 2019,2018 and 2017 respectively. Furthermore, employers (respondents) were keen to employ the students wherein 88.29% had indicated as such. Being aware of insurance details and the process thereto contributes to the real time attendance to injury in the work environment.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the recommendations of the study that are based on the findings and theliterature reviewed. The following are recommended: -

- Development of hybrid learning models and simulated work environments will ensure students receive uninterrupted training within their specified time frames.

- To explore the avenues of additional financial support through the Department of HigherEducation and Training as well as NSFAS can significantly contribute funding for the placement.

- Implementation of a process that incentivise the industry partners with acknowledgmentand recognition.

- Integration of the current student system with the co-operative education system and enhance the functionality so that it includes the use of apps.

- Implementation of an integrated placement system that includes an underlined uniformityof student information.
- Improvement of the work preparedness module and ensure its alignment to current workpractices within relevant industries.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

The main limitation of this research is that it is restricted to Durban University of Technology, and henceforth the results cannot be generalised, as there is a need to conduct this research in other Universities of Technology (UoTs).

5.6 SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

In view of the above limitations, this study has identified opportunities for future research. To begin with, the study recommends that a similar research be carried out with employers (industry partners) from other University of Technologies (UoT) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training colleges.

This study also recommends that research be carried out to establish the importance of work integrated learning at higher education institutions and its impact on student preparedness for the world of work.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The Durban university of Technology through its adoption of the Envision 2030 endeavours toensure that: -

- Our people will be creative innovative, entrepreneurial and adaptive to changes in theworld.

- Our people will participate productively in the development of our region, country andthe world.

- Our state-of-the-art infrastructure and systems will enhance and an ecosystem createdto achieve this vision.

In light of the high unemployment rate and the scarcity of employment, it is imperative that theuniversity strives to produce graduates that are able to fit into the world of work. As stated by Govender and Taylor (43 -2015) South Africa has embarked on a National Development Plan and Vision for 2030 to promote a triple helix partnership witheducation, government and industry to reduce the unemployment rate from 27% in 2011to 6% by 2030. The continued

support provided by the industry partners to the students can be seen from a perspective of a “win-win situation”, whereby the student gains knowledge while the industry partner gains an extra set of hands with a different set of ideas thus creating a synergy of outputs. Emanating from the transition post Covid, the working environment changed from face to face to “work from home”. Consideration must be given to the outbreak of other infectious diseases and the direct impact on the attainment of placement spaces for students. Further studies should be carried out with employers (industry partners) from other University of Technologies (UoT) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training colleges (TVET), to understand their perspectives. This study also recommends that research be carried out toestablish the importance of work integrated learning at higher education institutions and its impact of student preparedness for the world of work.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 -Letter of Information and Consent

1 November 2020

Dear Participant

I am a registered Masters student in the Department of Management at the Durban University of Technology. My research study is entitled: Employers' perspective of Durban University of Technology's Work Integrated Learning students

You have been selected as one of the respondents for this study and I humbly request your assistance in completing the research questionnaire. The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. Only my research supervisor and I will have access to the completed questionnaires. There are no known risks to participation. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Please return the questionnaire as soon as possible to singh_s@dut.ac.za (note its underscore between the singh and s).

If you have any questions about this research study, please feel free to contact me.Thank you for your assistance in this important endeavor.

Kind Regards

Shireen Singh

Student Number: 21242322

Tel: 031-3732880

Email:singh_s@dut.ac.za

CONSENT LETTER

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Shireen Singh about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____

- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.

- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.

- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____ _____ _____ _____

Full Name of Participant **Date** **Time** **Signature**

I, _____ (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____ _____ _____

Full Name of Researcher **Date** **Signature**

_____ _____ _____

Full Name of Witness (If applicable) **Date** **Signature**

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study : Employers perspectives of Durban University of Technology's work-integrated learning Students

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Dr Strinivasan Pillay – PHD

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to investigate the Employers Perspectives of the Durban University of Technology's Work Integrated Learning Students.

Greeting Good Day – Trust you are well.

Introduce yourself to the participant: I am a Masters Student at the Durban University ofTechnology in the Faculty of Management Sciences

Invitation to the potential participant: I would like to invite you to participate in the research

What is Research (Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalized new knowledge)

(Address the Research Participant directly in the second person pronoun "you." Do not address the research participant as "participant," "patient", "sir" or "madam". The language must be free of jargon and unexplained acronyms and must be easily understood by the potential research participant. Technical terminology, must be clear and explained. Consider the age, target population, home language, educational level, frame of mind, etc. of the participant. An explanation to the potential participant that he/she can ask as many questions as he/she wish because it is important that he/she fully understand the study. Participants are entitled to discuss the study with their family and friends and are under noobligation

to commit at this stage. For this purpose, a copy of the Letter of Information document is given to the potential participant to take home.)

Outline of the Procedures: The participant is required to complete a survey questionnaire which will be emailed by the researcher to companies that employ DUT students. The estimated time taken to complete the questionnaire is 15 minutes.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: There are no risks or discomforts to the participants.

Benefits: This will allow the University to improve on the student's skills before they are placed for training

The benefit to the researcher will be research publications both in conference proceedings then in accredited journals:

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: There will be no adverse consequences for the participant should they choose to withdraw from the study.

Remuneration: The participants will not receive any remuneration for participating in the study.

Costs of the Study: The participant will not be expected to cover any costs towards the study.

Confidentiality: All the businesses in the sample are aware that all information released would remain confidential. The information will not be used for any other purpose other than this research study. There will be no business names mentioned in the write up of the dissertation.

Research-related Injury: There will not be any compensation for any research related injury because it is very unlikely that there will be any injury occurred while answering of a questionnaire.

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Please contact me, the researcher, on 031- 373 2880, my supervisor: Dr. Strini Pillay on 031 -373 5605, or the Institutional Research Ethics administrator on 031 373 2900..

CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: Employers perspectives of Durabn University of Technology's Work Integrated Learning Students

Names of Researcher/s: Shireen Singh

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, _____(name of researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study – Research Ethics Clearance Number:_____

- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.

- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initial and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.

- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this studycan be processed in a computerised system by the researcher

- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study

- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature/ RightThumbprint

I,_____(name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

Appendix 2 – Questionnaire

SECTION A – YOUR DETAILS

NAME OF COMPANY	
NAME *(OPTIONAL)*	
DESIGNATION/JOB TITLE	
TELEPHONE NUMBER	
E-MAIL ADDRESS	

This page will be removed before the questionnaire goes in for analysis

1. How long have you been involved in supervising Work Integrated Learning Students?

NUMBER OF YEARS	**INSERT AN "X"**
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
More than 15 years	

2. Please state the number of students your organisation has offered WIL to.

YEAR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of students					

3. Please select an option that most reflects your response to the following statements: -Insert an **"X"** as per the key below

KEY	
Strongly Disagree	SD
Disagree	D
Neutral	N
Agree	A
Strongly Agree	SA

	SD	D	N	A	SA
THEORY TO PRACTICE					
The number of hours allocated for Work Integrated Learning is sufficiently allocated					
The students logbook represents the outcomes and key deliverables of theory to practice/workplace					
The assessment criteria, in the logbook, issufficiently represented					
Logbooks are a reflection of workplace scenarios					
PROCESSES & SYSTEMS					
Information regarding WIL is readily available					
The purpose of supporting WIL students is clearlyindicated					
Application to be accepted as a WIL industrypartner is well defined					
A standardised format of CV's assists in faster pre selection and comparison of students					
Responses to Queries and requests are attendedto promptly/timeously					

4. Where the students monitored by their respective departments?

Yes	
No	

If yes, please complete the table below: -

FREQUENCY	**INSERT AN"X"**
Weekly	
Monthly	
Quarterly	
Other: Please specifyi) ii) iii)	

5. Rate the students' ability to use the following Microsoft packages: -

	FAIR	**AVERAGE**	**GOOD**
M S Word			

M S Excel			
M S Power point			
M S Outlook			
M S Project			
OTHER: Please Specify i) ii) iii)			

Comments/Suggestions

6. Rate the students' skills in the following

Insert an "X" in the relevant box

P = Poor A = Average G = Good E = Excellent

	STUDENT SKILLS	**P**	**A**	**G**	**E**
1	Teamwork & Co-Operation				
2	Attitude to the work situation				
3	Understanding of workplace practices				
4	Desire to learn and continue learning				
5	Analytical Thinker				
6	Problem solving				
7	Initiative				
8	Verbal Communication				
9	Written Communication				
10	Adherence to occupational health and safety standards				

7. Kindly insert an "x" for your preferred method/s of interviews of students

1	Face to face at DUT	
2	Face to Face at your organisation	
3	Telephonically	
4	Multimedia (Skype, WhatsApp, MS Teams, etc.)	

8. Is your organization aware of the students' insurance and medical aid details?

Yes	
No	

Comments/Suggestions

9. Is your organization aware of the process to be followed during a students' injury?

Yes	
No	

Comments/Suggestions

10. Select the option/s which represents the funding of WIL students at your organisation:

FUNDING	(X)
Self-funded	
Funded by organisation	
SETA	
DUT	
OTHER: Please specify i) ii) iii)	

11. Does your organisation consider offering employment to WIL students?

Yes	
No	

Comments/Suggestions

12. What are the challenges that your organisation experienced, or will experience as a result ofthe COVID19 pandemic with regards to DUT WIL students?

Appendix 3 -IREC Letter

Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwin Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology

P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001

Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics

www.dut.ac.za

23 April 2021

Ms S Singh
Flat 915 Windermere Centre
163 Lillian Ngonyi Road
Morningside
Durban

Dear Ms Singh

Employers' perspectives of Durban University of Technology's work-integrated learning students
Ethical Clearance number IREC 172/20

The Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that FULL APPROVAL is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the IREC according to the IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the IREC as outlined in the IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Professor J K Adam
Chairperson: IREC

Appendix 4 -Editors Report

25 Maple Crescent
Circle Park
KLOOF
3610

Phone 031 – 7075912
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Dr Saths Govender

5 DECEMBER 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LANGUAGE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

This serves to inform that I have read the dissertation titled:

EMPLOYERS' PERSPECTIVES OF DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY'S WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING STUDENTS, by Shireen Singh, student no. 21242322.

To the best of my knowledge, all the proposed amendments have been effected and the work is free of spelling and grammatical errors. I am of the view that the quality of language used meets generally accepted academic standards.

Yours faithfully

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B Paed. (Arts), B.A. (Hons), B Ed.
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Appendix 5 – Turnitin Report

Employers Perspectives of Work Integrated Learning Students - A case study of DUT

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